

Rwandan roles are amply discussed, as is the involvement of Burundians and Sudanese in the eastern part of the country. External interests are one of the driving factors behind the war, both in terms of the countries supporting either Kabila or the rebel movements and in terms of the commercial interests of political and economic elites, including the occupying armies, with regard to the exploitation of the DRC's resources. The inconsistencies and omissions in this respect are striking. Moreover, given that the first page lays out in no uncertain terms the authors' views on the role of Rwanda and Uganda as instigators of rebellion and invaders, the overall impression is that, while the book is presented as a factual text, the authors are far from impartial observers.

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LAURENT MONNIER, BOGUMIL JEWSIEWICKI and GAUTHIER DE VILLERS (eds), *Chasse au diamant au Congo/Zaire*, Cahiers Africains 45–6 (série 2000). Tervuren: Institut Africain–CEDAF; Paris: Harmattan, 2001, 240 pp., €18.59, ISBN 2 7475 0972 9 paperback.

Chasse au diamant was inspired by a seminar on the informal sector in Congo/Zaire held in 1997. The collection of papers seeks to look beyond the pillage of the Congo's riches by 'gemocrats' (Misser and Vallée's term for political actors whose power is linked with diamonds) and to explore the involvement of ordinary Congolese in the exploitation of diamonds by less formal methods (*artisanal*) as a survival strategy. The book covers various forms of diamond mining both legal and illicit, a distinction which is often unclear, as the terms *artisanal* and *informel* are used to cover both illegal and small-scale, but legal, activities.

The first part of the book provides an introductory overview of the complex dynamics of mineral exploitation in the Congo up to 2001, taking in the fall of Mobutu and the rise of Kabila. Misser and Vallée discuss the increasing importance of diamonds (and minerals in general) in Congolese politics and economics, exploring the commercial interests of political elites, international diamond corporations and the external armies present on Congolese soil. Leclerc adds a reflection on the nature of the politico-commercial networks (*filières*) linking the various actors involved in the diamond industry at both formal and *artisanal* levels, concluding that predatory exploitation in the interests of the few leaves little hope of Congo's mineral resources being turned to wider developmental ends.

The greater part of the book is dedicated to personal accounts of the diamond industry as experienced 'from below'. Much of the research for these was undertaken in the early 1990s, preceding the civil war and Kabila era. Omasombo's study of the Kisangani area highlights firstly the transformation of the city, whose economic role has been superseded by the diamond villages and where a get-rich-quick culture pervades; and secondly provides a rich insider view of the harsh realities of those villages, which essentially function as autocratic mini-states existing on the edge of legality but shored up by clientelist relations with the country's political elite.

Several articles pertain to the *Bana Lunda* (young urban Congolese mining diamonds in the Lunda Norte region of Angola). Kivilu explores the search for 'paradise on earth' through diamond mining, the appeal of a Wild West style adventure in the face of the decomposition of the state. The hardships (and horrors) are outweighed by the potential riches to be gained for the lucky 'princes' who succeed. De Broeck's sociological analysis of this phenomenon

explains how modernisation theories are effectively turned on their head, with the villagisation of Kinshasa and the dollarisation of rural areas. The interplay of modern and traditional dynamics in the diamond 'hunt' is analysed in terms of the restructuring of male identity in his first article, and of female identity in his second. The volume concludes with a description of the Ngokas incident, illustrating the capacity of ordinary people to mobilise around diamond mining practices when the state is seen as being too predatory.

Although the analysis of the socio-political dimensions sometimes lacks depth, the personal accounts provide a captivating illustration of the social realities of the diamond industry (tales of witchcraft, suffering, untold riches and corruption), well captured in the title, 'Hunting diamonds'. One cannot but be struck by the contradictions that emerge: of the worthlessness of education to a diamond hunter, yet the emphasis those who succeed place on educating their children; of the importance of trust within mining groups set against how quickly it dissipates after a big find; of the widespread recourse to witchcraft yet the feeling that diamonds secured in this way are destructive; and especially of the decomposed state, offering little social security to the population, set against the highly organised nature of the diamond industry from the lowest to the highest levels. For anyone seeking a deeper understanding of the diamond sector, beyond the politics of international 'blood' diamonds, this volume provides some interesting insights into the experiences of ordinary people.

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K. N. GETACHEW, *Among the Pastoral Afar in Ethiopia: Tradition, Continuity and Socio-economic Change*. Utrecht: International Books; Addis Ababa: OSS-REA, 2001, 208 pp., £14.95, ISBN 90 5727 039 0 paperback.

This book is a solid anthropological study of an important but understudied people: the Afar in Ethiopia, counting some 1.5 million. Remarkably, there are very few published works on this Cushitic-speaking, Islamic pastoralist group. In the old travellers' literature and among neighbouring groups the Afar were known as 'Adal', 'Tiltal' or 'Danakil'. The Afar live in an arid, resource-poor zone but occupy a strategic place in the Horn of Africa (living in Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti) and are crucial to the stability of the region. Noted for their historical reputation of independence and wariness of outsiders, and feared because of their raiding tactics, the Afar are at present in dire straits owing to persistent drought, encroaching agriculture by outsiders and often oppressive state influence. Their habitat, the Danakil lowland in the Rift Valley, is one of the harshest places in the world, with its scorching heat, its scant resources and its vulnerability to natural calamities.

Getachew Kassa of Addis Ababa University has done a great job in presenting us with a clear and well documented analysis of the Ethiopian Afar, based on field research of more than eighteen months in 1994–95 in the Middle Awash, a little known area of Afar habitation but one where they were most clearly affected by commercial farm development on Afar grazing land (e.g. state farms set up in the 1960s during the last decade of Emperor Haile Selassie's rule).

The main theme of the book is social change in Afar society. Against the background of an ethnological description of how this society works, the author assesses the impact of the externally induced changes—resulting from large-scale irrigation and settlement projects as well as confrontation with the