The history and legacy of othering in Ethiopia during the nineteenth century is usefully applicable in postcolonial Africa, where authoritarian elites have often created a category of 'other' in order to consolidate their power and privilege. We can cite numerous examples: in Sudan, where the othering process began first as the north versus the south and then between so-called 'Arabs' and non-Arabs;[7] or in Zambia, where the founding president and long retired Kenneth Kaunda was listed as a non-citizen illegal alien marked for deportation;[8] to the Ivory Coast, where the loser of the 2010 presidential contest, Laurent Gbagbo, labeled the winner, Alessane Ouattara, a non-Ivorian and refused to concede and transfer power.[9] Yates successfully demonstrates how othering has been a tool of governance well before the postcolonial era. Rather than his effort to extend the original meaning of *Hābāsha* linked to plundering and violence, and as such considered outmoded, into a pan-Ethiopian identity, his focus on 'othering' as a tool of governance is widely useful and important. But the book's contribution lies in the utility of applying the Ethiopian theme of othering to broader African historical studies.

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Changes in the (Namibian) Land

Shaping the African Savannah: From Capitalist Frontier to Arid Eden in Namibia

By Michael Bollig. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. 425. $99.99, hardcover (ISBN: 9781108488488); $31.99, paperback (ISBN: 9781108726399); $80.00, e-book (ISBN: 9781108809900).

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Shaping the African Savannah represents the culmination of more than 25 years of research in the northwestern Namibian Kaokoveld by anthropologist Michael Bollig. In it, Bollig offers a mature synthesis that uses a wide array of sources and methodologies to construct a history of changes in the 'environmental infrastructure'. This concept, first developed by Ian Hodder and Emmanuele Kreike (8) to describe the product of creative interplay between both human and non-human actors, seeks to overcome nature-culture dualism. The book lays out how those changes came about and what they mean for the survival of the savannah and the people who call it home. This is a region perhaps best known to outsiders as the home of Herero pastoralists and desert elephants. Dramatic changes in the relationship between people and the environment in northwestern Namibia over the last 150 years demonstrates the wide range of adaptive possibilities as well as the hard material limitations.

While Bollig carefully lays out the particulars of this case, he is also interested in what it tells us about changes in other arid savannah landscapes. He posits that change from one phase of

[7]A. S. Natsios, *Sudan, South Sudan, and Darfur: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York, 2012).
[8]*The New York Times*, 19 Oct. 1995.
[9]*The Guardian*, 6 Dec. 2010.

environmental infrastructure to another is precipitated by ruptures due to external forces — like violence, new technologies, disease, government policy, or trade — that result in changed power relations, territorial boundaries, or material resources. In similar environments, like East Africa, cycles of stability and collapse may be the result of internal forces. It is significant that in Bollig's telling of the Kaokoveld, external forces predominated and resulted in phased changes, accompanied by extraordinary adaptation and resilience. These are not isolated, unchanging 'traditional' communities, but rather a region that has met external challenges with rapid innovation, based on a stable set of values and cultural patterns within an environmental infrastructure that limited possibilities. Human creativity and political processes have largely been responsible for these large-scale changes. Bollig suggests that pastoralists in this part of Namibia are facing significant impacts from climate change in the near future; they may need to assert their autonomy again in the face of external challenges in order to co-create new environmental infrastructures capable of supporting the region's life.

Bollig's history unfolds chronologically, starting with the long-term prehistory of movements in and out of the region by foragers with small stock over 2000 years and considering how foragers interacted with emerging pastoralist communities until the nineteenth century. At this stage elephants contributed as much to the development of the environmental infrastructure as people, both in the effects of their foraging habits on the savannah and of their later decimation as objects of commercial hunting. The early forager-pastoralist era was interrupted in the late nineteenth century by violent raids driven by capitalist trading networks in cattle and ivory, bringing the rinderpest that depopulated and de-pastoralized the area, and opening the way for the imposition of German, and later South African, colonial rule and knowledge systems.

By the early twentieth century, the socio-ecological system was transformed by the adoption of large-scale pastoralism with the establishment of colonial stability and the end of violence. Pastoralists began moving back into the region and established settlements centered around big men who occupied strategic water points. As cattle herds increased, pastoralists changed the environmental infrastructure through practices of transhumance and fire that encouraged grazing tolerant species and reduced wildlife numbers. The government policy of enforced 'encapsulation' or territorial isolation and the control of mobility precipitated further changes. The state isolated communities by dividing them into ethnic reserves and restricting the movement of cattle and hunting, which separated people from wildlife. During the period of South African rule, the apartheid government's 'betterment' policies further enforced self-sufficient economies. The Kaokoveld was isolated externally by restricting trade and cattle movement across its boundaries, in part because of fear that herders' cattle would spread cattle lung sickness (CBPP) to white settler areas. Colonial rules cut people off from kin and trade networks, thus creating the isolated subsistence lifestyle now understood to be 'traditional'. Restrictions on mobility resulted in famine, especially during drought, which increased poverty and degraded soil and savannah ecologies.

