

the twentieth century such as Ghanaian independence or the Second World War do not feature very prominently (p. 200) – interweaving them with the greater themes of the history of Ghana and other parts of the world. The choice of the eight men was based on the quality of personal rapport and the richness of Miescher's first conversations with them (p. xvi). While it is true that this selection represents a range of life experiences and differences in socioeconomic status, the men represented are all achievers in the sense of having reached the status of elderhood and prominence. Not only are they vocal, most of them have also left a considerable written record. Miescher reminds us of the fact that their inclusion in the book and the way they were represented is to a large extent a result of their agency and is just one step further in their striving to leave a legacy (p. xix). Precisely because the author makes it so clear that elderhood is the ultimate goal of men and women, one would have liked to see the inclusion of commoners and of people who have not achieved this status, whether they failed in their efforts, did not strive for it or were excluded from the avenues leading to it.

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## PORTRAIT OF A NAMIBIAN FREEDOM FIGHTER

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*Kaxumba kaNdola: Man and Myth. The Biography of a Barefoot Soldier.* By ELLEN NDESHI NAMHILA. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2005. Pp. xi + 157. No price given (ISBN 3-905141-86-8).

KEY WORDS: Namibia, biography, independence, wars, protest, resistance.

Born in 1918 in a northern Namibian village, Eliaser Tuhadeleni earned, while still a juvenile, the local name 'the organ (piano or harmonica) of Endola' (*kaxumba kaNdola*) for his melodic voice. Soon, Tuhadeleni, like many others, moved further south into what was then known as the 'Police Zone' of South-West Africa, where from the mid-1930s he went for *okaholo* (contract labour). His sense for unjust treatment and solidarity with others soon made him emerge as a politically obstinate 'trouble maker' in the eyes of white employers and authorities. The 1950s presaged the dawn of the anti-colonial liberation movement against South African occupation and its settler-colonial apartheid system. As a fearless and honest man, an excellent organizer and an articulate speaker in his mother tongue, Tuhadeleni became a central mobilizing factor. The meetings he organized on behalf of the Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO) and later the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) were called 'Kaxumba's rallies' (*oyoongi yaKaxumba*).

Tuhadeleni never left for exile but organized resistance from within. He was a central figure until the mid-1960s and achieved a mystical reputation for outsmarting the South African police and army in their painstaking yet futile efforts to arrest him. Legendary already in his own lifetime, he ultimately fell into the hands of the authorities in March 1967 through betrayal. As 'accused no. 1', Tuhadeleni, together with 36 other Namibian patriots, faced an internationally widely condemned show trial in Pretoria. In February 1968, the foreign court sentenced him and 18 others under the notorious Terrorism Act no. 83 of 1967 (enacted only after their arrest) to life imprisonment. Another nine accused (including Andimba Toivo ja Toivo) received 20 years' imprisonment.

Released in 1985, Tuhadeleni returned from exile to Namibia in 1989. In contrast to others and despite his popularity – if not fame – (or maybe because of it?) he never entered the higher echelons of political office bearers in the party ranks and government. These were established and consolidated mainly in exile while he and others were locked away in prisons like Robben Island. In 1997 Tuhadeleni died as a poor and disappointed veteran back home in northern Namibia.

Ellen Ndeshi Namhila, herself from the same region, is now, after many years in exile, the Director of the Library and Archive Services in the Ministry of Education in Windhoek and has collected, since the mid-1990s, traces, evidence and interviews to construct a portrait of this remarkable Namibian freedom fighter, who remained loyal to his people and his values throughout his life. It is a compilation of oral history rather than a biography. It often lacks analytical reflection and critical distance from its subject and the recorded testimonies. At times it borders on the kind of ‘patriotic history’ the postcolonial office bearers would like to see replacing the colonial-style ‘invention of tradition’. But it doesn’t completely fit in with the ‘heroic narratives’ of those now in political power. After all, Tuhadeleni never became one of them.

While it requires some careful reading between the lines, the story unfolding is evidence of anything but glory and romanticism. It shows instead the heavy toll which commitment to a liberation movement demanded from individuals. Without academic ambitions, this volume contributes to the task of collecting and disclosing social realities as well as histories on the ground, during the so-called ‘struggle days’. It has achieved nothing less than this.

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## CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES AND SLAVES IN EASTERN AFRICA

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*The Evangelization of Slaves and Catholic Origins in Eastern Africa.* By PAUL V. KOLLMAN. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005. Pp. xxviii + 356. \$25 (ISBN 1-57075-626-0).

KEY WORDS: Eastern Africa, Christianity, missions, slavery abolition.

Cet ouvrage débute dans la préface (p. xix) d’une manière intrigante où l’auteur déclare son intention de remettre les Spiritains à leur juste place, usurpée dans l’histoire de l’évangélisation de l’Afrique de l’Est par les Pères Blancs. Heureusement il n’en est plus question dans la suite de l’ouvrage, il ne s’agit pas d’un règlement de compte entre ordres missionnaires catholiques concurrents, ni d’un travail hagiographique. Les Spiritains sont implantés de façon précoce (1862: Zanzibar; 1868: Bagamoyo) et importante sur la côte africaine de l’Océan indien et leur histoire mérite d’être plus étudiée et mieux connue indépendamment de leur rivalité avec les Pères Blancs. L’auteur appartenant à la congrégation de la Sainte Croix (*Holy Cross congregation*) fait un véritable travail d’historien. Cet ouvrage est d’ailleurs une adaptation de sa thèse de doctorat soutenue à la University of Chicago Divinity School en 2001.

L’auteur s’attache à travers un travail sérieux et minutieux à comprendre l’évangélisation des esclaves, c’est-à-dire une conversion destinée à des non-libres qui sont achetés dans la foi (souvent très jeunes, généralement désignés comme ‘les enfants de la mission’) plus qu’ils ne la rejoignent dans une démarche libre et