

rugby club (Chapter 8). Combined, Smith demonstrates that these contradictions, as well as many others that define the book, are not only related to democratic state building, but also to the very fabric of social life.

The only contradictions that Smith fails to address are those that he experienced while conducting research. Apart from a small paragraph on page 15, we are not given insight into his unquestionably multifarious experiences while collecting the data and how he navigated this complex web of contradictions. Adding this personal and reflexive dimension would not only have heightened this formidable book's appeal, but would have answered some of the questions that we, especially as ethnographers, are unfortunately left with after reading it.

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Power and the Presidency in Kenya: the Jomo Kenyatta years by ANAÏS ANGELO
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. 325. \$99.99 (hbk).

doi:10.1017/S0022278X20000099

In *Power and the Presidency in Kenya*, Anaïs Angelo explores the rise of Jomo Kenyatta to become Kenya's founding president and how his political career shaped the Kenyan presidency. With a wealth of original archival research, Angelo injects a fresh perspective into the historiography of post-colonial political development in Kenya. The book is an important instalment in the study of Kenyan politics, and challenges several established assumptions about the nature of executive power under Kenyatta. Characterising his leadership style as 'secluded' (179) and reliant on 'charismatic indecisiveness' (87), Angelo shows how Kenyatta tactfully leveraged his own political weaknesses to emerge as Kenya's indispensable post-colonial leader.

The book begins by exploring Kenyatta's political thought. With evidence from his writings, speeches and secondary sources, Angelo argues that Kenyatta lacked a fixed political ideology. Instead, he was a malleable pragmatist, albeit with a deep belief that the family was the primary political unit in line with established Kikuyu moral economy. Building on this foundation, Kenyatta viewed the state as having a limited role in the everyday lives of citizens, beyond establishing order and protecting property rights. The book also grapples with Kenyatta's ambiguous approach to political ethnicity. Although his political thought matured within a Kikuyu cultural milieu, Angelo argues that Kenyatta was not necessarily a tribalist, partly on account of his overriding elevation of the family.

These observations largely jibe with the historical record. Kenyatta opposed the redistribution of alienated land (under colonial rule) 'for free', instead championing a 'willing buyer willing seller' approach that disproportionately benefitted well-connected politicians and bureaucrats at the expense of the landless poor (many of whom were his Kikuyu co-ethnics). And while he appointed Kikuyus to key government positions, Kenyatta did not engage in ethnic mass political mobilisation. His 'kitchen cabinet' was limited to Kiambu Kikuyu, to the exclusion of Kikuyus from other districts. Furthermore, he built enduring alliances with leading non-Kikuyu politicians as a means of cementing his authority and balancing fellow Kikuyu elites.

The rest of the book examines how Kenyatta's precarious political position before independence and the question of land redistribution shaped the institution of the Kenyan presidency. To this end, Angelo relies on both Kenyan and British archives. The former paint a picture of Kenyatta's administrative style. The latter document Kenyatta's imprisonment, unexpected political resuscitation right before independence, and British perceptions of the post-independence administration.

More than previous works, Angelo documents the unexpectedness of Kenyatta's political revival. Much of Kenya's political development in the decade leading up to independence happened while he was in prison. And even after he became Prime Minister, Kenya's political class still believed that his leadership was temporary. Angelo argues, convincingly, that the precarity of Kenyatta's political power, his personal predilection against organised politics, and the Kenya African National Union's (KANU) organisational weakness and factional squabbles led him to adopt a strategy of intentional seclusion. Instead of involving himself with everyday party politics, Kenyatta relied on his charisma as the founding leader of the nation, tactfully managed KANU's factions, and projected power through a bureaucracy. Stated differently, Kenyatta chose to be above politics as a matter of necessity. The same strategy of seclusion informed his approach to the question of land resettlement. After centralising control over land policy, he retreated, leaving bureaucrats and politicians squabbling over policy specifics and actual pieces of land. Overall, Kenyatta's approach to land redistribution stunted the development of mass politics within KANU and precipitated the schism in 1966. Ultimately, these dynamics yielded the presidency that emerged under Kenyatta: at once powerful but also secluded from everyday politics and governance.

Power and The Presidency in Kenya is likely to fuel enriching academic debates well into the future. More broadly, it is a timely reminder of the need to take seriously African leaders' political thought and agency in structuring post-colonial institutional trajectories in the region.

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The Politics of Poverty: policy-making and development in rural Tanzania by

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Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. 381. \$120 (hbk).

doi:10.1017/S0022278X20000117

South-eastern Tanzania, comprising Lindi and Mtwara regions, is an area under-explored in historical and ethnographic works of Tanzania. It is also considered one of the least economically developed areas in the country. This book aims to illuminate the roots of this marginalisation and to address debates in development and poverty more broadly by focusing on the social, economic and political dynamics of the region from the colonial era of the 1930s to the 2000s. Becker examines why rural poverty endures here despite generations of efforts to address it. Her analysis relies on archival material, documents from a local NGO, and interviews with development practitioners and residents of the region, to understand the persistence of poverty and the efforts made by the state to address it.