During the 1950s the state sought to develop the area through the intensification of livestock management and the massive expansion of boreholes via collaboration between chiefs and administrative experts. The idea was that by providing water for each chiefdom, people would be able to raise cattle more intensively while remaining within their ethnic borders. Pastoralists responded to the new system by adapting a complex social system of livestock transfer and wealth accumulation, leading to competition and differentiation within and between ethnicized communities. Boreholes impacted the environmental infrastructure in multiple ways, resulting in new settlement and grazing patterns that in turn led to the replacement of perennial grasses with annual, the spread of the grazing range, fewer fires, and a lower water table. In the past, people moved in times of environmental stress, but this was impossible with boundary restrictions still in place; by the 1970s the collapse of both wildlife and cattle populations brought a new rupture as a result of drought and a return to violence associated with Namibian independence and the militarizing of the Angolan border.

As Bollig details, a new regime of game protection, community conversation, and the emergence of powerful international NGOs resulted. By the late 1970s, drought, livestock loss, and war had

decimated local herds. Poaching increased and wildlife suffered. With elephants playing a central role, international conservation NGOs began to target the Kaokoveld as a model for community conservation and game parks with global value and support. The era of Namibian independence after 1990 was characterized by more intensive land use through pastoralism and agriculture, with an increasing emphasis on conservation livelihoods through grassroots initiatives and traditional authorities focused on Community Based Natural Resource Management, with external funding. While wildlife numbers have recovered, the intensive globalization of the Kaokoveld has also resulted in denser settlements, sedentarism, and reliance on tourism, mining, wage work, and remittances. With climate change and the exponential growth of livestock and human populations, the common pool of pastoral resources is declining and the region faces an uncertain future.

Bollig commands a wide range of sources and methodologies that contribute to the incredible depth and breadth of this study. Having regularly lived in this region since the early 1990s and speaking the Otjihererro language, the book benefits from his on-the-ground knowledge. It is amazingly interdisciplinary, using oral history interviews, ethnography, pastoral household surveys, environmental surveys, archives, biological and economic data, secondary sources, newspapers, historical maps and photographs, letters of complaint to the administration, and reports by government, private companies, and NGOs. His command of oral tradition is also commendable. In turning to oral history for evidence from local voices on changes in the 1950s, Bollig relates his surprise that more recent stories of boreholes and development projects are not part of collective memory, in contrast to the grand narratives of an earlier era. Yet that is what historians of oral tradition would expect with narratives from different eras and time scales. Bollig's theory is equally eclectic and strong — drawing on a new materialism, environmental history, and political ecology. Yet in spite of his intimate knowledge of people in the region, the analysis often feels remote and unconnected to relatable people and their everyday lives. For the reader unacquainted with the geography, ecology, and ethnography of this region, one would appreciate more introductory overview and orienting maps.

The study concludes by assessing troubling future scenarios, given the dire projections of climate change. Those futures include 'the arid Eden', a vision that implies an ever-increasing reliance on wildlife and managed pastoralism, which Bollig asserts have disputed success. Recent attempts to develop mines and build dams for industrialization resulted in considerable community opposition, with international support. Other future scenarios include reliance on social transfers and intensive livestock development. The final scenario is the trend toward the ethnicization of semi-autonomous governance, where local control over natural resources is based on ethnic affiliation.

Despite this move toward a form of ethnic encapsulation, Bollig argues that this new regime depends on public and private global partnerships for survival, while demanding the evolution of traditions of chiefs and customary knowledge. Herero ethnicity is performed for tourists as a market commodity, projecting an image of age-old traditional pastoralism, which has been anything but stagnant. Throughout Bollig's history, it is clear that he sees the precedent of community adaptation as the only viable way forward. Adaptation is ongoing: locals have used older patterns of livestock loans and patronage to spread out risk, adapted seasonal livestock camps to new water sources, innovated new rules and rituals for pasture access, relied on local cattle breeds and traditional authorities, and generated young, educated leaders for community conservation work, while asserting their own autonomy. This has resulted in demands for reconfigured notions of tradition within the old chieftaincy boundaries, which are now governed by elected committees, who act as gatekeepers to deal with both the state and donor organizations. It has also resulted in the commodification of wildlife like desert elephants and plants that can be sold on the global market, with uncertain implications. While Bollig does not end with a prescription or a clear future, he does indicate that in these local arrangements are likely to be found adaptations sustained by the emerging environmental infrastructure.

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