

## REVIEWS

### ENCYCLOPEDIA OF AFRICA

*Encyclopedia of Precolonial Africa. Archaeology, History, Languages, Cultures and Environments.* Edited by JOSEPH O. VOGEL. London: Sage, 1997. Pp. 605. £95 (ISBN 0-7619-8902-1).

This is a difficult volume to review adequately, let alone in 700 words, as it runs to some 605 pages and includes 93 different articles written by 80 authors, thus allowing approximately eight words per contribution! The coverage is extensive ranging through various subject areas grouped under the headings ‘African environments’, ‘Histories of research’, ‘Technology’, ‘People and culture’, and by far the longest section, ‘Prehistory of Africa’. The background to how the project was conceived and executed is discussed in the preface, and the volume is described as having ‘in mind university undergraduates, the general reader interested in archaeology and anthropology, and teaching professionals needing insight into peripheral fields beyond their own research specialities’ (p. 18). Within a brief review, it is only possible to look at how this statement fares in the broadest sense.

Firstly, as with many volumes of this nature which include such a wide range of contributions, the result is somewhat patchy in terms of quality. Most of the individual sections are good, a few excellent, while only a minority are poor. Geographical imbalance, which might have been a problem, is not too much of a dominant factor, with individual papers either concentrating upon specific regions (North-east Africa and the Horn, Western, Southern etc.) or tackling subjects from a pan-continental emphasis, predominantly from the Sahara southwards. But in this respect, one wonders why an encyclopaedia of ‘Africa’ largely excludes the north of the continent with the exception of Egypt? If an African emphasis was the aim, North Africa should have been covered in greater detail.

Subject coverage is good, with sections detailing, as the headings already described indicate, a variety of subjects, usually in a concise form with a short bibliography attached to each entry. This is a useful format, especially for the target audience as it means the interested student or lay-person need not wade through a single lengthy bibliography to obtain the further reading required. The references themselves are in the main up to date, and take account of recent research up to and including 1995. When examined in greater detail, the coverage in the contributions this reviewer feels best able to comment upon (those dealing with West Africa, and with later archaeology across the continent) is generally good and no glaring inaccuracies are visible. This no doubt results from the fact that most of the authors are writing about their own research specialisations.

The one major failing of the volume is the generally poor quality of the illustrations both with regard to quality and coverage. Relatively few photographs are included (perhaps to cut costs) and many of the line drawings could easily have been improved. Rock art, for example, is reasonably well illustrated, perhaps because the genre by its very nature is relatively easy to reproduce. But this has led to an imbalance: 20 out of a total of 70 illustrations (excluding 24 tables) are concentrated within pages 348 to 376, while the rest are scattered throughout the remainder of the book with the result that some sections are almost wholly devoid of illustrations. ‘People and culture’ provides an instance of this. Important entries on ‘Forager’, ‘Farmer’, ‘Pastoral lifeways’ and ‘Ethnoarchaeology’ (pp. 179–240)

contain one illustration and one table, when many more could have been included to make this volume more accessible and informative to the target audience. Where illustrations are included, their quality frequently leaves something to be desired, and it seems that authors' roughs were sometimes included without being redrawn (see, for example, the maps on pages 91 and 174). Captions are misaligned, shading borders on the bizarre, letraset or computer symbols are not used, and outlines sometimes appear to have been sketched with a biro! This inevitably detracts from the volume as a whole, although production values are otherwise generally high.

In summary though, this is a useful volume which does fulfil the editor's aims. It will be of use as a reference work to students and others interested in pre-colonial Africa and it fills a niche in the market for such a text.

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TIMOTHY INSOLL

### 'NUBIOLOGY'

*Kerma and the Kingdom of Kush, 2500–1500 B.C.: The Archaeological Discovery of an Ancient Nubian Empire.* By TIMOTHY KENDALL. Washington: University of Washington Press, 1997. Pp. xvi + 142. \$29.95, paperback (ISBN 0-9656001-0-6).

It has been more than twenty years since William Y. Adams published *Nubia: Corridor to Africa* in 1977, and over a decade since its second (1986) edition, updated only by a single introductory chapter. At the time, *Corridor* was the authoritative handbook for the entire gamut of Nubian civilisations, and even today is – quite literally – the first to appear on any subject bibliography, and the ultimate authority for which one automatically reaches on the bookshelf. Its scholarship, range, detail, bibliography, all were equally breathtaking in scope.

Time, however, marches on. An entire generation of scholars, extended geographical investigation and two decades of ever-expanding research later, it is sadly outdated. The concept and development of 'Nubiology', even 'Sudanology', as a focus of research rather than 'poor-cousin' adjunct to Egyptology – deriving largely from the publication of this book – has created a new and distinctive discipline in its own right. And it has grown by leaps and bounds. A late 1970s international meeting of Nubian scholars could fit into a minibus. One would now require a jumbo jet. Or two. The explosion of new 'Sudanology' journals alone – at least seven since 1973 – together with the revival of *Kush*, testify to its glowing health. As does the appearance since 1972 of new permanent museum galleries devoted to the region and its successive civilizations in Berlin, Boston, London, Oxford, Philadelphia, Toronto, Warsaw – and, at Aswan, an entire museum.

The incredible pace of the discipline since *Corridor* has created a vacuum, for a committee of specialists, far less one scholar, would be hard-pressed to produce an up-to-date equivalent. Wisely, no one has tried and *Corridor* frustratingly still remains the only accessible compendium available. The best one can hope for would be a series of books or fascicules, concentrating on but one or two cultural periods or geographic regions. Even so, they would not be able to replace *Corridor*, only supplement it.

Enter the volume under review. Its *raison d'être* as catalogue of 40 objects from Boston's Museum of Fine Arts on permanent loan exhibition at the National Museum of African Art in Washington DC is actually secondary. The catalogue is a mere perfunctory endnote; it is the preceding 'introductory' chapters that make this volume worthwhile.

Kendall is not an obvious choice as author. His speciality is the Napatan and Meroitic periods of later Nubian history. Nonetheless, he has acquitted himself well in this succinct yet highly informative and immensely readable overview of the

current state of Kerma scholarship, by drawing heavily upon the recent work of Charles Bonnet and Peter Lacovara (amongst others), whom he acknowledges at the beginning or in the main text. Their work, in particular, has completely transformed our perception of Kerma since *Corridor*.

The text itself is divided into several chapters, all enhanced by uniformly superb photographs and drawings. After a general introduction, we travel to Kerma as did the ancient Egyptians – from the north – in a short account of the developing relationship with their southern neighbours and its importance to both cultures. There follows a short history of Kerma's resurrection from total obscurity by sheer force of modern scholarship, from Reisner's initial erroneous conclusions through the various stages of major reassessment and further clarity achieved in the past forty years of renewed interest. A current assessment of the rise and fall of Kerma as a civilisation and as an empire along the Nile Valley is next, before separate chapters on life and death in archaeological context at the site of Kerma itself, and finally its legacy within succeeding Nubian powers. Short overviews of the material goods by type (pottery, burial beds, warrior's equipment, personal adornment and Egyptian imports) precede relevant catalogue entries to conclude the volume.

I have but a few minor comments, and a plea. This is the first general discussion of early Nubia *not* to mention the fallacious 'B-Group', an omission some may perceive as premature. It is nonetheless an academic landmark. The introductory map and timeline are both excellent, although all Egyptian dynasties should have been marked on the latter for the benefit of the general public. The Classic Kerma *T3-wrt* figure is not always clad in a skirt (*contra* p. 92); see also fig. 21 for a contemporary example without it. Catalogue numbers 33–35 (p. 102) are shown from outside to inside in the photograph rather than as described and, judging from the object itself, the given length of necklace no. 35 (p. 101) must be incorrect. And would someone *please* analyse and identify in print the 'white pigment' (p. 84) and coloured varieties infilling the incised pottery.

These do nothing to detract from the volume's worth. This is an immensely readable book that carefully and successfully balances the 'coffee-table' and 'scholar's bookshelf' polarities of its potential readership, and should feature prominently in future student and academic bibliographies. Highly recommended.

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JACKE PHILLIPS

## EARLY ANGOLAN HISTORY

*Studien zur Geschichte Angolas im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert: Ein Lesebuch* [Essays about the history of Angola in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: A Reader]. By BEATRIX HEINTZE. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 1996. Pp. 327. DM.48 (ISBN 3-927620-96-3).

Beatrix Heintze's articles are famous among aficionados of Angola for their quality and thoroughness. Indeed they have established her as the foremost authority on Angola for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They are also famous for being easter eggs hidden in the long grass of a very wide range of sometimes obscure publications. Hence her decision to bundle thirteen of them together in a book is very welcome.

The articles, slightly rewritten and with somewhat reduced footnoting are grouped under five headings and followed by a bibliography and indices. The series begins with four contributions to the historiography of written sources and written-down oral traditions, the problems of interpretation they raise, the pitfalls of using translations as sources, and an evaluation of Cadornega's *História de Angola*. These are definitive essays in the sense that they should be required

reading for anyone planning to do research on Angola, and also in the sense that they will not be superseded. They are, moreover, highly recommended for anyone who conducts or evaluates research on tropical Africa before 1700.

The two next headings include first two articles concerning the kingdom of Ndongo and Portuguese policy concerning settlement and economics in the sixteenth century, followed by five contributions about the seventeenth century, of which one deals with the end of independent Ndongo (1617–30), two with ‘vassality’ (i.e. Portuguese territorial administration and the income that was derived from tribute), while the last two deal with the slave trade and its impact. All these essays are valuable, but the eye-opener is the paper dealing with the dynamics of the escape and flight of slaves as well as of free persons. These led both to a thorough redistribution of the population over space and to the restructuration and recreation of new societies and cultures within and all around the old colony of Angola.

The two following headings include one essay each. First comes a pioneering article devoted to the material culture of the Mbundu, in which the author lists the available evidence for houses and their contents, textiles and personal ornaments, weapons, musical instruments and some religious objects. At first glance the topic may perplex historians, but once one grasps that these are issues about both standards of living and technological know-how its potential becomes evident. But the essay is only a first approach. Later research will need to delve into related issues such as the standards of living of different classes and broach other topics such as agriculture and nutrition.

The concluding article presents Heintze’s overall interpretation of the history of Ndongo during these centuries as she asks the question: ‘Were the days of the kingdom of Ndongo numbered after the arrival of the Portuguese?’ Perhaps not before the early 1600s, she concludes, but as soon as the slave trade in Angola became a mainstay for Brazil’s economy and thanks to a Jaga alliance which procured military superiority for the Portuguese, Ndongo was doomed. Its fate was sealed by 1629, even if the kingdom nominally lasted until 1671.

This collection of essays is by far the best available introduction to Angola in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Yet the reader should remember that Heintze does not claim to have written a complete history. While she addresses a number of major issues, she does not strive to be comprehensive and so does not mention other major themes, for example in religious or social history. Hence the book should be used and appreciated for what it brings and not taken as the final word about the Angola of those days.

A Portuguese translation of this work is expected, which would make it accessible to Angolans as well as to students of Angola. Still, given its sterling qualities, one would wish that an English translation also be made available to make Heintze’s achievement accessible to a much wider range of scholars and students.

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JAN VANSINA

## ESSENTIAL SOURCE

*The Purchas Handbook: Studies of the Life, Times and Writings of Samuel Purchas, 1577–1626.* 2 vols. Edited by L. E. PENNINGTON. London: Hakluyt Society, 1997. Pp. xvii + 811. £40 each (ISBN 0-904180-52-2 and 0-904180-53-0).

In Robert Silverberg’s novel *Lord of Darkness* (New York, 1983) the English seaman Andrew Battell, known to historians as a major source for seventeenth-century Angola, refers to ‘a little dreary pedantic man named Samuel Purchas’,

who mutilated his and other travellers' accounts. This view of the English clergyman Purchas' editorial role is widely shared. My own encounter with his work did not occur until 1985, when, having haggled for ages with Albert van Dantzig about the details of our joint translation of Pieter de Marees' book on the Gold Coast, I decided to look at how Purchas had tackled the task. Accustomed to the awful seventeenth-century translations of other books on Africa, I was taken aback. True, he omitted a third of the text and was sometimes difficult for a modern reader to follow; but I prayed that no reviewer could be so unkind as to compare our style with his. As it turns out, my admiration was misdirected: in this case Purchas seems to have relied upon a translation inherited from Richard Hakluyt, whose work in making available the knowledge of distant countries brought back by European travellers he continued.

Whereas in his *Pilgrimage*, first published in 1613, Purchas merely summarized in his own words what he had read, his four-volume masterpiece, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625) constitutes a valuable collection of sources, including non-English ones and some that had never been published. Thanks partly to an accurate reprint of the *Pilgrimes* which appeared in 1905–7, a number of Africanist historians have made use of various parts of this work. Most important is probably Battell's fascinating account of Angola, which had not appeared elsewhere and of which a critical edition by E. G. Ravenstein was published in 1901; but there is also original material on the Cape and Madagascar (mainly from accounts of East Indian voyages), as well as a little on eastern Africa and the Comoro Islands. Much of the material on West Africa, however, comes from published sources.

As far as sub-Saharan Africa is concerned, the *Purchas Handbook* contains few surprises, since P. E. H. Hair's informative contribution on this region represents a shortened version of an article he published in the journal *History in Africa* in 1986. Nevertheless, Volume I offers more than I had anticipated, not only in C. F. Beckingham's chapter on North and North-east Africa (treated together with the Near and Middle East) but also in the general chapters devoted to the uses of Purchas' works, his editorial approach and his coverage of 'native peoples'. Volume II begins with a useful review of the contents of each volume of the *Pilgrimes*, including some interesting remarks on the sources used in each section. (I was puzzled, though, by the comment on page 407 that Purchas' section on Benin was not from de Marees but 'apparently derived from another Dutch source'.) There follows a 'primary Purchas bibliography', indicating among other things which libraries possess copies of his works, and a secondary bibliography, which lists, discusses and criticises publications which have dealt with Purchas or made use of his works. The list is enormous; but while good on race, its coverage of sub-Saharan Africa – I counted about 15 authors – seems incomplete. Finally we are offered two indexes, again very detailed, one of books and articles, the other a general index.

This, like the Hakluyt Handbook, is an essential reference tool for anyone working on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century African history or on the history of European perceptions of Africa. Although I suspect that better co-ordination might have made possible a somewhat slimmer work (some of the information in Volume I is repeated in Volume II), one can only hope that other important authors and compilers will one day receive similar treatment.

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ADAM JONES

## AFRICAN CULTURES IN COLONIAL NORTH AMERICA

*Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South.* By MICHAEL A. GOMEZ. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998. Pp. xiv + 370. £35.95. ISBN 0-8078-2387-2; £14.50, paperback (ISBN 0-8078-4694-5).

In recent years, scholars studying the cultures of African slaves and their descendants in the Americas have shown an increasing awareness of, and sensitivity to, work which has been done on the history of the societies in Africa from which slaves originated. It is perhaps a logical development of this welcome trend for historians of Africa themselves to turn their attention to the study of Africans and their descendants in the trans-Atlantic diaspora.

In this work Michael Gomez, whose primary training was in African history – his earlier research being on the pre-colonial history of the kingdom of Bundu in Senegambia (*Pragmatism in the Age of Jihad*, 1992) – studies the evolution of identities among blacks in the North American colonies which became the United States, down to around 1830. According to a conventional view, African culture survived less successfully in the USA than in the Caribbean or Brazil, the difference being attributed partly to the fact that the slave population became self-reproducing earlier in the former than was generally the case in the latter, so that the proportion of African-born was radically lower (under 20 per cent by the end of the eighteenth century); and partly to the lower numbers of slaves relative to whites, and the generally smaller scale of units of production, which had the effect that African slaves were subject to more extensive and intensive contact with whites, and hence to greater pressures for acculturation.

