

court elders were themselves uncertain of where right lay in difficult and changing times. Plaintiffs, defendants and court elders, however, were not the only actors in these domestic dramas. Administrators and, more distantly, officials and critics in London also played a part, in the construction of 'crisis' if not in the resolution of disputes. Shadle provides the larger context. Whether or not he is right in seeing a conservative turn to administrative thinking in the inter-war period, colonial and patriarchal/generational authority were assumed to be mutually supportive. However, the Colonial Office found itself caught between activists at home who demanded an end to the 'sale' of women and local officials concerned that 'girl cases', and the disobedience that they apparently demonstrated, were undermining a basic cornerstone of 'tribal life'. Local officials were also aware both that they lacked the power to intervene effectively and that legal remedies – criminalizing adultery, for example – were themselves problematic.

Amongst the wider issues, beyond marriage itself and its discontents, that *Girl Cases* raises, two in particular speak to the comparative dimension and complement recent studies elsewhere. The first concerns the working of local courts and, especially, the gap between 'custom' in theory and its determination and application in practice. Courts did not 'make' or enforce a fixed custom so much as provide a focus for argument, even though inequalities of power and authority still shaped the debate. The other concerns female agency. Shadle shows how ordinary women (and men) struggled for some control over their own lives without rejecting established norms. Indirectly, their struggles again demonstrate how inadequate an unproblematized 'resistance' paradigm is in understanding gender issues and the complexities of individual lives. Court records well handled, as a number of pioneering studies have shown, provide us with one of the few remaining paths to an understanding not only of what people argued intimately about but of how they did so and why it was important to them. Shadle has given us much to think about here and, indeed, the general Gusii background might have been abbreviated to give even more space to 'girl cases' in court.

Bucknell University

RICHARD WALLER

THE CHALLENGES FOR POSTCOLONIAL LEADERS IN EAST AFRICA

doi:10.1017/S0021853707002976

Transformational Leadership in East Africa: Politics, Ideology and Community.

By ERIC MASINDE ASEKA. Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2005. Pp. viii + 464.

£29.95; \$39.95, paperback (ISBN 9970-02-480-9).

KEY WORDS: East Africa, culture/cultural, ethnicity, ideology, politics.

This is a serious, angry, erudite and challenging work. The author is as unsparing of his readers as he is of the failed leaders of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania but repays their close attention. Professor Aseka teaches political history at Kenyatta University and knows at first hand of what he writes. He asks why postcolonial leaders have achieved so little by way of transformation of their societies in the past forty years and more, but first admits that they had enormous problems to overcome. They had to transform a colonial inheritance that offered them scarcely any assistance. Their states were by origin arbitrary occupying forces, 'imposed on a mosaic of ethnic traditions' (p. 407) with varied legitimizing

ideologies; there were weakly developed markets, and no relevant political experience, since Africans, and especially nationalists, had been marginalized by colonial rulers; and yet they inherited a monopoly of power that was, of its nature, corrupting. What were leaders to do? In answering this conundrum Aseka consults a number of political philosophers, including Althusser, Gramsci, Hegel, Heidegger, Kant and Nietzsche and, from their various wisdoms distils the vital importance of maturity and integrity in leadership, the only intelligible and politically plangent embodiment of ideologies able to energize and inspire coherent and responsible political communities out of the unpromising historical material left behind by British imperialism. Only one postcolonial leader, Nyerere, had any inkling of the immensity of the task and the intellect to address it. But, Maseka argues, that was not enough to transform Tanzania. Indeed Nyerere's very intellectual certainty was Tanzania's undoing: such was his towering stature that no other intellectual projects had any hope of contesting the President's or of subjecting it to the criticism that no political project can do without. Tanzania almost died from good intentions. Neither Obote nor Kenyatta, however, were able to pursue such good intentions, nor their successors. It was not that they were entirely without transformational vision but that they got bogged down in the merely transactional politics by which they survived the maze of intrigue and corruption to which they were condemned by the competitive politics of ethnicity. As for Zanzibar, that was ethnicity with racial barbs added.

It is this shared impasse that leads Aseka to stress the necessity of moral integrity in a leadership that is sufficiently convinced of the managerial efficiency of popular involvement and freedom of expression for its ideological vision to liberate rather than suffocate creative energy. Moreover, there has to be popular involvement of specific sorts, especially of women with subversive notions of what constitutes liberty, so as to cross-cut the otherwise deadly influence of politically involved ethnicity that has caused such strife in Uganda and such futility in Kenya. It is in relation to the gender implications of his focus on the unrealized creativity of ideologically visionary leadership that Aseka reflects most interestingly on what is needed in order to practise transformational politics. To what other communities of involvement, and with what particular visions, can leaders appeal who wish to break out of the currently unproductive politics of contemporary East Africa? I would have liked Aseka to have spent rather more time in pursuing such questions, the answers to which would I think be found more in his own acute observation and less in the alleged wisdom of Althusser and his like.

Trinity College, Cambridge

JOHN LONSDALE

THE PRIVATE SPHERE IN TANZANIA

doi:10.1017/S0021853707002988

A History of the Excluded: Making Family a Refuge from State in Twentieth-Century Tanzania. By JAMES L. GIBLIN. Oxford: James Currey, 2005. Pp. xii + 304. £50 (ISBN 0-85255-467-2); £16.95, paperback (ISBN 0-85255-466-4).

KEY WORDS: Tanzania, family, kinship, local history, nationalism, state.

The most innovative research on modern African history of late has been that which seeks more meaningful units of analysis to challenge or reframe the seemingly inevitable categories of state, nation, ethnicity and race. Whether it is