

provisioning of food assistance detract from the fact that millions of lives have been enhanced or saved. International food assistance—while flawed—is certainly a good thing. Nor does this predictability in any way lessen Barrett and Maxwell’s accomplishment. Their book is an excellent read. The eleven chapters of *Food Aid after Fifty Years* comprehensively explore the history and the future of food assistance with breadth and clarity. The authors also use empirical evidence to disprove thirteen common myths about food aid, including the myth that it is primarily concerned with feeding the hungry (Myth #1), that it is an effective means of supporting U.S. farmers (Myth #2), and that it is a cause of food-aid dependency (Myth #12). On this often claimed last point, the authors explain that dependency assertions have the causal argument reversed. Food shocks (whether caused by drought, drastic price fluctuations, floods, civil war, or other events) do force people to modify their behavior in ways that may necessitate a variety of safety nets, including food aid. But the volume of food aid distributed even in severely stricken areas is usually too small to disrupt food self-sufficiency itself. The text also brings discussion of abstract international policies down to earth via abbreviated case studies in many “boxes” inserted throughout the book, including “War and Food Aid in Afghanistan,” “Food and Talk in North Korea,” and “Self-serving Food Aid to Russia.”

*Food Aid after Fifty Years* is at times repetitive. Yet because the topic is so enormous—encompassing issues pertaining not only to the various types of international actors and bureaucracies involved, but also to the types of food aid distributed, local subsistence strategies, food-consumption patterns, as well as agricultural, market, monetary, and transport policies—the authors must occasionally reiterate some of the basics to set the stage for a particular issue under discussion. While an index of authors cited would have augmented the text’s utility, overall the book is a very important contribution to the literature. It is a must-read for students, researchers, advocates, and (one would hope) policymakers with interests in international hunger, poverty, agricultural economics, and development studies.

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**Karen Coen Flynn. *Food, Culture, and Survival in an African City*.** New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. xvii + 211 pp. Figures. Tables. Photographs. Bibliography. Index. \$22.95. Paper.

Karen Coen Flynn’s study of day-to-day activities of food vendors, producers, and consumers in Mwanza, Tanzania, on the southern shore of Lake Victoria, is based on fieldwork conducted in the early to mid-1990s, after the Tanzanian government had moved away from a centrally controlled

economic system. At that time Mwanza had a population of about 280,000, mostly ethnic Africans with a significant Asian-African community. The discussion of her interview-based methodology is followed by seven substantial chapters which form the main body of the monograph. Chapter 3 describes broad patterns of consumption, which are explored in the context of the impact of local, regional, and national factors ranging from pricing, to government policies, to religion, and to taste. This sets the stage for chapters 4–7, which focus on the household, the key site for the provisioning processes that Flynn aims to unravel. Extensive interviews show how differences in migration history, in gender-based access to wage labor, and in declining support from rural relatives are linked to the ways that male and female incomes are used within households to obtain food. These differences are also linked to variation in household composition and household responsibilities. Economic factors also account for the greater participation of wealthier households in urban agriculture as a supplementary source for food.

Chapters 8 and 9 constitute an unusually important contribution to African urban ethnography and studies of food provisioning. Here Flynn provides an account of persons outside the normative domestic units: the homeless street people, both adults and children. For the destitute, hunger is addressed through “exchange entitlement” with individuals and organizations. These exchanges are carried out within various “food-supply groups” in which an individual may participate, depending on age, health or disfigurement, and/or gender. The groups parallel the various household organizational structures resulting from the differential access to food described in earlier chapters. These chapters not only underscore the precarious day-to-day struggles of the poor and destitute but also suggest the significance of charity as a source of food to this segment of the urban population.

Throughout her work, Flynn goes beyond ethnographic documentation to address the nature of food exchanges and issues in “food-acquisition theory.” Of central concern is a clarification of the work of Amartya Sen, the economist whose research on famine introduced the notion of food “entitlement,” the relationships with others that allow one to procure food through exchange. Through the life histories she constructs from her interviews, Flynn documents a wide range of forms of entitlement for Mwanza residents, and connects those forms not only to sociological and economic factors but also to cultural beliefs and local norms of propriety in behavior. In so doing, she refines some of Sen’s notions. Most significant, perhaps, is her argument for a concept of charity as reciprocal exchange, rather than a one-way transaction, with emphasis on the prestige and/or moral satisfaction realized by donors.

*Food, Culture, and Survival* is a densely packed study, both ethnographically and theoretically. The reliance on interviews, while providing rich content, means that participant-observation-based data are somewhat

overshadowed. This is not unusual in urban studies, but one wonders about the rest of the lives of individuals beyond their food provisioning efforts, as well as the extent to which the lives within and among the households described here might be connected with one another. And although the study is anthropological in its aspirations, its anthropological character disappears a bit in the context of the complex interdisciplinary literature on food-provisioning. Neither limitation, however, detracts significantly from a carefully designed and well-argued study that sheds significant new light on key aspects of the African urban condition.

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**Danielle de Lame. *A Hill among a Thousand: Transformations and Ruptures in Rural Rwanda*.** Translated by Helen Arnold. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press/Tervuren: The Royal Museum of Central Africa, 2005. xix + 540 pp. Works Cited. Map. Photographs. Lexicon. Index. \$65.00. Cloth.

The hill is the traditional local community in Rwanda, which until recently had no towns and no villages. People lived in enclosures dispersed across the hillside. In this outstanding book, fieldwork on Murundi hill in the 1980s reveals the ways in which a peripheral region has changed, especially as regards “social representations of space” (46).

The political and economic history of this region was recapitulated on the hill. Murundi—like the north and northwest in general—was independent of the Rwandan state until late in the nineteenth century. It stopped paying taxes to the central court at the death of King Rwabugiri in 1895 and did not resume payment until obliged to do so by the Belgian administration in the 1920s. The principal (Hutu) lineage of those who supposedly had cleared the land remained influential, but so did the lineage of the first Tutsi sent from the center to rule and to distribute land. In the 1980s, de Lame encountered “former Hutu dignitaries . . . integrated in the modern spheres, both lay and religious, of the government-paid elite, at different levels depending on their abilities” (31). The Murundi population included a majority of Hutu, a minority of Tutsi, and a few Twa. Fifteen percent of the enclosures or compounds were Tutsi. Everyone seems to have been able to classify other families as Tutsi, Hutu, or “more or less Tutsi” (which is interesting in light of the rigid colonial classification perpetuated by the Hutu-dominated first and second republics).

De Lame counted thirty-five enclosures belonging to the land-clearing Dahumbya Hutu lineage. The main rival of the Dahumbya was another Hutu lineage, which had arrived more recently. The Hutu and Tutsi identities were based on family origin in the first instance. The stereotypes of Tutsi pastoralists and Hutu cultivators correspond poorly to socioeconomic