Gomez's analysis serves to challenge this conventional perception, by establishing the persistence of African cultures and identities down into the nineteenth century. This was a matter of the survival, not of a generalized 'African' culture, but of a range of particularistic African identities, generally of an ethnic character – though Gomez also discusses at length the special case of African Muslims, who formed a larger element among slaves in North America than is commonly appreciated. African ethnicities were distinguished most obviously by language, but also by ethnically specific facial scarifications (the 'country marks' of the title). In line with other recent work, Gomez stresses the tendency for slaves to be bunched in ethnic concentrations, with slaves from the Bight of Biafra (mainly Igbo) predominant in Virginia and Maryland, and those from West Central Africa (mainly Congo) in South Carolina and Georgia – though with slaves from the Gold Coast (mainly Akan) and Senegambia (mainly Mandingo and Bambara) forming a strong secondary presence in both regions. Louisiana under French rule offers a divergent pattern, with early imports being mainly Bambara from Senegambia, with a strong secondary input from the Bight of Benin (mainly Ewe-Fon).

Gomez's central theme is the replacement of these particularistic ethnic identities by a broader racial consciousness embracing all persons of African origin or descent. This process began even before the Middle Passage, with the common experience of enslavement and displacement in Africa itself; but the main stress is upon how long African ethnicities persisted in America, even after the African-born had become a minority of the slave population. Gomez cites the conspiracy of Denmark Vesey in South Carolina in 1822 in illustration of this point; although Vesey appealed explicitly to the racial solidarity of all Africans and their descendants as the basis for challenging slavery, his followers were nevertheless organized into ethnic regiments, his two principal lieutenants leading followers distinguished as Igbo and 'Gullah' (which may refer either to Angola, or to the Gola of modern Liberia).

Although the case for the longevity of African linguistic and cultural traditions in North America is persuasive, the character and evolution of ethnic identities there remains shadowy. The content of the hypothesized ethnically specific regional cultures seems for the most part imputed, on the basis of the slaves' known African origins, rather than directly documented in the historical record. This, of course, reflects largely the limitations of the evidence; in particular, much use is made of runaway slave advertisements, which regularly employ ethnic labels, but offer no clues as to what these might have meant to those designated by them. The concentration of the argument on the shift from ethnicity to race also tends to distract attention from the parallel or antecedent process of the transformation of ethnic identities, although the problem is acknowledged in passing. The book is nevertheless welcome as a substantial attempt to bridge the persisting disjunction between the history of Africa and of its trans-Atlantic diaspora.

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ROBIN LAW

### SUDANESE SOLDIERS IN MEXICO

*A Black Corps d'Élite: An Egyptian Sudanese Conscript Battalion with the French Army in Mexico, 1863–1867, and its Survivors in Subsequent African History.* By RICHARD HILL and PETER HOGG. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1995. Pp. xxii + 214. No price given. (ISBN 0-87013-339-X).

This book is the late Richard Hill's last instalment in his long life's work of research into Sudanese history. The episode it documents, a battalion of Sudanese soldiers lent to the French in support of their imperial designs in Mexico in the 1860s, is typical of his interests in the unusual as well as the ordinary: here the lives of ordinary soldiers on an extraordinary expedition. It is illustrative of Hill's meticulous care in research, drawing on Egyptian, French, Austrian, Mexican, British, American and even Italian and Danish sources – in all the requisite languages, including Turkish.

The subject of the book is in many ways a convenient focus for a short history of the Egyptian *nizam al-jadid*, the European-modelled army instituted by Muhammad Ali in the 1820s, which became the means of Egypt's imperial conquests in Africa, and subsequently one of the chief mechanisms of the European colonial conquest and partition of north-east and east Africa. The outline of the origin and development of that army is given here, up to the mid-nineteenth century when a battalion of some 500 men, conscripted in a variety of ways from peoples throughout Egypt's African empire, was lent to Napoleon III and the French army as troops most likely to be inured to the tropical hardships of Mexico. Their numbers were too small to make much of an impact on the course of that campaign, and in fact they spent much of their service guarding the lines of communication from the coast. They returned to Egypt after some five years' abroad, much decorated by the French. The officers and many of the soldiers received immediate promotions and were redistributed throughout the Egyptian army, bringing with them direct experience in modern warfare in one of the most powerful contemporary European armies.

It is here that the book is at its most interesting, though most tantalizing and, to a certain extent, frustrating. Hill and Hogg reproduce the full roll of all soldiers who served in Mexico with as much as is known about individuals and their subsequent careers. Many became prominent in the subsequent history of Egypt's Equatorian and Abyssinian exploits, as well as in the wars of the Mahdiyya,

whether defending Khartoum under Gordon, or serving as intermediaries at Fashoda under Kitchener. Others are more obscure, their origins only hinted at in the garbled transliteration of their names. Here the authors rest content to give us the raw information and offer very little sociological analysis.

The authors allege that there have been 'centuries of confusion' over the application of the term 'slave' to 'life-long military conscription'. They pay tribute to Daniel Pipes and his *Slave Soldiers in Islam: the Genesis of a Military System* (Yale, 1981) for beginning to dispel this confusion. It is, therefore, unfortunate that in their own treatment of this modern variant of military slavery the authors display some confusion of their own. It is one thing to draw attention to the misconceptions that motivated US Secretary of State Seward, radical Republican and abolitionist that he was, in his protest to France and Egypt over the introduction of conscripted slave troops to Mexico. It is quite another to take Egyptian assertions of emancipation at face value. In all significant ways the Sudanese soldiers of the nineteenth-century Egyptian army shared characteristics with the classical Muslim military slave armies described by Pipes and Patricia Crone in *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge, 1980). The ambiguity of status never left these soldiers, and whether technically emancipated or not, they remained socially classed with the broad category of enslaved and enslavable peoples, a legacy of slavery still current in the modern Sudan.

In this respect the chapter on the mutiny of the relief battalion at Kassala in 1864 is rather evasive. There was more to that mutiny than the racial prejudice of Turkish officers and the 'highly-strung' nature of the Dinka soldiery. Sources in the Durham archives (founded by Richard Hill) suggest that the Turco-Egyptian authorities and the surrounding free Muslim peoples certainly regarded the Sudanese soldiers as slaves, and the suppression of the mutiny was accompanied by a reassertion of servile status for them *and* their families.

Were it not for Richard Hill many aspects of the nineteenth-century history of north east Africa would have remained completely ignored. Those of us who knew him are thankful for his long productive career, his respect for sources, and the clarity and incisiveness of his written language. It would be a great tribute to him if more scholars would take up in greater detail the research of the much neglected, and little appreciated, Egyptian episode in pre-Berlin African colonialism. As this book demonstrates, there are many surprises in store for them should they try.

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DOUGLAS H. JOHNSON

### SHIFTING MANDE IDENTITIES

*Family, Identity and the State in the Bamako Kafu, c. 1800-c. 1900.* By B. MARIE PERINBAM. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997. Pp. ix + 341. £44.50. (ISBN 0-8133-3080-7).

This ambitious and intriguing book, the last published by Marie Perinbam before her untimely death last year in Senegal, offers a kaleidoscopic history of the coming into being and subsequent recastings of the Bamako Kafu out of and through familiar yet shifting clan and lineage constructions. Perinbam argues that while the Mande state was indeed built upon family structures, rather than reiterating (as French colonial authors seem to have expected) the Roman *civitas in parvo*, the state 'in the Mande style' was minimalist, semi-autonomous and familial. The book explores the Bamako Kafu's transformations under changing political and economic regimes, tracing the corollary shifts and meanings of 'Bambara' within the fluid identity formations of the state and the families out of which it was



composed. Beginning with an exploration of variations and manipulations of the written and oral versions of the Legend of Wagadu in the invention of Mande identity, she argues that 'Mande myths and legends became the lenses through which families ultimately mediated their identities, configured their dominant norms, and negotiated their world views, including a historical consciousness' (p. 9). Thus, for example, the Niare family was to claim mythical and ancestral origins in Wagadu and take on a Bamana identity despite an ethnographic profile shifting from Soninke to Marka-Sarakolle and possibly Fulbe before becoming firmly Mande.

Mande identity could be authenticated through reference to a repertoire of common practices, from the *jo* power associations to *senankum* joking relationships. Shared tri-partite lineage formations undergirded political life, and were legitimated through universal ritual practices. Certain understandings, such as that commerce was associated with Islam, and that stable gender relations depended upon a salt-gold alchemy, were also shared. However, these universal elements of Mande identity were cross-cut by particularized practices presenting an increasingly regionalized set of stereotypes within the Mande construct. In particular Mande family identities were forged in cosmopolitan contexts such as Bamako, in which contrasts between the Islamized northern centres and their southerly hinterlands gradually crystalized into what Perinbam refers to as the 'northern paradigm': a misleading stereotype through which the south became associated with the animist 'Other', suitable for slave raiding and endowed with mythic gold wealth.

Perinbam argues that because of the French colonial state's reliance upon youthful literate northerners for administrative support, the northern paradigm was further taken up and elaborated, presenting the French with an 'authentic' moral justification in struggles to control women and youth and for the construction of administrative units. The poverty of the south relative to the north was at the same time reinscribed in the notion of the *dolo*-drinking pagan Bambara farmer.

The book's two greatest strengths lie first, in its rupturing of the notion of any fixed and monolithic Mande, Mandinka or Bambara identity and second, in its refusal to locate the origin of all identity shifts, constructions and transformations in either economic life narrowly understood or in the impositions of an orientalizing West. Indeed, Perinbam suggests that the French misunderstandings of the social world of the Bamako Kafu had their origins in particularized local understandings of Mande identity as Islamic which, refracted through the colonial situation, had unexpected consequences. Perinbam's treatment of the shifting meanings of the term 'Bambara,' at the core of the book, are extremely perceptive.

While the title suggests that the book will focus on the nineteenth century, in fact it ranges much more broadly in time, from the earliest Mande migrations to the late colonial period. The effect of such a sweeping account of family and state identity is rather like watching time lapse photography of a plant growing from seed to full flower. There is, of necessity, an odd tension between the effort to see identity as shifting and governed at least in part by chance, and the desire to tell the tale of the Bamako Kafu in ways that shed light on contemporary identity constructions and economic inequalities – the teleological draw of the Kafu in full flower pulls against the aim of the book to see identity in all its historical contingency. This is perhaps less a critique of the book than an observation on the difficulty of historical reconstructions of identity.

The book is pitched at a level of detail and abstraction that will make, I fear, for difficult reading for the non-specialist on the region. While the author's interpretation of the history of the Bamako Kafu is rich and striking, the book might have benefited from a more prominent central 'character' (such as the Niare family) to help the reader follow the overarching narrative and from more cogent

summary statements at the close of each chapter. Nevertheless the study will undoubtedly provoke much discussion amongst Mande scholars and intrepid students of the relationship between the state, social forms and ethnic identity, a fitting legacy of the author's scholarship.

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BARBARA M. COOPER

### CHIEFS ON PARADE

*King Khama, Emperor Joe, and the Great White Queen: Victorian Britain through African Eyes.* By NEIL PARSONS. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. Pp. xviii + 322. £39.95 (ISBN 0-226-64744-7); £15.25, paperback (ISBN 0-226-64745-5).

This is a fascinating and attractively-produced book. It is the story of the extended visit to Britain of the chiefs of the three principal 'tribes' of the then Bechuanaland Protectorate, as they attempted to make that 'protection' meaningful. Khama, Bathoen and Sebele came (successfully) seeking an audience with the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, and with Queen Victoria. They were accompanied – and their tour was stage-managed – by ministers of the London Missionary Society, helping to make the tour a success in gaining national publicity and support for the chiefs' cause. It was a happy coincidence that 1895 was the Society's centenary year).

The chiefs' objective was to prevent the transfer of sovereignty over their lands from the British crown to Rhodes' British South Africa Company. It was a daunting task, as they faced Rhodes at the apex of his financial, political and military power. Initially, they concealed their hostility to Rhodes' wider ambitions, confining their opposition to the import of liquor into their lands – a stance warmly applauded in the bastions of temperance Britain. Making extensive use of the railway network, the chiefs addressed political and religious meetings, attended dinners and functions, and toured factories and farms all over the country. It was an incredible odyssey, and the level of attention and publicity they received was equally notable.

How important the visit was in actually foiling Rhodes has been disputed, but Parsons is surely right in concluding that, Jameson fiasco or no, the chiefs would have been worse off if they had not made the trip. The visit also assumed importance as a national founding myth, successfully manipulated by future generations of Batswana to ward off the threat of absorption into South Africa. How could the British parliament and people renege upon promises made by the Great Queen herself? It also continued the precedent set by John Mackenzie of mobilizing metropolitan humanitarian, political, and religious constituencies in support of local causes, later utilized by the Khamas. The episode demonstrates 'just how difficult it was to achieve the diplomatic alternative to armed resistance against colonialization – to preserve a measure of autonomy rather than inviting conquest and dispossession' (p. xiv).

It is a well told, well written tale. Parsons' attention to detail is stimulating, and one feels the bustle of late Victorian Britain come to life through the use of contemporary press reports and the diary style adopted. The reader follows the itinerant chiefs around the country, visiting the sights, and witnessing the innumerable meetings and dinners attended by luminaries of provincial and national life. The archive of press cuttings that forms the bulk of the material consists of news items taken from 135 newspapers and periodicals. Before charting the chiefs' stately progress, the first chapter provides a *fin de siècle* overview of late nineteenth-century Britain – an ambitious task, but one necessary for the book to

appeal to readers beyond the circle of Botswana and Africa specialists. It is a fleeting, and sometimes flimsy, overview of British politics, society, culture, economy, industry and class as of 1895.

Parsons skilfully links local affairs with wider imperial and metropolitan trends and events – a ‘dual’ history that would be an excellent starting point for students new to African studies. The subtitle is something of a forgivable misnomer. The book presents, in fact, Victorian Britain through the eyes of the Victorian press, and also a portrait of the three African chiefs through the eyes of that proliferous press. There are few insights into what the chiefs themselves made of the carnival, and most of these come courtesy of the contemporary press reports that form the lion’s share of the source material. The image conveyed is of a moralistic, self-confident, civic, benign, zealous, and often hypocritical society, a middle-class Britain with a vacillating conscience on imperial affairs. The fact that the trip was made at all, and that it met with success on a variety of levels, is more notable than the patronizing tone that inevitably informed some (but by no means all) of the press comment. The chiefs gained the public ear and a good deal of support, and actually made a difference to the fate of their country, situated in a volatile region where the imperial factor met with the hostility of settler sub-imperialism and capitalist expansion. This is a fitting testament to their achievements.

*Mansfield College, Oxford*

ASHLEY JACKSON

### LIFE ON AN AFRICAN FRONTIER

*Imperial Boundary Making: The Diary of Captain Kelly and the Sudan–Uganda Boundary Commission of 1913.* Edited by G. H. BLAKE. Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1997. Pp. xxxii + 109. (ISBN 0-19-726154-X).

This is the fourth and final book in the British Academy’s Oriental and African Archive series, which has published manuscript-length documents from the University of Durham’s Sudan Archive. The first three volumes in the series have illuminated aspects of the internal workings of the British administration of the Sudan in the twentieth century. This book, the diary of a Royal Engineer’s demarcation of the Sudan–Uganda boundary, takes us to an area and time remote in the colonial histories of both countries.

At the outset one is forced to say that this diary is an example of how sources ought *not* to be edited. The editor has chosen an arm’s-length approach to his job: the transcription of the manuscript was done by one person, the basic documentary research by another (both acknowledged), but the editor himself has no apparent personal experience of the region described and seems not to have sought the advice of a single person who has. Corruptions thus enter the text unchecked, and the highly idiosyncratic spelling of colloquial Arabic and local names (if accurately transcribed) goes unremarked upon. There is no reference to post-First World War published ethnography of the region and the most perfunctory of introductions and annotations are given, along with an unreliable glossary. What is worse, the diary itself is not compared with the extracted report – and map – which was published in the *Sudan Intelligence Reports* of 1913 (a copy of which in the PRO at Kew). This omission is the most surprising because the editor was unable to locate Kelly’s exact route on other maps. Since the editor’s main interest is in how international boundaries are demarcated, he was really obliged to do this basic research himself.

This is all very unfortunate because, apart from anything else, Kelly’s diary deserves better treatment. Kelly was an experienced surveyor and an acute

observer, as his earlier reports from south-western Ethiopia (another remote and contested area), also printed in *Sudan Intelligence Reports*, show. Despite these problems of editing, what does the manuscript itself tell us, as a source, of the pre-war history of the peoples of this area?

