

adding proverbial interjections; Chapter 6 on editorial verification and the making of local correspondents is an intriguing exploration of the relationship between testimony and verity. Part 3, taken up by reception in a broad sense, feels diverse, successive chapters (7 and 8) examining the reasons for the absence of stories from Englund's main fieldwork site from the programme, and arguing that the programme works as a general moral instruction regardless of this; and then presenting the contrasting narrative preferences of born-again Christians, who look for more inspirational content in radio programmes than is offered by the narratives of 'News from the Districts'. A brief but wide-ranging conclusion returns to the possibility of equality based constitutively in obligations between people in non-egalitarian circumstances for which they are held to account by means which include programmes like '*Nkhani Zam maboma*'.

Supplying a chapter breakdown is by way of saying that this is not an easy book to summarize. Rather than a descriptive ethnography in a conventional sense, Englund has created his text from a series of linked engagements with, and discussions of, his evidence theorized from different perspectives. Many of the chapters can and no doubt will be used as stand-alone teaching texts, and the most discussed of the case studies are given verbatim in Appendices so that readers can follow his interpretations up from source. An extensive and wide-ranging bibliography is indicative of the extent to which this is also a theoretical work in anthropology. Anyone interested in African media and politics, irrespective of whether they work on Malawi, will want to read this serious work for the originality both of its case study of a single long-running programme, and of its construction through a variety of questions into which that case study can be drawn.

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JOHN MCCRACKEN, *A History of Malawi, 1859–1966*. Woodbridge: James Currey and Rochester NY: Boydell and Brewer (hb £85–978 1 84701 050 6). 2012, 485 pp.

Inspired by John Iliffe's *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, John McCracken's long-awaited *History of Malawi* is the first attempt to write a comprehensive synthesis of the modern history of this small but significant Central African country since the 'nation-building' histories of the 1970s. The book weighs in at a whopping 485 pages, covers considerable thematic and chronological ground (its dates are 1859–1966) and integrates a prodigious amount of primary and second material to produce a very readable survey of Malawi's colonial past.

The book is divided into sixteen chapters, beginning with the tumultuous nineteenth century and the advent of European missionary enterprise in the region. Subsequent chapters establish the background to the colonial economy and the central roles played by both Islam and Christianity in forging new types of identity and, sometimes, unique forms of political action. There is an entire chapter, for example, that revisits the Chitembo rising and its significance for Malawian history, with particular emphasis on its millenarian overtones. There are also chapters on the First World War and on the crucial inter-war years

during which economic patterns were established that would endure well into the post-war period –and were to have political significance as land hunger and agrarian reform efforts became the catalysts for rural unrest. Chapters follow on the Depression and how this led to the delay of development initiatives. The book also includes a re-examination of the role of various officials whose development and ‘agrarian reform’ efforts stoked rural resistance to colonial and ultimately federal overrule.

There are thematic chapters on the urban experience, the establishment of colonial administration and the relationship between town and country. The second half of the book is devoted to the years after 1945 during which Malawi’s peoples faced one of their greatest political challenges –white settler nationalism and the resulting imposition of the Central African Federation. Opposition to this arguably led to the formation of independent Malawi and a particular brand of politics that, in its focus on the need for unity to achieve national liberation, eventually contributed to the emergence of a one-party state. McCracken touches on the development of party and popular politics, the role of violence in political change, and on the impact of the 1959 State of Emergency on reshaping African resistance to colonial rule. He surveys the trajectory of Malawi’s incipient and then aborted labour movement, and the emergence of different factions within the Malawi Congress Party that would ultimately drive post-colonial politics. He does a commendable job of merging archival sources with a growing body of secondary literature on this period and provides considerable insight into the interplay between British and Malawian actors in bringing about a negotiated independence. The book culminates, quite rightly, not with the raising of the flag on 6 July 1964 but with the denouement following the 1964 cabinet crisis and Chipembere’s failed rebellion of 1965. McCracken argues that one cannot help but draw parallels between the latter and the Chilembwe revolt of some fifty years before, not just because both rebellions failed but also in the light of their legacies. Each led to new alliances and political and economic power groupings that would endure –in the latter case, until challenged again in the early 1990s.

John McCracken has provided a masterful survey of Malawi’s modern past, encompassing political, economic and socio-cultural perspectives. *A History of Malawi* is bound to become the go-to text for students and scholars of colonial Malawi and those interested in the foundations of the post-colonial period. It is sure to have considerable local appeal (one hopes future editions will be more affordable), and must surely become a standard reference for those interested in Malawi’s modern history, politics and economics.

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DANIEL LARGE and LUKE PATEY (eds), *Sudan Looks East: China, India and the politics of Asian alternatives*. Woodbridge: James Currey (pb £16.99 – 978 1 84701 037 7). 2011, 203 pp.

From its very outset, the welter of academic literature on resurgent Africa–Asia relations has had a broadly corrective feel. Scholars rightly attempt to interrogate reductive and tendentious Western representations of vulnerable African nations