ill-defined and as such it obscures rather than clarifies our understanding of colonialism. The author's indefatigable search for the periurban in all policies and in African resistance to them is in the end misleading. The administrative organization of Togo after 1920 was very similar to the rest of French West Africa (*chefs de villages, de subdivision, de canton* and *de cercle*): to qualify this as a periurban colonial administration with French officers operating as 'periurban despots' and village chiefs considered as 'periurban chiefs' is of limited use. Deposing some chiefs and promoting others was less a 'periurban policy' than a common practice throughout earlier colonial Africa. Heavy taxation led many Africans in Togo, as in other parts of French West Africa, to flee to British West Africa (Gold Coast, Nigeria, Gambia). Were 'periurban peasants' from 'periurban locations' engaged in 'periurban resistance' (pp. 61–2) not, in other words, peasants from villages trying to escape taxes?

There is a long and still ongoing debate in African scholarship to try to understand in different socio-historical contexts what are the political, the social and the cultural meanings of a town, of a city, of the rural and of the urban in Africa. While the intention of the author to bridge the gap between the rural and the urban is very welcome, I am afraid that the periurban brings very little heuristic value to this debate. Despite this, Lawrence's book is a significant addition to Ewe historiography, to Togolese history and more generally to our understanding of French West Africa under colonial rule.

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GRACE CARSWELL, *Cultivating Success in Uganda: Kigezi farmers and colonial policies*. Oxford: James Currey (pb £16.95 – 978 1 8470 1601 0; hb £50.00 – 978 1 8470 1600 3). 2007. xii + 207 pp.

Eastern Africa's highlands have for millennia supplied a suitable environmental setting for agricultural productivity. Nonetheless highland farming has been faced with the technological difficulties of cultivating steeply sloping land and the fact that most of the region's population has tended to congregate on the mountainsides. Grace Carswell's study of the agricultural history of western Uganda's Kigezi highlands reveals an exceptionally adaptive system that has consistently produced food surpluses. In Kigezi's hilly terrain, 'cultivating success' depended on a vibrant market in land, opportunities for wage labour outside the region, a technologically sophisticated farming system, and a bias toward food, rather than commodity, production.

That people in Kigezi have produced food surpluses should not surprise students of East Africa's pre-colonial agricultural history, during which highland zones served as regional bread baskets whose surpluses farmers exchanged with their neighbours, who had access either to manufactured goods or to commodities like salt and cattle. Rather than strengthening or sustaining the pre-existing social and economic networks, colonial policy aimed to sequester highland regions as sites for forest reserves or settler-run coffee and tea plantations. In this way, the priorities of the colonial economy in eastern Africa cut off African farmers from their trading partners and often eliminated expansion areas, leaving them vulnerable to a poverty tied to their shrinking

resource base. By contrast, Carswell argues, in Kigezi the colonial market for food surpluses, rather than commodities, sustained farmers' economic position. Furthermore, she points out that young men could easily earn cash outside Kigezi in Uganda's mining or plantation crop sector. Kigezi, it appears, was shielded from some of the worst abuses of resource alienation that plagued other parts of East Africa's highland complex.

The theme of Kigezi's uniqueness appears again in the subsequent discussion of the success of soil erosion control schemes under the auspices of colonial conservation projects, which the government implemented during the 1940s and 1950s. Carswell draws a set of comparisons between successful soil conservation in Kigezi and the abject failures of other state-inspired projects in Kenya and Tanganyika. The difference in Kigezi lies in the colonial plans, which drew upon long-established farming techniques and the accumulated local knowledge of well-regarded colonial officials. In Tanganyika's Usambara and Uluguru mountains and on Mt Kenya, similar schemes met with a sharp resistance born of threats to land tenure systems from land alienation, colonial disregard for local political contexts, and the ecological inappropriateness of technical applications. The comparisons are intriguing, for they suggest that the Kigezi may represent a unique and isolated case of colonial competence, or at least a more *laissez-faire* approach to conservation.

Much of Carswell's argument for the continuity in agro-ecological stability rests on the flexibility of Kigezi's complex system of land allocation and the security of land tenure during the colonial era. Indeed, the central contribution of *Cultivating Success* to development studies lies in its historical treatment of the evolutionary links between land tenure and land use systems. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss these subjects in great detail, drawing for evidence upon the author's own repetition of colonial era land surveys. Carswell's analysis points to a growing economic differentiation among Kigezi's farmers as well as the erosion of women's security of tenure under the shifting sands of the Ugandan state and the increasing power of Kigezi's chiefs to control the allocation of land, which was particularly evident when the colonial government oversaw the draining and allocation of the region's swamps during the late 1950s.

Subsequent chapters outline the changes to the labour and agricultural systems. Here the text tends to reiterate unnecessarily previous descriptions of Kigezi's agricultural economy and ecology. Persistent readers will find that Carswell's discussion of land use provides nonetheless important insights into East Africa's agronomic history. In an analysis that clearly jibes with Tiffen, Mortimer and Gichuki's widely cited study from Kenya's Kamba Hills, Carswell finds, under conditions of substantial population growth, increases in fallow and woodlots of acacia and eucalyptus, and no appreciable losses in soil fertility. Along with these trends, the analysis recognizes that the land-poor increasingly work as wage labour for the land-rich, or they choose to migrate to other labour markets. The author sees the commoditization of labour as a welcome change for the poor, who now have a more predictable cash income and find themselves less dependent on social networks for access to wealth, which in the past meant land ownership. It seems that labour mobility and access to cash have helped to reconfigure notions of wealth and poverty as more and more of Kigezi's population slip into landlessness. What these processes mean in terms of real economic vulnerability remains an open question.

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