The Sudan–Uganda border area east of the Nile on the eve of the First World War may have been remote from centres of power, but it could scarcely be described as ‘untouched’. Throughout the diary there are constant references to those who preceded – and remained beyond the reach of – formal government: the expeditions of hunters and traders whose trails criss-crossed this region, linking it with the trading centres of East Africa and south-western Ethiopia. Their presence was felt not only in the evidence of their caravan tracks but in the languages used as a medium of communication: Swahili, ‘Nubi’ and ‘bastard Arabic’. Securing suitable interpreters was a constant problem throughout the expedition: quite literally as the interpreters were frequently handcuffed or (as in one photograph) tied with ropes around their necks to prevent them escaping. A relay of languages was needed as interpreters interrogated other interpreters: from Arabic to Acoli or Swahili to Karamojong and back again.

Kelly at first attempted to draw a distinction between the Sudan and Uganda’s methods of government. He thoroughly disapproved of Uganda’s administration by punitive patrol. Yet the distinction was more apparent than real. His own escort of Sudanese soldiers tended to shoot at distant groups of natives without provocation (‘the usual civilising Sudanese way’), and Kelly adopted his soldier’s habit of referring to the natives as *abid* (slaves). His disapproval of Ugandan methods turned to acceptance. He noted that the people on the Uganda side of the border had a better idea of ‘what is due by them to the Government’ than those on the Sudan side. He was impressed, in spite of himself, by the militarization of the Acoli: each hill chief seemed to have his own bugle and drum band to greet the expedition and speed it on their way.

The boundary commission attempted to delineate an international border that would coincide with tribal boundaries. In this they failed, owing to the fact that there were no discrete tribes. A useful comparison could have been made with similar experiences elsewhere in the Sudan: not only Major Gwynn’s better documented survey of the Sudan–Ethiopian border, but internal attempts to define tribal boundaries as well. The colonial enterprise of defining peoples by delineating their territory was not a preoccupation of international commissions only.

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DOUGLAS H. JOHNSON

### ‘A THOROUGHLY PUGNACIOUS SETTLER’

*Koloniale Konflikte im Alltag: Eine rechtshistorische Untersuchung der Auseinandersetzungen des Siedlers Heinrich Langkopp mit der Kolonialverwaltung in Deutsch-Ostafrika und dem Reichsentschädigungsamt.* By NORBERT AAS and HARALD SIPPPEL. Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies Series, 1997. Pp. 179. DM 29.90, paperback (ISBN 3-927510-50-5) (ISSN 0178-0034).

In 1928, Heinrich Langkopp, a thoroughly pugnacious former German settler from Tanganyika walked into a government building in Berlin and threatened to blow up himself and his hostages if he did not immediately receive reparations for all that he had lost in the First World War. In essence this act was typical of Langkopp. It was this belligerent attitude that characterised his life in Germany and Africa, and which comes across most clearly in the book, which, though it bears a title more befitting a social history, is in effect a discussion of colonial jurisprudence in the guise of a biography.

In 1898, at the age of 22, Langkopp emigrated to the South African Republic where, in referring to bounty collected in a commando raid against the Tswana, he discovered 'how one can do business in Africa' (p. 23). Following the Boer War, Langkopp returned to Germany whereafter he found employment in Tanganyika as a labour recruiter for the railway line which was to be built between Dar es Salaam and Ujiji. After dabbling in cattle trading, labour recruitment, butchering and business, Langkopp set about establishing himself as a settler farmer near Iringa in the Hehe highlands of South-western Tanganyika. To supplement his income Langkopp continued recruiting labour.

Langkopp's recruiting methods were unconventional to say the least. Claiming to be operating on behalf of, and with the mandate of, the colonial state, Langkopp engaged the services of sub-contractors. These men, believing that they had been employed by the colonial state, then travelled to local leaders in outlying areas to demand labour for the construction of government works. When Langkopp was confronted by the authorities about these practices, he denied all knowledge of the affair and allowed the arrested sub-contractors to be sentenced to three months in chains and 25 lashes. In later years Langkopp described the beauty of this scheme in his autobiography.

In Iringa, Langkopp's life appears to have revolved around physical violence, and access to and control of labour. Unfortunately this aspect of colonial life is not developed, even though, of the eight court cases in which he was involved at the time, six dealt specifically with the issue of labour, and four of the cases involved violence initiated by Langkopp. In 1912, Langkopp assaulted the highly respected Jamadar bin Mohamed, who was in his sixties at the time, and who in the past had been a local government official. Initially Langkopp was found guilty, though on appeal he was cleared of the charges by the court which stated, 'no White person need tolerate physical contact by a Native, and... is entitled to violent defence' (p. 49). After the First World War Langkopp was deported to Germany where he came into conflict with the Weimar Republic on account of the payment of war reparations.

Unfortunately, the book tells us little about African history, being instead the summary of a number of court cases that effectively document the life of an extremely aggressive man. A chance has been missed to use the cases to explore everyday life in the Hehe Highlands, and the reader is continually left wondering about the role and views of Langkopp's wife (who only met him two days before they were betrothed in an arranged marriage), of fellow settlers and of colonial officials, let alone, local overseers and the local populations. Reading the text one cannot help but feel that this material could have been developed to a far greater extent. Be that as it may, the book is sure to provide an introduction and ample source material for those seeking to develop and write a social, political or economic history of the Hehe Highlands between 1880 and 1920.

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JAN-BART GEWALD

## FAMINE IN THE CENTRAL SUDAN

*Babban Yunwa. Hunger und Gesellschaft in Nord-Nigeria und den Nachbarregionen in der frühen Kolonialzeit. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der späten vorkolonialen Verhältnisse und der Einwirkung der Kolonialmächte.* By HOLGER WEISS. (Bibliotheca Historica, 22). Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1997. Pp. 480. No price given, paperback (ISBN 951-710-056-6).

*Babban yunwa* means 'big hunger' in Hausa, the *lingua franca* of the Central Sudanic regions of northern Nigeria, southern Niger and northern Cameroon,

which are the focus of this study. The book concerns the first two decades of occupation by the three colonial powers Great Britain, France and Germany between c. 1900 and 1920. An earlier volume dealing with 'stress and crises in Hausaland' during the nineteenth century was published by Holger Weiss in 1995.

Various kinds of hunger crises caused by natural disasters such as drought, invasions of locusts, blight and other pests and epidemics can be categorized. Serious deficits in rainfall occur regularly in the Sahel and Sudan savanna regions resulting in a lack of food which the inhabitants are accustomed to cope with through multiple strategies. These include an increased utilization of wild plants, temporary emigration and a general reduction of food consumption. *Babban yunwa*, however, refers to a 'deadly famine' not only generating an atmosphere of suffering, but resulting in considerable numbers of victims. There were two major periods of this type in the early colonial history of the Central Sudan, the years 1904–5 and 1913–14, on which Weiss's study is particularly focused. The essential aims of his research can be summarized as follows: (1) to reconstruct the respective crises within the context of the general socio-economic situation of the Central Sudan; (2) to analyze to what extent the strategies of the local populations to cope with such catastrophes were affected by the far-reaching changes recently effected by the colonial regimes; and (3) to provide interpretive explanations concerning those strategies.

It is an obvious fact, both in these regions and elsewhere, that vulnerability during food shortages differs considerably according to the social strata of the population. Disasters mainly affect poor and underprivileged people, (former) slaves who are dismissed or no longer taken care of by their masters and sharecroppers and pastoralists with few livestock. Precise statistical and other data which refer specifically to the bulk of people who are the predominant victims of every hunger crisis are scarce in early colonial history. It is nevertheless astonishing how much information on this subject Weiss is able to derive from the British and German colonial archives, as well as from the published and unpublished literature. He did, not, however, collect oral testimonies from elders, which have been a major source of information for cultural anthropologists such as Gerd Spittler who have also worked on the topic of famine crises in Central Sudanic areas.

The famines of the early twentieth century were different from earlier catastrophes of this type in so far as they occurred in a period of dramatic socio-economic changes brought about by the European colonial powers. The abolition of slavery, which led to discontinuities or even sudden disruptions of agricultural production, extensive confiscations by the military, particularly the French *Territoire Militaire du Niger*, new types of taxation and the introduction of cash crops such as cotton and peanuts, partly at the expense of the subsistence agriculture, were all cumulative factors which seriously challenged the system of previously existing strategies for coping with such crises. Traditional forms of agriculture were in the process of being altered, but the new alternatives had not yet been fully established. Weiss harshly criticizes the inability, and sometimes the unwillingness, of the colonial authorities to deal with the respective problems of their African subjects in energetic and efficient ways. For example, spreading news about a famine-stricken protectorate in northern Nigeria was not in the interest of Governor Frederick Lugard, who therefore impeded its communication to the British press. Measures in support of the suffering people, who partly took refuge in towns such as Kano, Zungeru or Sokoto, are thought by the author to have been taken reluctantly and half-heartedly, and in 1914, the year of the most serious famine crisis, they were further minimized by the mobilization of food reserves for the European powers following the outbreak of the First World War.

The book is impressive in the wealth of data presented, both in the text and in

numerous statistics, diagrams, maps and photographic documents from the early colonial period, although a number of unnecessary repetitions reveal that there is sometimes a lack of discipline in the writing. *Babban Yunwa* complements and enlarges the studies carried out by Jan van Apeldoorn (1981) and Michael Watts (1983), to which Weiss refers in extensive methodological and theoretical considerations. Unfortunately, since the text is in German, it will be available only to a limited number of scholars interested in crises during the early colonial period in the Central Sudan

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ULRICH BRAUKÄMPER

## MARRIAGE AND POWER RELATIONS

*Marriage in Maradi: Gender and Culture in a Hausa Society in Niger, 1900–1989.*

By BARBARA M. COOPER. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, and Oxford: James Currey, 1997. Pp. xlix + 228. \$60 (ISBN 0-435-07414-8); \$23.95, paperback (ISBN 0-435-07413-X).

This is an excellent book – theoretically sophisticated, meticulously researched and elegantly written. In eight thematic chapters Cooper produces a history of twentieth-century marriage in an unusual Hausa area: a site of resistance to the Fulani jihad whose inhabitants included Muslims and non-Muslims, a French-controlled colonial community and, most recently, an enclave of an ethnic majority in a Zerma-dominated nation-state. Cooper's book is a micro-study based on eleven months of field research with 111 women in the Maradi area. Thanks to her judicious analysis of field data in the light of a broad sweep of empirical and theoretical literature, *Marriage in Maradi* contributes on a macro level to a greater understanding both of Hausa culture and of the history of women in Africa.

Though she had planned a broader history of gender in Maradi, Cooper found women most open to discussions of marriage, and wisely realized that the data they offered shed light on an astonishingly broad spectrum of issues: the abolition of slavery, the military nature of French administration in Niger, land tenure and social hierarchy, environmental questions, the rise of a merchant class with ties to northern Nigeria, and Islamic and western education.

The initial chapters deal with the impact of the colonial abolition of slavery, in which Maradi experienced a household-level shift from master-slave domination to one in which mothers-in-law and senior wives exploited the labor of junior wives. Colonial intervention institutionalized instability in marriage by legitimizing a multitude of mediational domains for the domestic disputes that characterize relations between husbands and wives, and between co-wives and female in-laws. Indeed, instability becomes a leitmotif of Cooper's analysis, as the book evokes the complex ways that women and men 'have played upon the flexibility of marriage in order to garner power and to counter change themselves' (p. xxv). Cooper carefully traces the processes through which *gandu*, collective farmland, and *gamana*, plots meant for dry-season subsistence farming, were transformed into respectively husbands' and wives' lands. She argues that taxation, transition to a cash economy and ideologies of female dependency resulted in the fragmentation of land holdings and increased competition for land among a growing population, thus placing women in an ambiguous position that threatened to deprive them of all access to land.

Chapters four through seven deal specifically with marriage as an institution, and add intriguing insights to earlier discussions of Hausa marriage: that a bride's dowry, the 'things' of the room, establishes her worth and standing in addition to

ensuring her long-term security; that marriage to soldiers has been an important instigator of wider vision for women, leading them to acquire urban property and understand accessible resources controlled by the state; that scholarly emphases only on dowry or bridewealth miss the point that gifts and counter-gifts among the parties in marital negotiation give gift exchange a discursive character. Two social contradictions in marriage are given extended consideration. The first is that between the ideologies of the merchant class who emulate the seclusion ideals of northern Nigeria and those of the educated élite who model their vision of women on the western nuclear household with salaried wives. A second contradiction is women's organic model of marriage, which sees matrimony as a social process allowing women to build and rework social contacts, versus men's contractual model, which views the institution as a legal tie that is relatively easily cut.

In the final chapter Cooper shows how women in Maradi, by associating in state-sanctioned groups characterized by marital status, have transcended the common conflation of women's participation in politics with questionable morals. By using metaphors of marriage in a 'politics of difference', women have carved out public space in which they are able to be politically active yet preserve their respectable status. Nevertheless, Cooper warns that this very success, by emphasizing what divides rather than unites women, threatens the possibility of the development of a sense of solidarity.

Despite its obvious strengths, *Marriage in Maradi* leaves one with questions. The focus on marriage elicited a rich social history, but what was lost in that concentration? Generational tensions and important differences between women's experience in urban and rural areas are, for example, indicated but not exhaustively discussed. Cooper chose not to interview large numbers of men for fear of losing the trust of her women informants. As a result, though, she suggests that both genders negotiate to their individual advantages, but that men's views of marriage come across at times as unitary and lacking in subtlety. These difficulties are relatively minor, however, in a densely-written book that unravels the complexities of women's experience while it simultaneously weaves greater understanding of twentieth-century Hausa marriage.

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EDNA G. BAY

## POLITICAL SATIRE IN THE PRESS

*Straatpraatjes: Language, Politics and Popular Culture in Cape Town, 1909–1922.*

Edited by MOHAMED ADHIKARI. Pretoria: JL van Schaik, and Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1996. Pp. xii + 193. R75, paperback (ISBN 0-627-02131-X).

As its sub-title suggests, *Straatpraatjes* will be of interest to historical linguists, sociolinguists, historians, media analysts and analysts of popular culture. The subject matter of the newspaper columns – the *Straatpraatjes* – concerns the formation of, and resistance to, the racially discriminatory policies which at the end of the colonial period laid the basis for later apartheid. The columnists' satirical representations of Cape-Town public figures and events will be appreciated by South African urban and social historians, and also by general readers who may have previously encountered them only in more conventional texts. Editorial policy and design features have shaped a text that will attract both an academic and a more general scholarly readership.

Forming the centre of the book is a selection of *Straatpraatjes*. There is good reason to believe that most of these columns were written by Dr. Abdullah Abdurahman, then president of the African Political Organization, under the pseudonym of Piet Uithalder. They appeared in the APO's fortnightly newspaper.



The Uithalder texts are presented in this book in column format, with useful notes on linguistic and historical details appearing on the right-hand half of the same page, an excellent design feature for a book of this type. The columnist's representations of people and events are complemented by a wealth of contemporary cartoons and photographs. Two appendices provide examples of contemporaneous columns from newspapers with a different political base.

Raj Mesthrie's foreword effectively places the volume in the context of current sociolinguistic interest in language contact in colonial and post-colonial societies, drawing attention to the literary value of the columns as examples of early satire. Most importantly, he focuses on the volume as evidence of the links between language and history that increasingly are crucial to the work of both linguists and historians.

In his opening chapter, Mohamed Adhikari identifies the APO's constituency – the coloured community – and gives an account of the organization's initial anti-segregationist agenda and subsequent development in response to political events. He also gives a finely tuned historical analysis of the tensions and contradictions within the APO, and shows how these are manifested in the persona and voice of Uithalder. This introduction is an invaluable preparation for reading the columns, especially for those who are unable to comprehend the vernacular of the columns themselves.

Two chapters focus primarily on Uithalder's vernacular. Their two authors, Fritz Ponelis and Roy Pheiffer, pass a wealth of knowledge about the development of Afrikaans and about various attitudes towards it, which they draw on to very good effect. Ponelis examines its socio-political significance both in the general context of the languages and dialects used in the Cape in the early twentieth century, and as an indicator of the contradictions within the APO. (Some of the organization's leaders actively discouraged members' use of the vernacular, promoting English in its place.) The main thrust of Pheiffer's article is to demonstrate that the non-standard features of the dialect used by Piet Uithalder are not peculiar to speakers from working-class, coloured communities, but also occur in varieties of Afrikaans spoken by whites in the Western Cape. He examines phonological, morphological and syntactic features, and comments also on the lexicon.

