that more people were involved in other economic and social activities is not adequately reflected in this section.

The text is replete with names of Nigerian rulers, while minimal (if any) attention is given to other groups and individuals who also affected the course of Nigerian history—such as labor and peasant movements, labor leaders, or activists. For instance, the text seems to downplay the impact of the general strike of 1945 on the nationalist struggle and its effect on the nationalist movement leading to independence; and the efforts of prominent Nigerian labor leaders such as Michael Imoudu, Hassan Sumonu, Ali Ciroma, Frank Kokori, and Adams Oshiomole, or activists like Gani Fawehinmi are not recognized. Yet the history of Nigeria was not made only by the political elite. More information on social issues like health and women's struggles, and on indigenous technology, would have enriched the work. A few factual errors also appear in the text.

Despite these few "gray areas," the text certainly achieves its major objectives. It is a rich contribution to the growing literature on Nigerian history. Students, scholars, and general readers inquisitive about mainstream Nigerian history will definitely find the text informative, interesting, and refreshing.

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Solofo Randrianja and Stephen Ellis. *Madagascar: A Short History.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009. viii + 316 pp. Maps. Pictures. Notes. Appendixes. Acronyms. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. $64.00. Cloth. $24.00. Paper.

According to the authors, Solofo Randrianja and Stephen Ellis, *Madagascar: A Short History* is the fruit of their combined "fifty years" of research and writing. In addition to their dedication and persistence, we ought also to salute these two authors for their invaluable contribution to the general history of Madagascar with this book. Indeed, as they noted, "the only history of Madagascar in English that is still extant was written by a British diplomat who served as his country's ambassador to the island" (2). That reference was *A History of Madagascar* by Mervyn Brown (Damien Tunnacliffe, 1995). In this sense, *Madagascar: A Short History* is a welcome addition to the rare academic references (especially in English) on the general history of Madagascar.

Overall, the first two chapters on the premodern history of Madagascar (chapter 1—"Settlement, 400–1099"; chapter 2—"Transforming the Island, 1100–1599") are based more on speculation than on tangible evidence. Like many other authors before them, Randrianja and Ellis had to rely in these chapters on sketchy archeological and cultural evidence in order to trace the origins of the Malagasy people and their settlement on the island.

The remaining chapters, however, are based on a variety of written documents left not only by European explorers, adventurers, missionaries, and public officials, but also by Malagasy officials and citizens.

One of the most interesting chapters of the book is chapter 5, "The Kingdom of Madagascar, 1817–1895." It is worth noting that according to the prevalent view, the relationship between the Merina kingdom (which would become the Kingdom of Madagascar with King Radama I, 1818–1828) and the British kingdom was a model of cooperation between a powerful European country and a traditional African country in the nineteenth century. Through this cooperation, the Kingdom of Madagascar embraced modernization (or the European civilization) wholeheartedly and was recognized and respected by other European powers and the United States. The two authors shed new light on this cooperation and debunk what has been accepted as common knowledge, by showing that the modernization of the Kingdom of Madagascar in the nineteenth century was in fact a thin veneer on top of a traditional, oligarchic, and tyrannical regime.

However, my main criticism of the book concerns the deliberate rejection of the formal independence of Madagascar in 1960. Surprisingly, the two authors dismiss this formal independence as a "myth" (177–182). Consequently, they include the first decade of the independence of the country (1960 to 1972) in chapter 6, entitled "The French Period" (1896–1972), and begin what they suppose to be the independence period in 1973 with chapter 7, entitled "An Island in the World (1973–2002)." Their justification of this rejection is, nonetheless, contradictory. Indeed, while conceding that Madagascar was formally recognized by the international community "as a sovereign republic" in 1960, and was fully admitted as a member state of the United Nations with its own flag and national anthem, the authors still try to argue that

> This [independence] did not either cause or signify any profound change in the nature of Madagascar's relations with France.... Madagascar's First Republic was often regarded as a neocolonial regime, and this was an accurate perception insofar as the island's formal independence did not in itself signify a radical break with France. Such a break occurred more than a decade later, somewhere between the revolution of 1972, with its anti-imperialist rhetoric, and the agreement with the World Bank in 1980. (12)

In fact, the sine qua non of a country's independence in modern international relations is its "international recognition." Thus, once a country is recognized by the international community as independent, the nature of its relations with another country (France, in this case) does not matter at all and cannot change its status. Furthermore, for millions of Malagasy people, the independence of their country on June 26, 1960, was not a "myth." It was as real as anything could be, and they have celebrated it every

year since that date, regardless of the relations between Madagascar and France.

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JoAnn McGregor, *Crossing the Zambezi: The Politics of Landscape on a Central African Frontier.* Oxford, U.K.: James Currey, 2009. Distributed in the U.S. by Boydell & Brewer, Rochester, N.Y. x + 237 pp. Maps. Photographs. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $95.00. Cloth.

In *Crossing the Zambezi*, JoAnn McGregor embarks on an interesting but undoubtedly very complicated study of the "history of claims to the Zambezi" River (2), specifically the portion that forms the boundary between Zambia and Zimbabwe. Straddling a period of more than one and a half centuries, from the 1850s to the early 2000s, this book explores a wide range of themes that students of Zimbabwean history, and of African studies in general, will find helpful. The book explores how developments such as David Livingstone's "discovery" of the waterfalls (later named Victoria Falls) on the Zambezi in the 1850s, and the construction of the Victoria Falls bridge in 1905 and the Kariba Dam in the late 1950s, altered the Zambezi landscape. In addition to transforming the river's ecology, these developments entailed major changes in the political economy of the region. In examining how these scientific and technological interventions transformed the Zambezi riverscape, the author discusses not only the politics of landscape, but also conflicts between the people who inhabited the Zambezi Valley (the river people), the state, and more powerful others.

Over the course of the one hundred and fifty years studied in this book, the power politics in the Zambezi valley shifted significantly as various players fought for the control of the river and its resources. Before the arrival of Europeans, the Zambezi valley had witnessed intense conflicts among its original inhabitants (or early arrivals), mostly the Tonga and other groups who wanted to exploit the resources of the river. The advent of colonial rule, especially the emergence of the "tourist towns" of Livingstone and Victoria Falls on the northern and southern sides of the river, respectively, introduced more players who made various claims to the Zambezi. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 show how colonial "development" projects in the Zambezi valley further marginalized the inhabitants, who did not benefit from such developments. Many of the "river people" also lost access to the Zambezi when they were displaced to preserve wildlife and forestry resources in this region. These displacements and other grievances fueled ethnic consciousness and local resistance, which leaders of African nationalist movements utilized to mobilize anticolonial struggles on both sides of the river. McGregor argues in chapters 8 and 9 that the displaced people's self-identification as river