be explained? While some workers joined the armed struggle, what happened to those who remained in their factories—did they engage in workplace or community activities that laid the basis for later developments? With black politics effectively banned, many activists turned their energies to social organizations, such as sports bodies. What about the development of the nonracial sports movement, which inspired the successful international campaign against apartheid in sports?

Such questions invariably reflect intensely diverse and evolving political landscapes. This volume illuminates a wide range of political activity hidden beneath the surface of everyday life in 1960s South Africa. It provides an important basis for further analysis of that neglected decade and should spark much debate.

Allison Drew
University of York
York, U.K.

Jocelyn Alexander. *The Unsettled Land: State-Making and the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe 1893–2003.* Athens: Ohio University Press / Oxford: James Currey / Harare: Weaver Press, 2006. x + 230 pp. Maps. Notes. References. Index. $49.95. Cloth. $24.95. Paper.

These days it is hard to write about the Zimbabwean state. In 2000 President Mugabe and his ministers seemingly junked their own well-established principles of technocratic management. Nowhere was this volte-face more apparent than in policies related to land and natural resources. Rhodesia and then Zimbabwe had led the world in soil conservation, agricultural extension, export tobacco, and eco-tourism. Suddenly, however, crazed "war veterans" and other paramilitary groups were slashing and burning their way through institutions and practices previously considered inviolate. After a pause of some years, Anglo-American scholars have produced a spate of books on Zimbabwe, but none dissects the state and makes sense of its transformation more competently and completely than Alexander's *The Unsettled Land.* Her post-2000 chapter describes "a closely orchestrated process of remaking the state… in which land took centre stage" (180). Throughout, Alexander stresses complexity and compromise. Viewed through the lens of development policy, Zimbabwe has seen no revolutions, only recalibrations of the balance among technocracy, violence, and lineage-based rule. Alexander emphasizes flux and nuance, thus distinguishing her account from Mahmood Mamdani's "one-size-fits-all model" (5) and that of James Scott as well. This careful treatment is sure to set a new standard for histories of state-making in Africa.

The Unsettled Land advances its argument through two district-level case studies. In another innovative move, Alexander focuses on the local state, caught as it is between administrative rationale(s) and the quotidian mud-

https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.2008.0011 Published online by Cambridge University Press

dle of implementation. More interesting still, her cases—Chimanimani in Manicaland and Insiza in Matabeleland—straddle conventional oppositions: Shona versus Ndebele, crops versus cattle, and loyalty versus opposition to the postcolonial state. As Alexander demonstrates, those binaries cast little light upon the interstices of ruling and being ruled. So too, the conventional account of technocratic land-use planning (1940s–1960s) giving way to a traditionalist policy (1960s–1970s) and returning to technocracy (1980s–1990s) explains only part of the story. In each period, planners, extension agents, district administrators, chiefs, headmen, and their subjects had to negotiate with each other. Sometimes debate broke into the open, but more often players conducted it through indirection, innuendo, and double-dealing. For instance, peasants frequently demanded larger native reserves while the state insisted they use the existing reserves more efficiently. In either scenario, chiefs might benefit or lose, depending on population densities and the extent to which they did and would control land allocation. Hence they hedged in their advocacy, at different times following one, both, or neither approach. Plausible deniability was the rule of thumb. The stakes were particularly high during periods of armed insurrection: the independence war of the 1970s, and Matabeleland's *Gukurahundi* of the 1980s, wherein the army massacred thousands. In those contexts, a convincing show of loyalty meant the difference between life and death. Given these constraints, how could the state ever promote its high-minded ideals of conservation, agricultural improvement, or democracy?

On this last point only—a speculation on democracy in rural Zimbabwe—*The Unsettled Land* leaves questions unanswered. Colonialism, postcolonial development, and other modernizing projects have carried with them the legacy of the French Revolution: to replace monarchy and oligarchy with some form of popular enfranchisement. In the 1980s and 1990s this drive marginalized and displaced chiefs with one elected committee after another: from village development committees, to rural district councils, to wildlife committees, all of which Alexander discusses separately. Taken together, this institutional ferment threatened to democratize the polity from below—and even to feminize it, as many of the committees required a quota of female office-holders. By the late 1990s, international donors, local NGOs, and many civil servants openly advocated the replacement of male, hereditary leadership with more-or-less meritocratic structures. Neither technocratic nor traditionalist, these voices echoed far older movements against monarchy and in favor of individual rights. Alexander could say more about this implicitly liberal effort at state-making. But, then, given the post-2000 autocratic turn, her history would have been one of what could have happened rather than of what did happen.

David McDermott Hughes
Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey
New Brunswick, New Jersey

https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.2008.0011 Published online by Cambridge University Press