Piet Uithalder appears as a sharp, ironic analyst of discrepancies between the public and private faces of individuals, institutions and political parties. He casts his satirical eye not only upon political chicanery, but also upon the social pretensions evident in groups whose status was changing in the major restructuring that accompanied the declaration of Union. In the final chapter, Hein Willemsse argues that, in creating Uithalder, Abdurahman was not simply providing astute and accessible political critique in the columns: Uithalder was a challenge to key assumptions underpinning the social and political order of the time. Sober, intelligent and well-informed, he was the antithesis of the prevailing stereotypes of blacks as intrinsically inferior beings. Furthermore, his observations on the behaviour of particular whites and blacks challenged beliefs that South African whites were invariably more knowledgeable, honourable and sophisticated than their black compatriots.

The book will be most accessible to people who read both English and standard Afrikaans, and will especially delight those who are familiar with an Afrikaans vernacular spoken in Cape Town. The columns themselves are in an earlier form of this vernacular. The glossary notes are in English, as are the Foreword and the chapters by Adhikari and Ponelis. The chapters by Pheiffer and Willemsse are in Afrikaans, each prefaced by an abstract in English.

Adhikari has done valuable service to South African historical and linguistic research by rescuing these columns from relative obscurity and being responsible

for making their introduction to a wider readership so accessible and so rich. The contributors and publishers have together come up with an absorbing (and attractive) book.

*University of Cape Town*

KAY MCCORMICK

### LABOUR RELATIONS IN A SETTLER COLONIAL STATE

*Capital and Labour on the Rhodesian Railway System, 1888–1947.* By JON LUNN. Oxford: MacMillan, 1997. Pp. xi + 194; £37.50 (ISBN 0-333-65317-3).

The author divides this work into three sections: capital, white workers and African workers. The overall project asks whether it is possible to examine the relationships between capital, state and labour – and the intricate question of the nature of racism – in a settler colonial state. In the process of expanding on these themes, Lunn has articulated how railway development in the Rhodesias was characterized by the following: a pattern of uneven development; tough negotiations between the British South Africa Company (BSA Co.) and the colonial (later settler) state; and blatant opportunism on both sides over a crucial sixty-year period.

The first of the three sections, concerning the organization of the Rhodesian Railways under the BSA Co., is the strongest in the book. Lunn explains how the BSA Co. used its strengths as a monopoly firm to raise money in what were often tight capital markets in London, while also using the diversification of the BSA Co. to help itself in times when British capital was not forthcoming. This success also led to vulnerability, as the BSA Co. found itself at times greatly indebted to itself. The ability to weather hard times, however, was primarily achieved through the BSA Co.'s manipulation of the necessary conditions that would allow settlers to get their products to markets. It was in such periods of arm twisting over rates – and threats to build new lines to Angola to divert the Northern Rhodesian copper transit – that the BSA Co. and the Southern Rhodesian state grew increasingly at odds. In turn, the popular anti-monopoly sentiments of many settler farmers led the Rhodesian government of Godfrey Huggins toward an increasingly populist position, advocating a state railway monopoly. Lunn's explanation of the subsequent negotiations between the BSA Co., London, and the Rhodesian state is carefully argued and presented. Lunn shows how the Rhodesian state shifted its views on state intervention as electoral politics created greater pressures for action against the BSA Co. This process was complicated, however, by the decidedly anti-statist ideology brought from post-Second World War Britain by a new wave of settlers.

Lunn's section on white workers explores the trajectory of workers' attitudes towards their employers, the BSA Co., and the settler state, and the author makes a strong argument for the origins of white working-class racism in the labour process. In the early days of the Rhodesian railways this meant the use of African labourers organized into gangs and supervised, often quite ruthlessly, by a white 'ganger'. Stories and memories of these first white workers made their way into the mythology of the settler state. Endowing this oppressive system of management with the marks of civilization – in this case a functioning railroad system – helped to legitimate a brutal form of overseeing African workers that carried into other areas of colonial labour. Lunn also describes the opposition white trade union organizers faced in a country where trade union activists were easy to identify and deal with, either through transfers to remote areas of the railway network, or through the 'levelling' influences of settler society. In particular, the history of the

Labour Party created by Jack Keller and other experienced British railway trade unionists he presents helps to illustrate the similarities of interests and concerns between settler farmers and skilled white workers.

The third section, 'Black workers on the railways', astutely handles a number of complex issues concerning the difficulties of workplace organizing of African workers and particularly the divisions between what Lunn calls 'long-service' workers and the majority of migrant workers. Confronted with such a diverse labour force, it is all the more remarkable that African workers organized a series of successful strikes and work stoppages between 1919 and 1945. This section is written with the same concern for both larger questions and Lunn's desire to avoid over-generalizations. It is, however, the weakest of the three sections owing to the paucity of archive sources on African workers. In contrast to the preceding section on white workers, Lunn is less successful here at delimiting the interrelations between employers, state and African workers.

Lunn concludes with a question that should hopefully encourage researchers: Why is so little known about African railway workers' participation or lack of participation in the 1948 General Strike in Southern Rhodesia's major cities? Scholars working in the region should now build on Lunn's work and investigate more directly the contributions of African railway workers and their families to the strikes of the late 1940s and the political movements of the 1950s.

Lunn has done a great service in elucidating the complex interrelation of state, capital and labour within a readable and concise narrative. He presents a thoughtful and thorough discussion covering difficult historical terrain. Historians of the colonial period will be well-served to read Lunn's treatment of material that has not previously been tackled with such insight and clarity.

*University of Michigan*

TIMOTHY SCARNECCHIA

## JEWISH LIFE IN THE SUDAN

*Jacob's Children in the Land of the Mahdi: Jews of the Sudan.* By ELI S. MALKA. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997. Pp. xiii + 262. \$29.95 (ISBN 0-8156-8122-4).

This book is not a scholarly study of a diaspora community, nor is it a proper history of the Jewish community of the Sudan (promotional blurb to the contrary), nor is it even a memoir of Jewish life in the Arab world on a par with Andre Aciman's beautifully-written *Out of Egypt* (1994). What it is, however, is certain to charm and inform students of twentieth-century Sudan and the Jewish experience: one man's view of this short-lived and vibrant community, seen from within its centre of leadership and dutifully recording the features and customs of a now-vanished world.

The author of *Jacob's Children* was born in 1909 in Omdurman, the eldest son of Rabbi Solomon Malka (1878–1949), who from 1906 until his death served as the chief rabbi of the Sudan. Raised in Omdurman and Khartoum, Eli Malka was educated at local Church Missionary Society and Catholic Mission schools before being sent to a CMS boarding school in Cairo (the officials at Gordon College in Khartoum considered him too young at twelve to be admitted to their secondary school). Graduating at sixteen, he continued his studies in Khartoum and at Wolsey Hall, Oxford before beginning a long career with the leading British trading company in Sudan, Gellatly Hankey, where he rose to become chief executive of Gellatly Trading Co. and a chief officer of the parent corporation. His professional responsibilities notwithstanding (these included frequent trips to all regions of Sudan as well as neighboring countries), Malka was also heavily

involved in the affairs of the Khartoum Jewish community, serving at one time as its president. A family medical emergency as well as worsening conditions for Jews in Sudan led to Malka's resettlement in Europe in 1964. By 1967 the family had relocated to the United States, where, since 1981, Malka has been a permanent resident.

The book is divided into two parts: 'The Sudan Jewish community', comprising 23 brief chapters that tell the story of Malka's life alongside the history of Sudan's Jews, and 'Eighty-seven Years from Omdurman to New York,' which is more explicitly autobiographical and adds some detail on matters of trade and commerce. A final chapter, 'The Malkas,' provides a brief summary of that family's history from ancient times through the Spanish expulsion of 1492 to the present.

The author is at his best when relating the events of his own interesting life; in matters of interpretation he is out of his depth, but then the book must be read as a memoir and not, as stated above, as a history of Sudan's Jews. Thus we learn much about the early Jewish inhabitants, based in part on oral accounts and written records that Malka obtained from his father. Names of early Jewish families, their settlement patterns, business activities, and social relations are all described, as are aspects of their Sephardic Jewish custom and ritual. Naturally the greatest attention is given to the rise of the Khartoum Jewish community in the 1920s and its heyday of social and economic activity through the 1940s. Amidst the broader narrative of that community's development and governance we are afforded tantalizing glimpses into Jewish relations with other minority communities (Greeks and Armenians) as well as with the Jews of Aden, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Egypt. Rather less information is provided on relations with the British administration or the Sudanese, other than assurances of 'unhindered progress...and peaceful existence' (p. 112). Thus the reader – and the author too apparently – is at a loss to understand why Jewish–Sudanese relations disintegrated so rapidly after Israeli statehood and Sudanese independence.

Similarly, Malka insists upon the complete internal harmony of the Jewish community and the centrality of its Jewish identity, though many of his accounts suggest a far more complex situation. On issues of identity and social relations in general, the book is a mine of valuable (and undeveloped) material. Readers might note and ponder Malka's birth certificate, listing his nationality as 'Israeli' (i.e. *Isra'ili*) and his religion as 'Mousawi'; the roles of various Sudanese associates and Christian institutions; the presence of secular Jews of European origin, including one Jimmy Kane, founder of the Gordon Music Hall ('the only cabaret and night club in Khartoum'), who later converted to Anglicanism; as well as the multi-cultural, polyglot assembly that was Malka's own family.

The service the author has performed for scholars of Sudan cannot be minimized, considering there exists no other published account of Jewish life there. His material on the earliest Jewish settlers is unique and particularly valuable, as are the three documents appended to the end of the book. Unfortunately the work suffers throughout from poor editing: inaccuracies, redundancies, and garbled syntax all abound, as do typographical errors. Scholars of Sudan will forgive the book its faults, and appreciate it for what it is.

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ROBERT S. KRAMER

## THE PARTY-POLITICAL CALIPHATE

*An Aristocracy in Political Crisis: The End of Indirect Rule and the Emergence of Party Politics in the Emirates of Northern Nigeria.* By ALHAJI MAHMOOD YAKUBU. Aldershot: Avebury, 1996. Pp. xi + 281. £41.50 (ISBN 1-85972-097-8).

There was a point early in the 1990s when the Sokoto caliphate finally expired. The political system that was organized some one hundred and eighty years ago by Muhammad Bello and ‘Abdullahi for their Shaikh, ‘Uthman dan Fodio, ran out of legitimacy. The *jama‘a* ceased to have even the symbolic unity that is so dramatically enshrined in the communal act of prayer: no longer did it matter if the Sultan of Sokoto or the Emir of Kano had set the day for the *Salla* prayers – individual families, if they wished, prayed on the day their particular religious group had selected for itself. Furthermore, in late 1988 the military government had appointed a very wealthy businessman and close affine of the president to be the new sultan on the death of Abubakar III. The appointee was not accepted as the legitimate heir by the Sokoto townspeople, who rioted as never before and who, once the riots had ceased, shifted to a sustained campaign of mockery and insult that no one had imagined possible. Not just Muslims in Sokoto but Muslims with at best only a sentimental interest in Sokoto were shocked, and recognized the crisis for what it was: the end of an era, if not of the world. It is an end, however, the magnitude of which intellectuals focusing mainly on southern Nigeria – visitors, emigrés and locals alike – have tended to ignore.

Alhaji Mahmood Yakubu has written a detailed, illuminating account of the crisis that in the 1950s was already set to transform the caliphate and its ‘aristocracy’. This was the crisis that both questioned the emirs’ authority and sought to control that questioning: it was a defining moment which determined what ‘northern’ values and identity might come to mean. Based on the excellent doctoral thesis that Alhaji Mahmood Yakubu wrote in Oxford under A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, the study shows how the young men that formed the Northern People’s Congress managed to create their own kind of ‘indirect rule’ that kept the emirs both in their place and on the party’s side. They converted the existing ‘colonial caliphate’ into a new-style ‘party-political caliphate’ under the Sardauna of Sokoto while the colonial British were still in place (if not in power to quite the extent they might have wished). This meant that the transformation at times resembled what had happened in the first decade of colonial rule, most notably, in the dismissal of any emir who was not as ‘progressive’ as was thought appropriate. Among the most senior of the emirs who had to go this time was the Emir of Bauchi, Yakubu III, who retired in 1954.

The author himself grew up in Bauchi and so has a keen eye for this and for the ideals that prompted his fellow Bauchi man, the reluctant Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, to enter big-time politics and become the federation’s first prime minister in Lagos. It was a civil war in Bauchi that had caused Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa’s father and mother to be made slaves in the households of the winning side; it was the civil war in Kano with its appalling slaughter of fellow Muslims that had caused Allah, so people said, to permit the Christian conquest. So too in the politics of the 1950s, with independence near and the southern Christian parties poised to take power federally, it was imperative that there should not be ‘civil war’ again between Muslim factions. The crisis was therefore resolved and unity was restored, but not without serious in-fighting, the *realpolitik* that Alhaji Mahmood Yakubu so ably analyses.

In his last chapter, Alhaji Mahmood Yakubu describes the way the military after the coups of 1966 set about, with the support of their ‘radical’ civil servants, dismantling the emirate system. The military did not feel they needed the emirs

and the apparatus that kept the peace. Their own forces were by definition sufficient to intimidate any group that might threaten them. After some 60 years of peace (during which time the populace had been kept strictly disarmed and closely watched), the military were right: there was no possibility of sustained rebellion in 'the North'. Despite the rhetoric, the reforms were not to ease the villager's life, but to break down a system that was attacked as 'feudal'. The young men of the 1970s carried on where the youth of the 1950s had left off, whittling away at the traditional powers of their elders. The oil boom that brought unexpected prosperity to the towns facilitated change in a way reminiscent of the boom years of the 1950s; even in a countryside hit by prolonged droughts and famine, the oil boom meant that the officials who normally preyed like vultures on the peasantry stayed on their town perches and fed on contracts instead.

This study is explicitly about the 'aristocracy'; it is neither about the peasantry and their political preferences, nor about the native authorities who provided the aristocrats with their clout. Although there is oral material here, the words are those of the great (if not always of the good): valuable to have but not always surprising – their scripts have been too well rehearsed. What we need to do now is to go backstage. It is already too late to get backstage and hear people gossip about the first of these caliphal crises – the one that terminated in the British–Christian conquest and the setting up of a 'colonial caliphate' in 1903. With the recent past looking to many Nigerians like a golden age, access to the unsentimental realities of the everyday politics that underpinned the Sokoto caliphate's long life is more important than ever.

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MURRAY LAST

## MUSLIM POLITICS

*Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria.* By ROMAN LOIMEIER. (Series in Islam and Society in Africa). Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997. Pp. xxiii + 415. \$69.95 (ISBN 0-8101-1346-5).

This volume is a historical study of the period from the 1930s to the early 1990s, covering the areas of majority Muslim population in the former northern region of Nigeria. It contributes to our understanding of religion and politics in northern Nigeria by critically engaging key issues from the existing literature and by updating our knowledge of more recent events.

Loimeier claims that British indirect rule (1903–1960) did not question the existing social system in the North but modernized it along existing lines, resulting in political and economic disparities between north and south, which, however, created no problems for Muslims in the north as long as they had control over the most populous part of the country. In the 1950s and 1960s, Ahmadu Bello dominated the politics of decolonization and early independence, consolidating his control by utilizing the Islamic legacy of the nineteenth-century Sokoto Islamic empire, creating a personally loyal corps of bureaucrats and promoting northern political consciousness in the name of the community of the north. Loimeier contends that Bello's assassination in the military coup of 1966, the ensuing civil war and replacement of the regional structure with twelve federal states in 1967, destroyed the political foundations of northern dominance. He claims that from the 1970s, northern Muslims felt increasingly pushed into a politically problematic position as far as their chances to keep their share of power in the federation was concerned (p. 8). As a result, northern Muslim politicians, intellectuals and religious leaders stressed the necessity of Muslim political and religious unity for retaining dominance over Nigerian politics (p. 9). Loimeier thus sets up the

background for analyzing the religious conflicts in Nigeria during the 1970s and 1980s.

