

constituted around 10 per cent of the audience. Bearing in mind the Devonshire Declaration was provoked by Asian rather than African demands for equality with European settlers, Asians were clearly more than disinterested bystanders in any discussion of race and citizenship in colonial Kenya. More too could have been said of the Kenyan opponents of eugenics, particularly given the small minority of Europeans who participated in these debates.

In conclusion, *Race and Empire* is a powerful treatment of the limitations of colonial rule, the exchange and mutation of ideas between colony and metropole, and the complexity of notions of race that lay at the heart of the British imperial project. Innovative, theoretically sound and artfully constructed, it is highly recommended.

*University of Exeter*

DANIEL BRANCH

### AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN COLONIAL UGANDA

doi:10.1017/S002185370800354X

*Cultivating Success in Uganda: Kigezi Farmers and Colonial Policies.* By GRACE CARSWELL. Nairobi: The British Institute in Eastern Africa; Oxford: James Currey; Kampala: Fountain Publishers; Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007. Pp. xii + 258. £50 (ISBN 978-1-84701-600-3); £16.95, paperback (ISBN 978-1-84701-601-0).

KEY WORDS: Uganda, agriculture, environment, peasants.

Grace Carswell shares empirical evidence from a small place which upsets our assumptions about the effects of colonial policy on colonized places. After examining twentieth-century changes in the lush southwestern Ugandan region of Kigezi, Carswell's conclusions challenge assumptions in environmental scholarship: modernizing policies did not always succeed, traditional systems were not always inefficient, population growth is not always bad for the environment, but these assumptions can be.

This historiographical contribution is in the form of two arguments which emerge from a decade of fieldwork. Carswell mined the local archives, the piles of dumped and dusty files which can reward only the patient. In 1996, she repeated a 1945 land survey to reveal changes in land use and in local perceptions of change. Photographs, both archival and her own, illustrate these changes. She sought the testimony of elderly men and women in the hills of Kigezi, which is featured in a series of boxed case studies throughout the book. Her fieldwork reveals surprising evidence: farmers in Kigezi did not adopt colonial cash crops; but despite this, and contrary to accepted wisdom, they implemented land management techniques which have to this day successfully maintained agricultural production and positive environmental change under a growing rural population.

The first argument that arises from this evidence is that scrutiny both of colonial pronouncements of the success or failure of policies and of the varying definitions of success and failure is far more illuminating than accepting and repeating them. The goal of the British in Uganda was the production of low-bulk, high-value, non-food crops for export, to finance the colonial administration and satisfy British market demand. The colonial state concluded that cash cropping in Kigezi was a failure. Carswell argues that this colonial failure was actually a success for Kigezi

farmers. The British were unaware of a lively regional trade in crops which preceded imperial adventure in east Africa. Located on a major trading route linking Uganda, Rwanda and Congo, Kigezi farmers had long converted their surplus beans and sorghum into livestock, hides, blacksmithing products and salt. Blind to this vibrant activity and convinced that Kigezi was peripheral in Uganda, the British did not see the pre-existing demands on people's time and labor. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the British tried one crop after another: cotton, coffee, flax and tobacco.

And indeed Kigezi farmers did produce cash crops, even those brought by the British, but not for the benefit of the colonial state. Most crops gave the British temporary success, but each perplexed them with decreasing production in the face of increasing prices. Tobacco worked well for farmers, who soon found that it was more profitable if traded outside of the colonial marketing system. Smuggling was what the British called their failure to control tobacco marketing. Success for them was cash-crop marketing through the colonial state. Farmers did not see this failure, because they continued to produce cash crops for their regional market. Cash crops did not fail; cash cropping under colonial control did.

Carswell's blend of archival and oral research reveals gendered reasons for this failure. Because of their cultural conditioning, the British introduced crops through men, who, because of their own conditioning, turned to women to raise the crops without access to the profits. Women did not embrace this deal. Demands on women's time and labor were high all year, satisfying the existing regional trade. Women's rights over land were strong, and men alone could not meet colonial demand. Thus, women prevented colonial success in cash cropping, while maintaining success in their regional trade in crops. Each colonial failure justified another try at a cash crop and more environmental intervention.

This is Carswell's second theme. She argues that British centralized environmental policy led to intervention in the use of natural resources which menaces Kigezi to this day. Citing the contemporary literature which formed British assumptions about themselves and Africans, Carswell argues that the British came to Africa shrouded in beliefs about science and technology which undergirded the imperial mission: to modernize the backward continent by transforming subsistence producers into market-based producers linked to world markets. This zeal prevented them from seeing that local agricultural practice was also science. The British assumed Africans to be unscientific over-exploiters of natural resources and assumed their own mandate to intervene.

Kigezi farmers had long implemented strategies of erosion prevention and soil conservation. Farmers constructed terraces, fertilized, irrigated, intercropped, rotated crops and used weeds and crop residue to bind the soil. Despite known local variations like these, the British implemented reforms throughout East Africa. The unintended consequence is that people in Kigezi, despite being surrounded by evidence to the contrary, are convinced today that they are overpopulated, and that without intervention their agricultural practices are environmentally destructive. This is not just a historical quirk that Carswell has picked up on; she argues that this colonial perception persists to this day on the unquestioning lips of researchers and policy makers who continue to intervene in the control and use of natural resources.

*University of Maryland Eastern Shore*

KATHRYN BARRETT-GAINES