

When I first read that this book claims to address a wide audience embracing undergraduate and graduate students—with or without training in economics—in addition to academics and policymakers, I was skeptical. After reviewing it, however, I believe that the book does serve all of these audiences. There is only one chapter that would be too difficult for undergraduates with some economics training. While others have been simplified to address a wider readership, they maintain a level of rigor by including a comprehensive literature review, a complete history of the topic when warranted, a discussion of the various theories and their controversies, and ample use of time series and cross-sectional data from numerous countries.

Overall, *African Economic Development* is a superb book, amply fulfilling its promise. It discusses the strengths and weaknesses of various policy recommendations and supplies ample data to support or illustrate the range of topics explored. Equally important, it addresses the political and institutional milieus in which development takes place.

Lisa Daniels
Washington College
Chestertown, Maryland

Katherine A. Snyder. *The Iraqw of Tanzania: Negotiating Rural Development*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Case Studies in Anthropology, 2005. xii + 196 pp. Photographs. Bibliography. Index. \$20.00. Paper.

Lowe Börjeson. *A History Under Siege: Intensive Agriculture in the Mbulu Highlands, Tanzania, 19th Century to the Present*. Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2004. Distributed by Almqvist & Wicksell International. 187 pp. Photographs. Bibliography. SEK 266. Paper.

These two fine studies taken together are as refreshing as they are informative. They are both about the same ethnic group, the Iraqw (or Iraqw'ar Da/aw) of Tanzania. The study by Katherine A. Snyder is more of an ethnography, while that of Lowe Börjeson is more an historical ethnogeography. Both deal with agriculture, its intensification and modernization. They nicely complement each other and have implications for understanding development and change in other areas.

The Iraqw are anything but traditional (in the stereotypical use of that term). They clearly have an ability to adapt and adopt new technologies in agriculture and food production for their benefit. Both authors recognize that many Iraqw see that what is modern (even if Snyder uses the term with quotation marks) can also be desirable. To Snyder, “notions of tradition and modernity have resulted in a struggle over identity as well as the meaning of community” (2). Modern ways have clearly brought a diversification in agricultural products and pursuits. Snyder has an entire section on the

“decline in production” (91–94), but it is not clear whether she means a decline in total agricultural production with a concomitant decline in yields or whether it is a decline in per capita production as a result of population pressures resulting in ever smaller holdings. Is she, in fact, referring to a decline in grain and cattle production, which may have been offset by increases in tree crops, other crops, and livestock?

In neither study does one get the sense that accepting the modern has, in any significant way, undermined Iraqw traditional identity. Quite the contrary, the successful use of new ways of doing things seems actually to have helped sustain bonds of group identity that would otherwise have been lost for those seeking participation in the larger community. This does not mean, as Snyder’s study makes clear, that older forms of authority may not have been undermined; as would be expected, it is the younger members of the community who are most attracted to the practices of “modernity.” Snyder speaks of the “ways in which Iraqw manipulate ‘development’ for their own aims”; she notes that “Iraqw have always been quick to adopt changes that provide obvious benefits, yet who gets these benefits is always determined by those who are quickest to recognize the possible gains” (100).

Whatever problems modernity creates, “modernizing” elements allow its members both to retain their group identity and to participate more fully and effectively in the larger community and nation state. “In the Iraqw homeland, cultural practices continue to endure, albeit in modified form, in new circumstances and are deployed in novel ways to fit current problems, thus continually blurring the divide between past and present, tradition and modern” (100). This conclusion has broader applications. As is often the case, what seems to the outsider as an alien intrusion in a “traditional culture” is often accepted by the people themselves as local or even indigenous. Or, as is the case with the Iraqw, while they may have categories of tradition and *maendeleo* (progress), *maendeleo* itself has become part of Iraqw cultural identity.

Compared to Snyder’s book, *A History under Siege* has more material in it of interest to an economist. Börjesson understands Iraqw agricultural intensification as driven by a cultural dynamic of the Iraqw people themselves. In an apparent difference with Snyder, he sees intensification as most economists do, namely, as increasing productivity in terms of yield per unit of land. Early on, he dismisses some of the extreme Malthusian “narratives of environmental degradation” that showed “alarming rates . . . [of] processes of desertification, deforestation and overgrazing,” since they were “largely based on false assumptions, misjudgments and miscalculations” (15). The scientific literature on which Börjesson’s claims are based is sufficiently robust to allow him to move on to an Iraqw narrative of intensive agriculture that is not “based on a degradation narrative” (16).

This reviewer is anything but a Malthusian pessimist; quite the con-

trary, since I accept the validity of the literature refuting the more catastrophic forecasts of the 1960s and 1970s. However, there is a significant problem of soil degradation for African agriculture overall, and it is not a Malthusian one of population growth that clearly contributes to the problem. Simply stated, African agriculturalists are taking more nutrients out of their soils than they are returning, either with manure (plant or animal) or synthetic fertilizer. Nutrient depletion eventually results in structural damage to the soil. There are not even remotely enough “natural” nutrients to sustain cropping in Africa or elsewhere. Yields have risen dramatically all over the world outside of Africa for a variety of reasons, including increased fertilizer use. In Africa, lack of a transportation infrastructure has made fertilizer prohibitively expensive, often twice as much or more than the price at the port, and problems of foreign exchange and political instability have made its availability unreliable.

Börjeson’s survey of the literature on African agriculture and ecology is outstanding and allows him to define his own course of analysis by navigating between them. He quotes Abe Goldman, who argues that “what threatens the sustainability of African crops, agricultural practices, and productivity is more commonly the insufficient use of modern technology” (21). Börjeson is sympathetic to a more “ecological” approach to African agriculture, but he recognizes its limitations; if this book had been about selecting strategies for African agricultural development, he would likely have relied on a large component of modern technology. He draws heavily, in fact, on Ester Boserup’s work on the forces creating agricultural intensification without necessarily endorsing them.

Börjeson’s discussion of competing theories of agricultural intensification is largely a prelude to his own empirical study, which involves geography, ecology, and historical inquiry also encompassing culture, politics, and economics—all in 174 pages. It is a narrative that is so rich and densely textured that it is impossible to summarize, and it merits careful reading. Indeed, both books are highly recommended.

Thomas R. DeGregori
University of Houston
Houston, Texas

Paul R. Masson and Catherine Pattillo. *The Monetary Geography of Africa*.

Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute Press, 2004. xix + 217 pp. Graphics. Appendixes. Notes. Index. Cloth. \$39.95

In this insightful, thorough, extensively documented, and well-researched work, the reader is led to investigate the feasibility of a common African currency and encounters the geography of the continent—not in the usual sense of space, place, and ecology, but in the financial senses of deterritorialization and regional currency areas. As the authors indicate in the