Loimeier also addresses the question of Islamic reform (*tajdid*) as the other dominant issue in the history of northern Nigeria. In tracing the history of the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya from the nineteenth century, Loimeier revisits old issues, including the controversy of conversion to the Tijaniyya, its popularization at the expense of the Qadiriyya during the first half of the twentieth century, and, since the 1970s, the emergence of a Wahhabi type of anti-Sufism championed by the Yan Izala movement. He criticizes John Paden's terminology of reformist, traditional and modernist orientations within the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya, asserting that the disputes described by Paden are not a manifestation of a single conflict between two great Sufi brotherhoods but rather a multitude of controversies, quarrels, and jealousies among a whole series of networks (p. 16). Loimeier insightfully argues that we should see the Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya and Yan Izala as networks coexisting around a number of spiritually, politically and economically influential religious scholars, all of whom were competing with each other for influence, followers, supporters and economic resources.

Thus, Loimeier brings up to date the fascinating story of shifting relationships among the leading religious scholars and their networks which are comprised of ordinary mass followers, wealthy merchants, influential bureaucrats and high-powered politicians. He also critically examines the polemics among the religious leaders through a learned comparative analysis of three treatises authored respectively by members of the Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya and Yan Izala. He reveals in his textual analysis how different situations dictated the choice by these authors of discursive strategies for constructing religious and political authority in their texts. Given the focus on political change, however, Loimeier could discuss only a small sample of the vast polemical literature that he rightly identifies as the discursive area of competition among the religious networks.

The reader should overlook minor errors of incorrect transliteration and mistranslation, which do not detract from the valuable contribution of this richly documented volume.

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MUHAMMAD S. UMAR

## RETHINKING MALAGASY NATIONALISM

*Padesm et luttes politiques à Madagascar, de la fin de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale à la naissance du PSD.* Par JEAN-ROLAND RANDRIAMARO. Paris: Editions Karthala, 1997. FF180, paperback (ISBN 2-86537-783-0).

The Malagasy insurrection of 1947 figures in nationalist historiography as a heroic failure, a tragic attempt to secure independence which was brutally crushed by a French colonial government still intent on restoring the French empire. The main Malagasy political party of the time, the *Mouvement démocratique de la rénovation malgache* (MDRM), with a pedigree stretching back to the island's earliest nationalist movements, was destroyed during the repression of the rising. The tradition of militant nationalism in Madagascar lost the initiative to two parties enjoying the favour of the French administration, first Padesm (*Parti des déshérités de Madagascar*), and then its successor, the *Parti social-démocrate* (PSD), the latter forming the first government at independence in 1960.

A reading of African nationalism of the sort fashionable among English-speaking historians in the 1960s and 1970s would thus tend to consider the MDRM as the party of authentic nationalists and Padesm as a party of reaction. This impressive book rescues the Padesm from such historical opprobrium. Far from being no

more than an artificial creation of the colonial administration, Padesm is revealed to have been the vehicle for the many Malagasy who feared the advent of an independent Madagascar dominated by those interests and those families – mostly from the Merina people of the central highlands – which dominated the MDRM, many of them lineal descendants of the ruling class of pre-colonial Imerina. Prominent among the adherents of Padesm were provincial lineages whose forefathers had suffered from Merina slave-raiding in the nineteenth century, and descendants of Merina slaves or low-status castes who had good reason to prefer administration by France to an independence dominated by families they regarded with suspicion. Before the 1947 insurrection had sanctified the MDRM with the blood of martyrdom, many left-leaning French observers were inclined to regard Padesm as the more progressive of the two parties, since it represented a lower social class than the aristocratic leaders of the MDRM. In recreating this context, Jean-Roland Randriamaro goes beyond the myths of collaboration and resistance to colonial rule and lays bare the real political struggles which took place in the shadow of decolonisation.

As Françoise Raison-Jourde points out in an interesting preface, struggles similar to this one took place throughout Africa during the 1950s, as various African political parties manoeuvred to become the incumbents at the moment of independence, frequently pitting parties which represented the interests of provincial notables, arguing in favour of federalism, against those championing the cause of a unitary national movement. In this regard she mentions examples from Ghana, Burundi and Cameroon, but she could equally well have added similar cases from almost any country south of the Sahara. The shortcomings of radical nationalist movements with strong centralising tendencies, so evident today, provide historians with every incentive to re-examine the history of African nationalism, no longer primarily in terms of those who were for or against independence, but in terms of the local political interests involved in such struggles. Professor Raison-Jourde's mention of Burundi, where the *Manifeste des Bahutu* argued that the mass of the population was ill-prepared for an independence dominated by what it called a 'Tutsi colonialism', is, in the light of recent history, an apt illustration of just how important are these movements which had every reason to fear the fate of large sections of various African populations in face of a winner-takes-all system.

Armed with Dr Randriamaro's lucid and intelligent study, we are better able to read the recent political history of Madagascar as a struggle between rival groups who have contested not so much Madagascar's place in the world, as the internal distribution of power within the island. As parties and constitutions have come and gone, many of these interests have shown a remarkable continuity, demonstrated not least by the number of leading personalities of Padesm who later became prominent in the PSD, and some of whose children returned to power in the pro-democracy movement of the 1990s. This is an interesting model for the further exploration of modern African nationalism, now so far departed from the goals it set itself in the first flush of independence, or which were set for it by historians perhaps too confident in their identification of what exactly was at stake in the transfer of power, and of the true identities of progressives and reactionaries.

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STEPHEN ELLIS



## RETHINKING COLONIAL HISTORY IN CAMEROON

*La naissance du maquis dans le Sud-Cameroun (1920–1960) : Histoire des usages de la raison en colonie.* Par ACHILLE MBEMBE. Paris: Karthala, 1996. Pp. 438. FF 180, paperback (ISBN 2-86537-600-1).

The process of decolonization has been a decisive period in the history of Cameroon and in many ways has deeply marked the country's development since then. Unlike most other French territories in Africa, decolonization in Cameroon was extremely violent and was followed by one of the most repressive post-colonial African regimes. Under the dictatorship of Cameroon's first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo, military and police forces as well as the secret service were omnipresent, any form of political opposition was brutally repressed, and any form of expression censored. Under Ahidjo's successor, Paul Biya, in power since 1982, Cameroon has remained an authoritarian state which with considerable success has withstood the democratic winds of change of the early 1990s.

Until the mid-1980s at least, the period of decolonization had to be more or less omitted in public debates. Thus until then, in Cameroon itself – and even outside Cameroon, apart notably from Richard Joseph's excellent study, *Radical Nationalism in Cameroon* (Oxford, 1977) – there was little historical research on this era and even less on the important 'radical nationalism' represented by the *Union des populations du Cameroun* (UPC). Especially under Ahidjo, writing on this topic was considered an act of opposition and thus banned. The regime argued that the period in question was 'too close' to the present and still laden with fierce emotions and subjectivity.

Achille Mbembe was confronted with this censorship at an early stage of his career. In 1980 he submitted to the University of Yaoundé an MA thesis on 'Violence among the Bassa in South Cameroon' in which he examined in detail the anti-colonial insurrections in this area during the 1950s. He dedicated his work to Ruben Um Nyobé, charismatic leader of the UPC, who was killed in 1958 and whose important rôle during decolonization was eventually denied by the Ahidjo regime. Within the university, the thesis provoked much astonishment and disapproval, and it was never examined, although Mbembe eventually got his diploma. He left Cameroon soon after that and – after many years at French and American universities – is now director of Codesria in Dakar.

In his publications, Mbembe repeatedly places anti-colonial memories in Cameroon on the agenda. He not only edited the scattered writings and speeches of Nyobé but also analyzed in a number of articles how the nationalist past denied by the Cameroon government was remembered and constructed by people in the villages of South Cameroon. The book under review again takes up these topics and develops them further. It is based on Mbembe's doctoral thesis submitted in Paris in 1989. The title (as well as the sub-title) are somewhat misleading. *La naissance du maquis* is mainly an (often extremely subtle) analysis of what Mbembe calls 'the colonial relationship' in French Cameroon, a relationship which is, of course, far more complex than the classic dichotomy 'European domination vs. African obedience or resistance' suggests. The dozen chapters revolve around themes such as 'Of cults and language', 'Of taxes and charges' and 'Of grammars of resistance'. Behind these and other somewhat opaque headings is hidden an ambitious effort better to understand the colonial experience based on the example of South-Central Cameroon. The book effectively emphasizes the twists and turns in the lives of the colonized, their misfortunes, the culs-de-sac where many of their initiatives ended, but also the intelligence which characterized their work, their lives and their language. Mbembe especially focuses on the local 'work of imagination' at different levels: material life, the production of religious

and linguistic signs, of text and discourses. The book ends with a dense chapter on the assassination of Ruben Um Nyobé, an extremely important event both for the political development of Cameroon and – until today – for the colonial memories of the local population in many parts of the country.

This is not an easy read for people without solid knowledge of the history of late colonial Cameroon. Moreover, Mbembe's tendency to language acrobatics sometimes produces strange effects; and from time to time one gets the impression that there is no or little substance behind the powerful eloquence. However, the book, which is based on an impressive number of archival sources and on the spot interviews, is without any doubt a major effort in rethinking and rewriting colonial African history.

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ANDREAS ECKERT

### APARTHEID, THE LAW AND URBAN SPACE

*L'aménagement urbain en Afrique du Sud entre apartheid et pauvreté (1948–95)*. Par JEAN-BAPTISTE ONANA. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996. Pp. 352. FF 195, paperback (ISBN 2-7384-4145-9).

For Jean-Baptiste Onana, 'juriste et urbaniste', the key to understanding the realities of the apartheid system lies in the contradiction between the economic needs of the system which inevitably absorbed indigenous black labour on a massive scale and the ideological imperative of creating whites-only space. This is a fundamental and powerful way of assessing many of the phenomena of apartheid, particularly its impact on law and space, which Onana's background, in this adaptation of his doctoral thesis for the University of Paris XII, equips him to pursue effectively. While it is possible to note occasional errors of fact, which nevertheless do not lead one to stray from his line of argument, in general this book shows an excellent knowledge of the workings of the South African system at the end of the apartheid era from a devastatingly critical and acute perspective. While English language specialists will find much of the material very familiar, the particular virtue of Onana's book lies as an introduction to South African conditions for the French language reader. So much of what is available in French has focused on ethnicity, identity and ideology that this book, which puts its emphasis rather on the material realities of the system, is a welcome and important alternative source.

There are perhaps a few critical comments on this study which should be made. First, it is largely based on a close reading of some of the best compendia of social and legal information available in the early 1990s. Onana does not, however, really confront the debates amongst specialists on the phasing of apartheid, the work of the social historians on its human ramifications and the so-called race-class debate, which must limit its appeal to South African readers who have enough French to approach his study. It is also surprising that Onana does not attempt to compare South African conditions more with those prevailing in other colonies, especially settler colonies, in Africa and elsewhere.

Second, Onana focuses very much on the role of the state and normative governmental activity. He refers rather rarely to the pressure of popular forces or, for instance, to the insurgent trade union movement. This can lead one to forget that the possibilities of change – both under the old regime and now – are constrained by the real cut and thrust of politics, rather than simply the choice of policies.

Third, this is very much a study of the distinctive transitional period before the change of government in 1994 (with short case studies of Duncan Village near East

London, Alexandra near Johannesburg and Khayelitsha near Cape Town). Onana is acutely sensitive to the contradictory nature of the state's late reform drive and its limits with regard to the broader inequities of the system. While this gives the book a particular historic value, nonetheless the urban planning scene has moved on and readers who want to get a grip on the early years of post-apartheid governance may be disappointed.

Fourth, while Onana perhaps effectively discusses the Bantustans in the context of politics and space, he understands their internal workings less well than the urban scene to which he gives most of his attention. Movement between the urban and rural spheres can be disconcerting in this text.

It is salutary to have Onana's perspective of an *urbaniste* for whom the integrated, balanced urban life is an unquestioned ideal. He holds out not only for an alleviation of poverty and poor social and capital infrastructure in the townships but for what the French like to call the *désenclavement* of peripheral slum areas. He shares the abhorrence of racial segregation in practice, let alone in law, an abhorrence which is virtually second nature in most French literature orientated to city planning. For Onana, access to the once privileged white city for the black bourgeoisie ('economic segregation rather than racial segregation', p. 197) is hardly a sufficient answer. This seems at times very idealistic in the light of contemporary international literature observing the forces pulling apart cities today. One can measure with a critical eye the gap between what this book's perspective presents and the fairly limited nature of urban change, subject to the powerful weight of business interests, in the first years after the end of racial rule in South Africa.

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BILL FREUND

### SAMPLING THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

*Imperial Policy and Colonial Practice, 1925-1945*. Edited by A. R. ASHTON and S. E. STOCKWELL. (British Documents on the End of Empire. Series A, Vol. 1.) London: HMSO for the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in the University of London, 1996. Part 1: *Metropolitan Reorganisation, Defence and International Relations, Political Change and Constitutional Reform*. Pp. cviii + 403. £70 (ISBN 0-11-290544-7). Part 2: *Economic Policy, Social Policies and Colonial Research*. Pp. xxi + 403. £70 (ISBN 0-11-290551-X).

This collection of documents firmly restates the now fashionable view that the origins of decolonisation are to be found in the inter-war years. From the vast welter of documents available from this period, general materials, mainly position papers, have been selected by the editors to illustrate metropolitan reorganization in the Colonial and Dominions Offices and such themes as defence and international relations, political change and constitutional reforms, economic policy, social policies and colonial research. Inevitably, we are offered a tiny showcase of what is available in the great warehouse of the Public Record Office. Other editors would no doubt have selected differently.

The actual coverage of the Empire is curiously, though perhaps inevitably, unbalanced. The Dominions and India make their appearance in the sections on defence and international relations and economic policy (where imperial preference looms large), but much of the rest is devoted to Africa and the Caribbean with a few side glances at Palestine, South East Asia and the Pacific. Africanists will no doubt be gratified to find that the continent receives so much attention, but there are significant omissions. It is good to find a few documents on medical policy, nutrition, radical discrimination and education, but generally this is a very

traditional selection. Environmental concerns are completely ignored, despite the fact that this is a key period for international regulation in respect of game law, reserves and national parks (and the internationalisation of such issues is itself significant). There is nothing at all on forestry, even though Lord Hailey's *African Survey* devotes a whole section to it. Indeed, the editors would have done well to have used Hailey as a guide because many of his innovative insights, for example in the fields of agriculture and science, are ignored here. These should surely be just as much as part of the End of Empire story as defence, constitutional and economic issues.

Nor is there much on the propaganda and information developments of the period, such as the Empire Marketing Board and the various campaigns which flourished in the inter-war and Second World War years, although the collection does start engagingly with Colonial Office anxieties about ignorance of the Empire in 1939. From this we learn that a sample of British schoolchildren (a very small one, as it happens), knew a great deal less about the Empire than their German counterparts. Indeed 80 percent of the pupils placed Kenya in continents other than Africa, thought it was famous for producing milk and macaroni, and that it was governed by Germany or Italy or France or the United States. One wonders just how serious this survey was and if the teachers conducting it had inadvertently chosen 1 April to conduct it. Nevertheless, the implication is clear: an ignorant population was unlikely to be much exercised by decolonization. The Empire may have been lost in a fit of absence of mind. How ironic that it was the war that was likely to dispel at least some of this apathy, whether real or presumed.

The eighty-page introduction is solid and useful. The editors' brief explanations for some of the documents are generally well done, although it is not always clear why many of the documents lack such explanatory preambles. The clear and helpful footnotes and appendices are also in the best traditions of these End of Empire volumes. No doubt senior undergraduates and postgraduates will find them a valuable foretaste of the riches of the PRO. They certainly illustrate or confirm some of the major trends of the period, even if primarily in relatively traditional areas.

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JOHN M. MACKENZIE

## DOCUMENTING THE LIBERATION MOVEMENT

*South Africa's Radical Tradition: A Documentary History*, Volume 2: 1943–1964.

Edited by ALLISON DREW. Cape Town: Buchu Books/Mayibuye Books/University of Cape Town Press, 1997. Pp. 402. £20.95, paperback (ISBN 0-7992-1614-3).

The second of Allison Drew's two-volume documentary history of South Africa's 'radical-left tradition' focuses on the shift in resistance politics from petitionary protest to armed struggle between the 1940s and 1960s. As with Volume I, there are few documents from the African National Congress or allies like the Communist Party (before 1950) in this collection. Critics may also find the views of some socialist groups over represented, although Drew is much more concerned with relations between socialist groups, the African nationalist movement and the Congress Alliance (from 1955) in Volume II.

She begins the book with a descriptive, tightly written introduction sketching the main groups represented in this collection and the main issues of concern in the resistance movement during this period. The documents represent not only fringe groups engaged mainly in ideological debate (like the various Trotskyite groups centred in the Cape Town metropolitan area) but also groups actively involved in

protest activities. They include the non-European Unity Movement and its two main affiliates (the Anti-CAD movement and the All-African Convention), together with various splinter groups, the Franchise Action Committee, African People's Organization, South African Congress of Trade Unions, the revived South African Communist Party (1953), Pan-Africanist Congress, National Liberation Front and guerrilla groups formed during the early 1960s (like Umkhonto weSizwe Poqo, National Committee for Liberation and the African Resistance Movement).

The main issues debated by these organizations are embedded in the 79 documents that comprise the corpus of the book. Drew organizes them in four themes that focus on (a) building a national resistance movement; (b) the national question; (c) agrarian questions; and (d) the turn to armed struggle. She suggests that political unity in the resistance movement was bedevilled by differences between activists over issues relating to non-collaboration with government authorities, the use of the boycott as a tactical weapon of non-violent resistance and the role of black trade unions in resistance politics.

The national question concerned the debate over how to organize the various population groups to bring about a democratic South Africa. The documents frame the debate as non-racial (NEUM and various Trotskyite critics), multi-racial/multi-national (Congress movement and the Communists) and Africanist (early ANC Youth League and PAC), but these discourses often overlapped and individuals continually shifted positions. Drew also notes various (unsuccessful) attempts to resolve these tensions between the 1940s and 1960s.

The agrarian question concerned the debate over (a) organizing African peasants, farm labourers and migrant workers; (b) linking political activities in town and countryside; and (c) participating in rural uprisings in various African reserves during this period. The turn to armed struggle begins with the events of March 1960, when most anti-apartheid groups were forced underground and the resistance campaign entered a new, and ultimately decisive, phase in the transition to a national resistance movement.

Drew succeeds in carving out a subaltern timeline for the history of South Africa during this generation. The dynamics of change in a white version of the past are hardly mentioned, as she begins her documentary history in 1943 during the middle of World War II ('a pivotal year for national liberation politics') and ends in a note of defiance from the ARM during the heyday of apartheid in 1964: 'To the people of South Africa, we say; ARM NOW FOR FREEDOM'. The annotated comments accompanying the documents are very informative, although some notes seem unnecessary (such as the references to German unification in 1870, Polish nationalism, the Russian Duma and the AFL-CIO) while others are incomplete (for example, birth and death dates are recorded for men like William Ballinger and Edwin Mofutsanyana but not for their activist wives). But these are minor quibbles. While some repetition is perhaps inevitable (such as the 1955 Freedom Charter), Drew's goal, as she puts it, was 'to complement other documentary histories... of the liberation movement'. I think she has accomplished what she set out to do.

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LES SWITZER

## LIBERAL POLITICS

*Liberals against Apartheid: A History of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 1953–1968.* By RANDOLPH VIGNE. London: Macmillan Press, and New York: St Martin's Press, 1997. Pp. x + 268. £45. (ISBN 0-333-71355-9).

The South African Liberal Party's beginnings in 1953 hardly suggested that it would represent anything other than the tradition of socially paternalistic pressure group activity which preceded and incubated it. Those dominant in establishing the Party were standard bearers in the Cape liberal tradition, and their own convictions about the merits of gradual reform and constitutional 'public life' might have ensured it historical oblivion were it not for the presence from the beginning of representatives of a younger generation of ex-servicemen. This group, influenced by wartime anti-Nazi discourse and shared combat experience with black soldiers, were predisposed towards more adventurous forms of activism than the Cape parliamentarians, and they were more socially sensitive to the political preoccupations of their black compatriots. Notwithstanding a debilitating internal debate on the merits of franchise qualifications until the party adopted the principle of universal suffrage in 1960, and despite, or sometimes because of, antipathy among some of its members to communists within the Congress Alliance, the Liberal party quite soon after its formation began to move into the terrain of popular anti-apartheid politics. Like the (white) Congress of Democrats, the party continued to contest elections. This helped it retain the loyalty of the older generation of Liberals such as Margaret Ballinger, but at the same time it began to mobilise an African following, first within communities threatened with 'black spot' removals in rural Natal and subsequently in the main cities. In many localities Liberal party members worked closely with ANC branches; this was the case in East London and in Johannesburg where Liberals joined in opposition to the Sophiatown removals and the issue of women's passes. Leadership collaboration with the ANC was hindered by Liberal suspicions of what they took to be Communist 'popular front' manipulation: this sentiment prevented Liberal participation in the 1955 Congress of the People and the 1961 All in African Conference.

For Vigne, though, their real achievement was not in the functions Liberals may have performed as tacit allies of the Congress movement, but rather in the efforts they undertook to constitute themselves as an independent force in extra-parliamentary politics. Their most impressive successes tended to be in regions neglected by other parties. A fascinating chapter draws upon Vigne's own experience and details Liberal party organisation in the Transkei, built up in the aftermath of the 1960 state of emergency and based upon the social networks represented by migrant workers in the party's Cape Town Nyanga branch. The role liberals played in knitting together organized opposition to Bantu authorities and 'self government' helps to explain the hostility directed at the party by the government; archival evidence suggests that National Party politicians and administrators were deeply angered by the Liberals' Transkeien extension. African membership, mostly rural, made up much of the party's following which peaked at 8,000 in 1962. Unlike traditional South African liberals, party leaders such as Alan Paton, Patrick Duncan, Peter Brown and Jordan Ngubane welcomed the mass mobilisation of Africans, recognizing it to be indispensable in the achievement of a state founded upon liberal principles. Their own efforts in this direction testified to this conviction, accompanied as they were by forms of activism very similar to those employed by the Congress movement. Their early encouragement of the PAC in Cape Town as well the Party's close association with an embryonic SWAPO also bore witness to the remarkable degree to which South African

Liberals by 1960 had positioned themselves alongside popular nationalist movements.

This carefully researched and gracefully written book has the authority of an in-house history with none of its complacency. In an historical context in which political activists could be counted in only tens of thousands it would be facile to be dismissive about the efforts of 8,000 paid up members of a political organisation whose energy peaked during a period of extreme repression, but the significance of Vigne's narrative extends beyond the re-evaluation of South African liberalism and raises other broader issues. If Liberals were so successful in organising a rural following in Natal and the Transkei, why did such projects elude the ANC at that time? Vigne's analysis suggests a much more fluid and open political terrain than is depicted in Congress-centred histories. It is also a timely reminder that non-racial traditions in South African politics are not, as they are often perceived, the monopoly of the Marxist left.

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TOM LODGE

### THE DISTINCTIVE FACE OF APARTHEID

*Bureaucracy and Race: Native Administration in South Africa.* By IVAN EVANS. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. Pp. xiii + 416. \$55. (ISBN 0-520-20651-7).

Ivan Evans places this analysis of how apartheid transformed state and society in post-1951 South Africa at the heart of the perennial attempt to resolve the 'native question'. In doing so, he illuminates apartheid as a form of the state, at the centre of which was the building of a civil administration so vast and coercive that it ultimately 'ensnared millions of Africans and corrupted the entire state'.

The book focuses on the restructuring of the Department of Native Affairs (DNA) under its new Minister, Verwoerd. Evans argues that the DNA reorganised native administration by reversing the triple focus that marked it in British colonial Africa: focus on the rural, on local autonomy and on racial bifurcation (p. 16). To support his argument, however, Evans makes two questionable assumptions. First, he equates the British legacy in colonial Africa with the legacy of the 'segregation' period in South Africa. And, second, he equates the workings of apartheid with those of the Department of Native Affairs; thus, since the department was turned mainly into an urban affairs organisation under apartheid, he tends to equate apartheid mainly with its urban administration. This is so in spite of the fact that the book is divided into two parts, one focusing on urban administration and the other on administration in the reserves.

A distinction between direct and indirect rule will help illustrate this argument. There was no single British colonial legacy. Native administration in the 'segregation' period was more in line with the legacy of nineteenth-century British 'direct rule' than with twentieth-century British 'indirect rule'. Mediated through the village headman rather than the tribal chief, it turned around a racial bifurcation that accented a 'native' (racial) as opposed to a 'tribal' (ethnic) identity.

Given this background, apartheid involved a contradictory administrative reform. The reform of the rural brought it more or less in line with the legacy of 'indirect rule' in British colonial Africa. As administration came to be mediated through tribal chiefs rather than through the combination of white commissioners and native headmen, racial domination was mediated through an ethnic fragmentation. The dual recommendation of the Sauer Commission – that the reserves

be developed politically in keeping with the 'tribal' character of their population, and economically in order to retain Africans – was a programmatic declaration calling for just such a shift. Unlike 'segregation' in the earlier period – and 'direct rule' in nineteenth-century British colonies – apartheid produced two bi-polar political identities, race as the identity of beneficiaries and ethnicity as the identity of victims, as had 'indirect rule' in twentieth-century British colonies.

With this reform, the DNA literally shifted ground, from the rural to the urban, as native administration in urban areas took on features of direct rule. The strength and importance of *Bureaucracy* and *Race* is that it brings out the logic and the practice of apartheid as direct rule in the urban areas in a fashion that is both compelling and illuminating. This is done mainly in two chapters, chapter 3 focusing on labour controls, and chapter 4 on housing policy.

The thrust of chapter 3 is how a reorganized DNA transformed labour controls 'into a generalized mechanism of terror'. As the courts became an enabling arm of the police, the law enforcement agencies were given a virtual *carte blanche*. By the late 1950s, 'the civil concerns of the Bantu administration were tightly integrated with the state's repressive operations' (p. 87–8). The reorganization turned the DNA into something resembling an armed fist. As the boundary between repression and administration got blurred, the same process that translated repression into day-to-day administration also transformed administration into an extra-economic coercion.

Evans comes closer than has anyone else to answering the morally troubling dilemma: how does one explain 'the NP's increasing electoral majorities from 1953 onward'? (p. 92). The answer lies in apartheid's impact on society, the subject of Chapter 4. If the labour bureau system was the mechanism that 'transformed the state by beefing up its interventionist apparatuses', then the DNA's housing solution was key to re-designing and re-shaping society. More than anything else, Evans argues, it was housing policy that undercut liberal attempts to organize white opposition to apartheid. For, even when they joined liberal opposition to 'the draconian sweep of the labour bureau system, few whites were prepared to countenance the prospect of squalid locations spreading amoeba-like in their direction' (p. 119). 'Because whites generally viewed Africans as labour units during the day and threats at any other time, the majority of them received the mass replication and spatial separation of urban African locations with gratitude in the 1950s and with indifference later on'. So Evans can rightfully claim: 'Whereas African locations are viewed in the literature principally as mechanisms for controlling Africans in the urban area, this study contends that they should also be ranked with the Bantustan model as a notably successful attempt to legitimate apartheid in the eyes of the ruling population' (p. 282).

But the urban face of apartheid was not without contradiction. 'After the spate of housing construction ended in the late 1950s, South Africans were left to ponder a crucial question: did stringently centralizing Africans in densely populated locations facilitate state control, or would black nationalism flourish amid the austerity and class-levelling barrenness of the department's brainchild, the 'properly planned location'? (p. 121). As elsewhere, the tendency of direct rule was to breed a unified resistance. We know that, in spite of forced removals and enforced de-urbanization, roughly half the native population in South Africa continued to be urban. Subject to direct rule, it became the locus of wave-like resistance, a development that would force an overall reform of apartheid.

Given this discussion, one is less than convinced by Evans' claim that the tendency in struggle literature to highlight the binary opposition between repression and resistance 'flatten(s) out both the Department's labour process and the response of Black people' for 'the Department didn't always respond with coercion and Blacks didn't always resist it' (pp. 297–8). And yet, one is left with



the strong impression that the department did mostly respond with coercion and that Blacks did mostly resist it. This is not to deny that apartheid did try to generate consent amongst its victims. But it is to argue that manufacturing consent was much more at the heart of apartheid's indirect rule through chiefs in rural areas than its project of direct rule through the DNA in urban areas.

Ivan Evans has written an important book. It deserves to be read and discussed widely. My strong feeling – both when I read the original thesis and when I re-read the book version – is that this study makes an important contribution to understanding the specificity of apartheid. If the theoretical discussion underplays the extent to which apartheid reproduced the legacy of British indirect rule in the rural areas, the sections on the reorganization of the DNA and urban administration bring out vividly the distinctive face of apartheid. A critical appreciation of *Bureaucracy and Race* should help us beware of two extremes: both the claim that apartheid was what made South Africa exceptional in the African colonial experience, and the tendency to paint every colonial experience in twentieth-century Africa in the same colour.

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MAHMOOD MAMDANI

## WAR AND THEOLOGY

*On the Frontline: Catholic Missions in Zimbabwe's Liberation War.* By JANICE McLAUGHLIN. Harare: Baobab Books, 1996. Pp. xvi + 352. £21.50, paperback (ISBN 0-908311-79-6).

Janice McLaughlin's monograph is a study of the Catholic Church during Zimbabwe's war of liberation. As such, it interacts with two lively traditions of scholarship on Zimbabwe. The first is a predominantly local religious studies tradition which has produced a rich body of denominational histories. The second arises more from ex-patriate anthropologists, social historians and political scientists who have analyzed patterns of wartime popular mobilization and raised questions about the legitimacy of guerrilla activity. McLaughlin's contribution is divided into three parts. The first section is an historical preamble tracing church-state relations at an institutional level prior to and during the hostilities. The core of the book details four case studies of rural Catholic missions on the frontline in the church's day to day relations with guerrillas. The final section is thematic. It draws out the theological implications of the church's role in the war, explores issues of political violence and examines the role of traditional religious institutions in popular mobilization.

McLaughlin's own involvement in the struggle is key to understanding her study. She is a Maryknoll sister who worked with the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission in 1977 before her arrest by the Rhodesia Front regime. Following her subsequent deportation she worked in ZANU refugee camps in Mozambique, an experience which she describes as the 'high point' of her life (p. 42). This clerical background and wartime relations with ZANU have enabled her to amass an extraordinarily rich body of data. She has not only unearthed useful documentation in the Justice and Peace Commission but has also located new archives such as those of the Bethlehem Mission in Gweru. More importantly, she is one of the few scholars who has gained access to the records of ZANU's military wing, ZANLA. These archives are supplemented by an impressive array of formal interviews with ex-combatants, nationalist leaders and Catholic clergy. She also persuaded many of these informants to lend her their diaries, personal correspondence and written reminiscences.

McLaughlin has put all this new material to good use. At the most basic level, she provides scholars with much needed logistical material such as ZANLA provincial command structures. More specifically, she outlines hitherto unknown debates within ZANLA regarding the virtue of working with traditional religious authorities (chapter 10). She is also able to cast new light on the ZIPA period, ZANU's failed experiment in workerist politics. On the clerical side of the equation, her interview material reveals a fascinating process of *rapprochement* between the church and the ZANU government-in-waiting, facilitated by expatriate Catholics on leave and itinerating nationalist politicians (chapter 2). Her penultimate chapter, entitled 'A church of the people', offers a perceptive and much needed account of the empowerment of black Catholic women who heroically kept rural mission work alive in the absence of missionary priests and nuns.

McLaughlin's personal involvement with struggle also explains some of her study's weaknesses and drawbacks. Her strong reliance on ZANLA documentation means that her book reinforces the victor's narrative. We learn little about ZAPU politics or the actions of its military wing, ZIPRA. Historians still know very little about why ZIPRA chose to attack a whole swathe of rural missions in Matabeleland in 1978–9. It is a shame that she did not make a Catholic mission in Matabeleland one of her case studies. At its heart the book is an apologetic, not ironically for the Roman Catholic Church in which McLaughlin identifies villains as well as heroes, but for ZANU.

Although McLaughlin claims not to shirk from discussing difficult issues such as guerrilla political violence (p. xiii) she does not explore ZANLA violence against the civilian population with the same rigour as she discusses security force atrocities. Part of the explanation for this different treatment is that her focus is ecclesiocentric. Rarely does she get beyond the confines of mission stations and the accounts of priests, nuns, teachers, nurses, orderlies and catechists to hear the testimonies of those residing in the communal areas. If she had managed to talk to more peasants she would have learnt that many were arbitrarily killed as sellouts or witches because they happened to be on the wrong side of a complex local political struggle. Her judgement on political violence is also clouded by her desire to depict the struggle as a just war. While I have no problem with such a judgement, it is a shame that it has prevented her from portraying the experience of those rural inhabitants who bore the brunt of this costly armed struggle.

McLaughlin's epilogue is the most problematic part of her study. Here she chastises the newly constituted Zimbabwean Justice and Peace Commission for what in retrospect appears to be their reinstated public attack on the new ZANU/PF government for its campaign of ethnic violence against the Ndebele people c. 1981–7. Given the systematic nature of the ruling party's attack on ZAPU and its predominantly Ndebele supporters, it is doubtful whether McLaughlin's alternative approach of a quiet chat with old comrades would have achieved very much. It is a pity that she did not also take the opportunity to interrogate ZANU's archives for the sources of authoritarianism which so characterize its contemporary stance.

Despite her own clear-cut agenda, McLaughlin has provided a fascinating and original account of Zimbabwe's largest and most powerful church during the crucial period of nationalist transition. As such, her study will be welcomed by theologians, historians and political scientists alike.

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DAVID MAXWELL

## AGRARIAN CHANGE IN IDERE

*An African Niche Economy: Farming to Feed Ibadan, 1968–88.* By JANE I. GUYER. London: Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute, 1997. Pp. xi + 260. £29.95 (ISBN: 0-7486-0931-8); £14.95, paperback (ISBN 0-7486-1033-2).

Throughout her career as an economic anthropologist, Jane Guyer has remained steadfastly committed to understanding how things get done – crops grown, goods sold, children fed, households managed – and how people's efforts to cope with life's daily exigencies shape trajectories of social change. In *An African Niche Economy*, she advances that agenda in a richly detailed, longitudinal study of rural economic change in Idere, a community in the 'urban hinterland' of Ibadan. Based on field research on farming and its place in the economic and social life of Idere, which Guyer carried out in 1968 and 1988, *An African Niche Economy* provides a detailed account of material agrarian practices (cropping patterns, labour arrangements, household budgets), social institutions, and the movements of goods and people which link Idere with a regional economy centred on Ibadan. Working in a deliberately inductive manner, Guyer seeks to show both what is distinctive about the dynamics of agrarian change in a particular African economy, and how the contours of a social process shape and are defined by the individual career paths of its participants.

Between 1968 and the late 1980s, Idere was drawn more closely into the economic orbit of Ibadan, through improvements in transportation, investments in local farming by individuals or enterprises with ties to the urban and national economy, and residents' increasing involvement in trade and urban employment. One of the signal contributions of this book is to document both the rich variety of changes in styles of farming – cropping patterns, labour intensity, methods of cultivation, farm size, degrees of commercialization and specialization – and the regularities of material and social practices which accompanied and contributed to the reconfiguration of the regional economy. Without underplaying the diversity of individual adaptations and experiments, Guyer demonstrates that farming practices changed along a limited number of specific paths, each associated with a particular cohort of farmers. As women became increasingly involved in farming on their own account, for example, they developed a distinctive category of farms – smaller, but also more specialized and more commercialized than those of the middle-aged men who have made up the core of the farming population since the late 1960s. Young men, migrant laborers, contract farmers, agribusiness firms, retired civil servants each participated in and helped to reshape agriculture in Idere in collectively distinctive as well as personally idiosyncratic ways.

On the whole, Guyer argues, farming expanded during this period because individual farmers produced more and because more of the townspeople entered agriculture: 'everybody's farming'. (p. 189) Far from a Chayanovian withdrawal from turbulent markets into the security of agricultural self-provisioning, however, the spread of farming was accompanied by increasing involvement in trade, education, off-farm employment and rural emigration. Standard paradigms of market response, agricultural intensification or commercially-driven differentiation 'offer only partial guides to understanding how overall growth has been managed.' (p. 221) It is equally important, Guyer argues, to understand 'the collective dynamics' of community life in which economic activity is initiated and carried out. (Ch. 13)

In keeping with her inductive approach, Guyer seeks to develop a conceptual vocabulary for analyzing agrarian change in Idere which is grounded in local activities and processes. Drawing sensitively and imaginatively on her own and

others' ethnographic research in Yoruba communities, she argues that the overall contours of rural economic change have not been determined by aggregations of individual rationalities or by underlying cultural understandings, but have grown out of the on-going engagements between individuals' career paths and the social arenas in which their personal aspirations are defined and realized. Like individual careers, paths of institutional change have interacted, rather than converged towards a single pattern. For example, compounds – the residential units which constitute one of the defining collectivities in Yoruba kinship and community relations – have become less important in shaping individual career paths since the late 1960s, but more important for people's control over productive resources. Diversity and flexibility should be understood, Guyer suggests, not as inherent attributes of Yoruba social and economic life, but rather as results of individuals' pursuit of personal success and 'the judgements that others make of their performance'. (p. 220)

Like Henrietta Moore and Megan Vaughan's recent longitudinal study of rural and agricultural change in northeastern Zambia, *An African Niche Economy* testifies abundantly to the creativity, resourcefulness, and variety of African men's and women's responses to changing circumstance. Whereas Moore and Vaughan use their evidence of daily resilience and diversity primarily to refute the thesis that African societies have 'broken down' in the face of modernization, however, Guyer develops a conceptual vocabulary for characterizing the directions and understanding the processes of agrarian change in Idere. Her central thesis, that people in Idere engage in an on-going process of creating, adapting and discarding 'niches' – named economic activities, together with their actors, market values and institutional contexts – draws on local social and lexical practice to define without reifying patterns of action and interaction which both shape the directions of and limit the possibilities of rural economic transformation. Like most of Guyer's previously published work, *An African Niche Economy* challenges us all to ground our interpretations of agrarian change in a thorough examination of Africa's 'real' rural economies, and offers stimulating and original suggestions for getting on with it.

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SARA BERRY

## MITTEL AFRIKA YESTERDAY

*History of Central Africa: The Contemporary Years since 1960*. Edited by DAVID BIRMINGHAM and PHYLLIS MARTIN. London and New York: Longman, 1998. Pp. 317. £44 (ISBN 0-582-27608-X); £17.99, paperback (ISBN 0-582-27607-1).

This volume, like its two predecessors, is a good illustration of the 'invention of Africa'. Its 'central Africa' is a combination of both French and English labels derived from the colonial period, and probably imposed by the publisher for the sake of sales. Hence this middle of Africa runs from the borders of Libya to the borders of Natal! Yet this 'central Africa' does not correspond to the regional historical dynamics of this period, nor to a single underlying body of historiography. The countries of former British Central Africa and Mozambique participated in the dynamics of southern Africa while those of the equatorial regions belong to a family of countries linked together by the use of French and the external influence of France. Only Angola participated in both groups. As to historiography, the first group has a rich body of writings in English with an epistemology closely linked to that of southern African studies, although the chapter on Zambia and Malawi is also strongly inspired the overall historiography

of East Africa. Most crucial studies about the second group are in French and informed by an epistemology derived from French milieux, although there exists an important historiography in English about Zaire. Studies about Angola have their own dynamics in which no single scholarly language or tradition predominates. It is a pity that the editors did not stress this situation or discuss its implications.

Secondly there are the particularities of writing a history of yesterday with one's nose pressing on the windowpane of the present. Unlike other historians the student of contemporary affairs has no information about what is to follow, no perspective. In addition this is a history 'for which the weight and diversity of sources can be "copiously numbing"' (p. 17), with the attendant risk of writing an account just as confusing and muddled as the present may seem to be. To cope with this kind of history requires a very clear vision of what history is and what it deals with. At the very least a theory about the coherence of society and the culture which makes sense of it is required. What is the focus of a history? What are the dynamics and hierarchical interrelationships of its various domains or 'sub-fields'? How does the passage of time operate? Does one accept notions of various *longue durée*, conjunctures, and superficial events and their interaction or not?

In this book the editors seem to understand history as primarily political. The work focuses on the political realm. Despite obvious and numerous common factors of all sorts at work in the whole or in large parts of this area, they have chosen to organize this history by nation state, a choice justified by the undisputed existence of a genuine national sentiment in each country (p. 18). But the implications of this choice have not been highlighted or discussed. The most minor one is that both Equatorial Guinea (with its bloodthirsty dictators) and São Tomé have been forgotten. More importantly, as a result of this choice and the choice of authors which flows from it, there has been a strong inclination to focus each chapter on the political history with some economic concomitants of a particular country. Therefore it was imperative to counterbalance this effect by concluding the book with a crucial chapter: a searching comparative analysis to cover the wider sweep of history including its social and cultural aspects. Only a particularly clear vision of the role and content of 'history' could save such a chapter from becoming a mere hodge podge of themes. There is such a concluding chapter in this work and 'the comparative analysis of the different experiences in the region' is billed on the blurb as a major feature of this book. But, unfortunately, instead of an overall analysis that final essay merely enumerates a laundry list of 'themes' in no particular order, with some repetitions.

After a preface and a general introduction (Martin) the chapters, each with 'sources for further reading' deal successively with Chad (Buijtenhuijs), Cameroun (Mehler), Gabon–Congo–Central African Republic (M'Bokolo), Zaire (Young), Angola (Messiant), Malawi–Zambia (Vaughan), Zimbabwe (Ranger), Mozambique (Penvenne) and 'Images and themes in the nineties' (Birmingham). Buijtenhuijs, Mehler, Young, and Ranger wrote authoritative accounts closely focused on political history. Of these Ranger comes undoubtedly the nearest to a lively 'thick description'. The chapter which impresses this reader the most however is that of M'bokolo. He focuses on a kind of broad social and cultural history which gives a very good idea of how most people who lived through it experienced the period. The essays of Messiant and Penvenne are almost equally impressive, the first because she builds on a fundamental explicit sociological analysis which reaches beyond the partisan bias which is so frequent in Angolan historiography, the latter because she successfully shows the significance of the political evolution which she narrates for the lives of most Mozambicans who underwent it. Vaughan's study stands apart from all the others because she chooses to deal only with 'rural producers and the state'. It is a precious contribution to

rural history and hence central to the history of Malawi, but it is less successful for Zambia where half the population, the half which matters most in political affairs, lives in and around cities.

As to the work of the editors, the introduction presents a narrative of decolonization, which sums up the second volume of the *History of Central Africa*, a discussion of decolonization in which Martin tests earlier interpretations about the colonial period against the evolution after 1960, followed by a summary of the whole period 1960–1990 (pp. 13–17), and some thoughts about ‘Writing contemporary history’. The second part is interrupted by two unexpected demographic tables (by country and by city). They are unexpected because she has not previously argued for the crucial importance of these data. In fact, the tables vividly illustrate her own later comment about the ‘weight’ of sources (p. 17). The table on city-populations 1960 and 1990 (p. 15) does not include the second or third largest city in the whole area for 1990 which is Mbuji-Mayi, a city of probably over two million, the very city illustrated on the cover of the volume! It only includes cities that had been legally recognized by 1960. All of the numerous cities that have grown up since then are ignored.

In turn this means that the index of urban populations for 1994 on p. 14 cannot be trusted either. Certainly the percentage for Zaire and probably also for Angola is far too low. As has already been said, the concluding chapter is a disaster. It follows that it is up to the reader to use his or her vision of history to draw crucial analytical comparisons and conclusions all the way from demographic growth and health, or oil, to revenues from ‘plums’ excluded from national budgets, to religious revivals and more.

The temptation in all contemporary histories is to go ‘stop press’ even if one has no clue at all as to the value of the latest news. It is especially unfortunate, that the editors have yielded to that temptation here by including summary conclusions about the war for Zaire in 1996–7 (pp. viii and 272–3) which, as it happens, betray the most blatant partisanship. ‘Discreet support by the Rwandan army’ is hardly appropriate in view of general Kagame’s own, and never contradicted, claim that his army formed the backbone of the invasion, while the statement ‘Those who had survived appalling conditions in refugee camps were later forced to return to Rwanda...’ is unpardonable. Over 1,150,000 Rwanda and Rundi refugees were counted in camps on the eve of the war and of these 600,000 were unaccounted for by its end. Many of these people have been killed by Rwandese and Kabila’s forces. Did the editors forget their responsibilities as contemporary historians responsible for a supposedly authoritative textbook? Responsibilities which are especially great because their text will probably be used as a weapon by the historical actors who are still involved.

How useful will this book then be? Undoubtedly individual chapters and the guides to further reading can be valuable as a reference tool. But as a history of the whole area the work fails because it arbitrarily lumps together regions with different dynamics, and especially because its editors have been unable to present the reader with a clear analysis of the overall evolution of the societies and cultures in this middle of Africa.

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JAN VANSINA

## WOMEN'S WORK

*African Women and Development: A History*. By MARGARET C. SNYDER and MARY TADESSE. London: Zed Press, 1995. Pp. xiii + 239. £14.95, paperback (ISBN 1-85649-300-8).

The literature on women and development tends to emphasize the pivotal role of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and the women's movement in the United States.<sup>1</sup> All too often, development for Third World women has been characterized as a one-way affair, wherein northern experts and expertise 'rescue' hapless women in the less developed areas of the world. *African Women and Development* is a refreshing break from this narrative, as it reveals the pivotal role played by African women and African-based institutions, particularly the African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW), in both the theory and practice of women and development. The book chronicles the history of the ATRCW, based at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The authors are well placed for such a discussion as Margaret Snyder, who was a regional adviser for ECA, co-founded the ATRCW in 1973. Mary Tadesse has been head of the centre until recently. Between the two of them, the story of this crucial institution can be told.

Ester Boserup's landmark study, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (1970), is often regarded as a crucial event for the emergence of the field of women and development. Because its timing coincided with the resurgence of the women's movement in the United States and the activities of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, these forces have been seen as key factors in the field of women and development. Snyder and Tadesse challenge this assumption, pointing out that Boserup's book was heavily indebted to existing research on women in Africa and Asia. In Africa, they argue, the legacy of women's involvement in the 1960s liberation struggles had led to a growing concern about women's political and economic rights before the re-emergence of western feminism. While more detailed research is required to document this argument, there can be no doubt that women in Africa during the 1960s did lobby for research and action to improve the status of women. Much of this activity centred around ECA. Indeed, a 1967 publication by ECA on women's role and status in Eastern Africa<sup>2</sup> documented women's crucial role in economic activities on the continent, particularly in agriculture, and this research profoundly influenced Boserup's thinking. Moreover, institutional developments at ECA played a pivotal role in the series of world conferences on women organized by the United Nations between 1975 and 1985. In the early 1970s, ECA developed a five-year program on women and then in 1973, established the ATRCW – the first regional organization devoted entirely to issues concerning women and development. The ATRCW provided a prototype for regional centres elsewhere in the world, and inspired other such centres in the south. Moreover, the research produced by ECA, as well as its focus on grassroots participatory training, profoundly influenced debates about women's status at the world conferences, and the emergence of the field of women and development. While it is important to acknowledge the role both of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and of western feminism, this book leaves no doubt about the pivotal role played by African scholars and activists as well, and suggests that women and development must be seen as a global affair.

<sup>1</sup> Irene Tinker, *Persistent Inequalities: Women and World Development* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> ECA, *Status and Role of Women in East Africa* (Addis Ababa: ECA, 1967).

Snyder and Tadesse demonstrate the crucial role of ATRCW's research and training on the evolution of thinking and practice about women and development. The UN world meetings on women highlighted both the differences as well as the commonalities among the world's women. Tensions emerged over explanations for women's subordination. Western feminists emphasized the role of patriarchy rather than global inequalities. Drawing on their own experiences, they focused more on women's unpaid work in the home than their productive work outside the home. Third World women argued for a different interpretation, one that placed the blame less on men and more on global inequalities, and one that emphasized women's key role in economic production.

The ATRCW research on women's work and lives in Africa provided crucial documentation in the struggle to assert a Third World understanding of women's lives and problems. The current discourse of difference and multiple identities papers over the lengthy disputes and acrimony behind this move. Western feminist concerns dominated thinking about global feminism for a long time. The struggle to assert difference without abandoning commitment to women's welfare around the world has been a long and complicated process. The research and praxis of institutions such as ATRCW played a key role in this transformation. This history has often been lost. *African Women and Development* is a welcome reminder of the pivotal role played by southern institutions, scholars and activists. We can only hope that more such studies will emerge for other parts of the world.

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JANE L. PARPART

### DECONSTRUCTING AFRICAN HISTORY

*Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture.* By IFI AMADIUME. London and New York: Zed Books, 1997. Pp. x + 214. \$55 (ISBN 1-85649-533-7); \$19.95, paperback (ISBN 1-85649-534-5).

The subtitle of Ifi Amadiume's new collection of essays might as aptly be 'Essays in Honour of Cheikh Anta Diop'. Through a critical appreciation of Diop's work Amadiume applies and extends his arguments concerning African matriarchy, providing a model for revised interpretation of African kinship, religion, ritual, politics and history based on the primacy of gender as an organizational and ideological concept.

Amadiume reawakens the nineteenth-century matriarchy debate and suggests a new definition which takes us from Diop's notion of power and authority traced through 'rules of succession and inheritance and the reign of queens' to 'the deeper structure of the matricentric unit and its ideological and cultural reproduction in the social structure' (p. 156). In West Africa, the autonomous household unit is a matricentric unit where relations of production and consumption are ideologically rooted in the concept of motherhood.

This presentation of 'a female generated, paradigmatical cultural construct' Amadiume argues, 'demolishes the generalized theory which sees man as the maker of culture and woman as the voiceless/muted/chaotic/unordered object...' (p. 19). She thereby rejects much of western feminist scholarship, anthropological tradition which projects onto Africa western class-based patriarchal models and African historians who continue to employ these western tools.

Employing Diop's interpretation of the social history of Africa, she argues that the manifestation of patriarchy in Africa is the result of Arab and European colonialisms and that historical depth beyond colonial contact is needed in order to recognize 'the organic cultural unity' of matriarchy which is based on the matricentric structure 'present in some form in our varied African societies'



(p. 156). She criticizes the assumption of patriarchal supremacy within African systems found in major ethnographic works, commenting on interpretations by Fortes, Riesman and Bloch.

Through reference to her earlier work among the Nnobi (see *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*), Amadiume illustrates how the existence of a dual gender system once allowed women to exercise considerable autonomy in political, economic and spiritual realms. She is careful to note however, that male and female religious and political systems did not co-exist in peaceful and homeostatic balance, but rather sustained a critical tension in which matriarchy served to check and balance patriarchal structures. Patriarchy, characterized in its expression by appropriation and violence, was thus offset by indigenous structures which promoted unity and harmony.

Amadiume may be criticized for the assumption that female is necessarily equated with peace and love. It relies upon an essentialist reading of female 'nature', based on predisposition toward maternal nurturance which fails critically to analyze the social construction of gender and incumbent roles, expectations and identities. Amadiume argues however, that the rejection of essentialist readings within western feminism may not be appropriate in the African case. 'What African women constructed in matriarchy,' she argues 'was... essentialist, a logic based on concrete facts generated by the production roles of the core production unit in the kinship system' (p. 115).

In her analysis of the role of women in contemporary Nigerian politics she looks at the colonial construction of the centralized patriarchal state, arguing that in its development, the dual gender system within which women exercise autonomy is undermined. She calls for grass roots political organization, more closely reminiscent of the diffused and decentralized authority of matriarchal systems as the only way to achieve some balance in political representation. Without radical restructuring, women are forced to become complicit in the perpetuation of those very structures which oppress them in order to achieve presence within political life. The same could be said of academia, where Amadiume suggests the fight of western feminists to exist at the centre, has necessarily meant adopting a male centre which is characteristically dependent upon domination over a constructed other.

Collectively these essays serve to expose and promote awareness of disciplinary rootedness in ethno- and andro-centric bias and offer positive directions for a revision of scholarship: anthropology should give way to social history; and history should turn its attention to pre-colonial matricentric structures. In pulling these essays together as a collection, however, much material is unnecessarily replicated in successive chapters. This repetition and the constant reference to the ideas of Diop make reading this volume as a single work tiresome and detract from the impact of what are otherwise provocative and occasionally damning essays. Each offers a contribution to what the author identifies as 'the most urgent project in African scholarship—deconstructing and decolonizing received colonial "African history"' (p. 176).

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CAMILLA TELFORD GIBB

## INTERPRETING AFRICAN SPACE

*Drawn from African Dwellings.* By JEAN-PAUL BOURDIER and TRINH T. MINH-HA. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998. Pp. xiii + 308. \$50.50, paperback (ISBN 0-253-330-432).

African architecture, much less its historic dimension, was denied by observers, scholars and professionals alike, for centuries. Only in recent decades, as African studies and traditional architectures gained recognition, has this remarkable field of African creativity been acknowledged. In-depth architectural studies, particularly by architects, are still scarce, so each new contribution assumes heroic proportions in the meagre repertoire, particularly when it involves the interface of linguistics and architecture. Thus, Bourdier and Minh-Ha provide a most welcome addition to the field.

While the subject matter that shapes the book has been drawn from more extensive research carried out by the authors in six countries of West Africa over the past two decades, its focus is primarily on 'building among the Fulbe, the Tokolor, the Sereere and Joola peoples...in addition to building among the Soninke, Mandingo, Jaxanke and Bassari peoples' in Senegal.

The book is comprised of three components: a set of visual essays 'Picturing' of Soninke, Bande and Boyni Fulbe, Fulaadu Fulbe and Mandingo, Jaxanke and Bassari dwellings, without commentary; a set of three interspersed essays ('Reflections') on 'The Drawn Image,' 'The Written Text' and 'The Bird's Eye View'; and a set of chapters on the Fulbe, the Tokolor, the Bassari and the Joola or Diola, whose integrated visual and verbal texts address various aspects of their cultural history. The visual essays, even to those of us familiar with the regional milieu, provide few clues to who its subjects are and where they are located. There is neither a map nor index references to guide us. The 'Reflections' are a philosophical rationale for using a 'drawing' language as a tool for thinking, feeling and seeing, for a written text to deal with cultural translation and the integration of oral and written sources, and for using an unusual technique (axonometry) to communicate space historically rendered by the western world in perspective. The more conventionally presented chapters are, for this reviewer, the most legible. Laid out in traditional format, they provide us with a wealth of new, albeit controversial, documentation, inviting and allowing us to applaud or take exception to the authors' ethnographic and/or historic interpretation.

The challenge which the book presents to this western-trained architect lies primarily and precisely in trying to follow the sequences of text, to read the visual texts (photographs, plans, captions, etc.) without the aid of a magnifying glass, to locate particular references in a much abbreviated index and footnotes interspersed with pages of visual imagery. In their effort to juxtapose verbal and visual processes in the construction and translation of African space, the authors designed a graphic layout for the book which does its contents an injustice. Forced to constantly shift between juxtaposed, interspersed, superimposed and contiguous photographs, rendered perspectives, axonometric drawings, conventional plans and sections, this reader is led to wonder how much the organization of visual and verbal subject matter in the book derives from the authors' interpretation of African dwelling space and how much from the African perspective. To be sure, the reality of African space cannot easily be communicated via techniques derivative of a carpentered, geometric world: to communicate the African reality is truly a challenge.

The book's design layout evokes the layout of an exhibition, in which the viewer, free to move around, constantly acquires new viewpoints, without the linear dictate imposed by typesetter and bindery. Perhaps the challenge results from the rigid

reality of the linear western mind in contrast to the African mind, which, it might be argued, conceptualizes space hodologically, records time spatially and constructs its habitat in response to the dictates of *both* environment and existence. By drawing on the synchronic existential writings of Heidegger, Norberg-Shulz and Ivan Ilich, on John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, and on mystical Sufi writings of Hampate Ba, the unanswered question which still defies definition is the nature of the African diachronic.

Challenging and controversial, the book evokes both acclaim and criticism in its effort to communicate the complexities, the simplicities and the temporal dimensions of African architecture to both an informed and a lay audience. Despite the reservations voiced above, the book remains an innovative and evocative effort, providing yet another foundation on which to build a truly African architectural historiography.

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LABELLE PRUSSIN

### MEANING IN MATERIAL CULTURE

*African Material Culture*. Edited by MARY JO ARNOLDI, CHRISTRAUD M. GEARY and KRIS L. HARDEN. (African Systems of Thought.) Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996. Pp. xii + 369. \$49.95 (ISBN 0-253-33000-9); \$24.50, paperback (ISBN 0-253-21037-2).

This anthology publishes the proceedings of a conference on African material culture held in Bellagio, Italy in 1988, the intent of which was to assess current approaches to the study of African material culture and point the way toward future studies.

In their introduction, Arnoldi and Hardin discuss the two traditional approaches that have dominated the American study of African material culture in the twentieth century: the ethnographic and the aesthetic. As ethnography moved away from studies of material culture, African art studies entered the realm of art history, where they have remained to this day. Formalist studies, which dominated early writings, still play a major role in the American literature on African art, and there is continuing give and take between American anthropologists and art historians who do not agree on the most effective and productive approach to the material. The authors call for a new approach, based on recent sociological models, which searches for meaning in African categories of analysis learned from studies which rely on the thoughts of Africans regarding their own material culture. The essays in this volume, they contend, reflect this new approach and a new concern with the shifting relationships between objects and meanings which considers both the real African world and our analyses of it.

The essays are divided into three sections. In Part I, 'Technology and the production of form', the authors concentrate on physical aspects of material culture as they reflect symbolic systems and changing social realities in Africa. Stress in these essays is on the manufacture of objects and the ways technology contributes to meaning. The best of them is Labelle Prussin's piece on nomadic architecture among the Gabra, the Rendille and the Somalis of northern Kenya and the ways architectural forms, their significance, and the prestige associated with them have changed with the sedentarization of these groups. Kazadi Ntole's essay on the Bambala and their material culture deals with introduced technologies (both European and African: firearms and raffia textiles are discussed) and the ways in which they affect individuals and their identities.

In Part II, 'Constructing identities: presenting self and society with objects', essays discuss the construction of identity through the lens of material culture: i.e.,

ways in which the things we make and own help define us as individuals. Here, the interest is not in the object *qua* object, but in the status or identity it confers on its user/owner, and ways in which objects' meanings have changed in recent times. As Aneesa Kassam and Gemetchu Megerssa point out in their essay titled 'Sticks, self and society in Booran Oromo: a symbolic interpretation', the sticks that are their subject are remarkably minimal as decorated/manufactured objects. Their significance lies in their shifting meanings and the identities these confer. Arnoldi's essay on Malian puppetry and identity is particularly illuminating.

Part III, 'Life histories: changing interpretations of objects and museums', adds another dimension to the studies: the role played by museums in identifying (often in constructing) meanings for objects, and ways in which museums have often misconstrued or created totally new and erroneous meanings for African objects once they are in the museum environment. These essays address the issue of meanings and their mutability once objects are removed from their cultural context, but they also address the change of meaning as objects exist over time, either in museums or within their original cultural settings. This section of the book is also the most intensely focused on 'art' as defined in the west, and it contains the only essay on modern, urban art in Africa: Bogumil Jewsiewicki's 'Zairian popular painting as commodity and as communication'.

Taken collectively, the articles in this anthology are well-constructed and informative. However, with the exception of the cover photograph, which is beautiful and attractively reproduced, the illustrations are generally difficult to read and interpret. The essays resound with echoes of the structuralism that was popular in the seventies and early eighties and the gender studies that became popular in the late eighties. Henry Drewal's essay is the only one which anticipates the reflexivity of recent scholarship. And the editors might have considered that their scope eliminated the Maghreb, northeastern Africa, and all of southern Africa.

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## MUSEUM AND COMMUNITY

*Museums and Archaeology in West Africa*. Edited by CLAUDE DANIEL ARDOUIN.

Oxford: James Currey, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997. Pp. xiv + 178. £35.00 (ISBN 0-85255-238-6); £14.95, paperback (ISBN 0-85255-237-8).

This book is the result of five meetings, in several West African nations between 1984 and 1992, convened variously by the West African Archaeological Association, the West African Museums Programme and the International Council of Museums. It is one of three volumes, along with *Museums and the Community in West Africa* and *Museums and History in West Africa*, that explore the roles of museums in Africa. The book addresses a fundamental question: 'Are museums in West Africa destined to remain, for the most part at least, alien bodies, desperately marginal in relation to national communities and cultural words, or can they really succeed, as intellectual institutions, in playing an active role in the development of their societies?'

The book does not give an unambiguous answer to this query, but it examines the issue in twenty chapters covering ten West African countries and Kenya. The volume is divided into three parts: archaeology, museum and training; museums and the management of the archaeological heritage; and communication and education. It may be read in two ways: from start to finish according to the thematic organization, or by country, which gives perspectives on the situation in

each state (Nigeria, four chapters; Côte d'Ivoire, three; Senegal, Benin, Mali and Burkina Faso, two each; and Ghana, Niger, Cameroon, Cape Verde and Kenya, single essays). The chapter from East Africa is a welcome addition, as it places the situations in West Africa in a continental perspective.

Part I, 'Archaeology, Museum, Training', examines the relationship between the training of museologists and archaeologists, and the institutions of which they are a part, including museums and university departments and the governmental structures (ministries) within which they exist. Many of the issues raised in one section of the volume apply to the other areas, and although there is variation from one country to another, common themes emerge. One is the lack of integration, and sometimes even mistrust or competition, between the agencies in charge of archaeological training and museums. Repeatedly the authors document the gap between institutions teaching archaeology, usually universities or institutes, and museums. Characteristically these reside in different ministries, which structurally practically guarantees problems of communication, co-operation, funding, planning and implementation. The authors recognize the educational value of material culture and museums, but note the often poor quality of collections' care and management and the frequently stagnant museum exhibitions. Some of these problems are the result of inadequate funding of museums and archaeological field expeditions. The casualties are the students seeking to enter these specialties, or professionals seeking further education. Limited employment opportunities exacerbate the problems for aspiring archaeologists and museum professionals. Many authors stress the need for better training programs, with greater focus upon archaeology and museology, and improved integration of museums into the teaching curriculum. The programs at Ibadan and Jos seem particularly strong, but generally there needs to be greater separation of archaeology from history departments.

In Part II, 'Museums and the Management of the Archaeological Heritage', the authors note that heritage is culturally determined, and that the destruction of archaeological heritage is often a consequence of poor dissemination of knowledge to people near sites and monuments. This section of the book reviews the kinds of monuments and sites found in various countries, documents threats to cultural heritage, and offers some practical suggestions for preservation. Most authors stress the need for more local museums and lament lack of co-ordination among institutions responsible for preserving cultural heritage, poor training of officials and inadequate funding. The quality of antiquities laws varies, but no matter the legislation, enforcement is a recurrent problem.

Part III, 'Communication and Education', addresses issues of accessibility, relevance and outreach. Access to museums is often limited for the general public because many people live in rural areas but most museums are located in towns. Many West Africans think museums are élitist, and several authors recommend making museums and archaeology more relevant to the lives of common people. This includes presenting 'cultural and scientific products that really arouse their interest and induce them to visit the museums', and 'transforming museums into social, friendly spaces for communicating and circulating knowledge in the community'. Ways to make museums more relevant include using national languages in educational programmes, taking travelling exhibitions to rural areas, emphasizing archaeology in the school curriculum, utilizing museum collections in teaching and educational materials, and developing local museums. All the authors seem to agree that there is a need for creative outreach strategies.

The writers present a critical review of the state of museums and archaeology in West Africa, and their candour makes it is easy to emphasize problems. The scholars themselves are cause for optimism, because they are a highly professional group who understand the problems of West African archaeology and museums.

One asks, '[C]an we point to an African definition of museums?', and the book seems to suggest that we can, although the metamorphosis of museums is incomplete, from colonial institutions serving often élitist ends to institutions and programmes relevant to the people of West Africa. These professionals have ideas for making the transformation, and could do so if they had political, institutional and financial support.

This book is a good survey of museums and archaeology in West Africa. It is well organized, written and illustrated. One or more maps of West Africa and photographs of exhibitions would be welcome, but these are minor quibbles about a useful book that analyzes both problems and solutions in researching, managing and explicating West Africa's cultural heritage.

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