

Ibrim, and Philae) is certainly consistent with the results of successive archaeological surveys of Nubia; the archaeological evidence leaves little doubt of a very sparse regional population in the Nubian corridor from the later second millennium BCE. A series of three graffiti relating to a ‘cattle road’ dating to Taharqo’s 19th year shows that the arid Nubian corridor was, by this time, a region to be traversed, rather than colonized and administered.

The second part of the volume draws out the considerable diversity in Kushite accommodations with varied existing local elites in Egypt. In Upper Egypt intermarriage with Theban elites seems to have been a key strategy. In Middle Egypt, Kushite royal monuments are notably absent, despite royal pretensions amongst local rulers in Lower Egypt. The final chapter explores some alternative perspectives on the political organization of the ‘Double Kingdom’. Pope makes clear the inadequacy of Egyptological models of a tightly centralized bureaucratic state for understanding the Kushite state. The potential of loosely-framed, segmented state models – already suggested for the later Meroitic kingdom – is further examined. Future work in this vein clearly has much potential now that so much essential groundwork has been established in this impressive study. Its full and wide-ranging bibliography and three indices also provide valuable support for readers negotiating a number of distinct bodies of scholarship. It is to be hoped that the high cost of this volume will not overly restrict the readership of this major contribution to historical studies of this important early African state.

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## IMPLICATIONS OF THE INVASION OF ETHIOPIA

*Collision of Empires: Italy’s Invasion of Ethiopia and its International Impact.*

Edited by G. Bruce Strang.

Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2013. Pp. xii + 385. £70, hardback (ISBN 978-1-4094-3009-4).

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**Key Words:** Ethiopia, diplomatic relations, military.

The Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, a defining moment in the history of the Horn of Africa, triggered profound changes in social and political landscapes. It also generated a wide-reaching and consequential diplomatic crisis, which exposed the League of Nations’ equivocal resolve to enforce its constituting Articles and the fragility of international agreements of collective security. It is this international impact of Italian aggression in Ethiopia that G. Bruce Strang’s edited volume examines with unprecedented comprehensiveness. This is a diplomatic history whose dominant focus lies not in Ethiopia but in the contested arena of pre-war diplomatic relations, primarily among Europe’s great powers.

The volume is clearly laid out, with chapters organized by country and contributors offering appraisals of particular national responses to the crisis that sprang from the war in Ethiopia. Chapters offer concise and useful overviews of respective historiographies.

In several cases contributors go beyond this, triangulating international archives to challenge or expand on received interpretations. Thus Strang highlights the ideological and demographic motivations that drove Italy's invasion of Ethiopia. Steven Morewood and Martin Thomas revisit the contested debates and policy considerations in Britain and France respectively. Both countries needed to negotiate commitments to collective security, in places supported by public opinion, against the demands of national interests in the context of pre-war Europe's shifting diplomatic configurations. Neither opted to decisively oppose Mussolini's aggression towards Ethiopia. A superb chapter by Geoffrey T. Waddington grounds the volume firmly in discussions about the origins of World War II, revealing the extent to which Nazi Germany benefitted from Italy's colonial war and the resultant international repercussions. Other contributors examine a broad range of arguably less-decisive national responses to the crisis, from the United States and Canada to Europe's neutral bystanders to the Soviet Union and Japan. The book thus takes its place squarely within the literature on the history of the League of Nations and its failings, and contributes to ongoing debates about international relations on the eve of the Second World War. Here lies both the focus and the strength of the book.

Yet historians of modern Africa will be disappointed to find the regional and continental dimensions of the conflict sidelined, the unfolding events in the Horn of Africa reduced to a trigger and background to the ensuing international crisis. The editor notes that the conflict in Ethiopia itself, which sparked the international crisis, has received scant academic attention. This is precisely right. The lens of historical scholarship remains focused on Italian motives and military organization, as well as on the invasion's global diplomatic ramifications. Engagement with Ethiopian voices, experiences, and responses remains minimal and insufficiently developed. *Collision of Empires* conforms to this mold. The invasion itself never comes into sharp focus. A single chapter, written by Ian S. Spears, is dedicated to Ethiopian realities. Spears offers a succinct summary of Haile Selassie's foreign policy, interpreted as a plea for the upholding of his fragile state's 'juridical sovereignty', an early display of the political extraversion that would undermine governance standards in independent Africa. The chapter has a distinctly dated feel, reproducing tropes about Ethiopia and its place in the world that have either been fundamentally revised – such as the idea that the battle of Adwa changed Europe's radicalized perceptions of Africans – or that are thankfully long buried – such as the claim that the Solomonic myth grounds Ethiopian exceptionalism in contemporary scholarship.

More original is J. Calvitt Clarke's detailed analysis of diplomatic and commercial ties between Ethiopia and Japan. Drawing on his own earlier work and an impressive range of international archival materials, he contributes fruitfully to the literature on Ethiopia's modernizing 'Japanisers' as much as on the relations between these two non-western Empires of the twentieth century.

It is regrettable that broader African responses to the invasion receive no attention. This is a function of the volume's narrow focus on high diplomacy, whereby other layers of 'international impact' are given little attention. Also regrettable are a string of minor editorial oversights that may raise some eyebrows and mar the otherwise flawless presentation of the volume, such as the claim that Tafari Mekonnen became regent in 1906 (p. 233).

It is sometimes suggested that for Africa, the Second World War began with the Italian invasion of 1935. G. Bruce Strang's edited book shows the extent to which Africa's early

war was tied to the emerging global conflicts. It is unfortunate that, in doing so, the book loses sight of the African dimensions of the war in the Horn of Africa.

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## STORYTELLERS AND STRAW MEN

*Remembering Nayeche and the Gray Bull Engiro: African Storytellers of the Karamoja Plateau and the Plains of Turkana.*

By Mustafa Kemal Mirzeler.

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014. Pp. xxi + 365. \$80, hardback (ISBN 9781442648661); \$34.95, paperback (ISBN 9781442626317).

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**Key Words:** Kenya, Uganda, oral narratives, sources.

Precolonial African history came into its own with the acceptance of a methodology for the analysis of oral tradition as historical evidence in the 1970s and 1980s. Although these early historians may have overreached, they nevertheless established a field based on African sources and agency that has since addressed its early naiveté. However, the difficulties inherent to working with oral tradition have attracted few scholars in recent years. Thus it was a pleasure to read a book that focused on the performance and meaning of an oral tradition about the origins of pastoralist Turkana from a wandering Jie woman, Nayeche, who followed the Gray Bull Engiro on the dry Uganda-Kenya borderlands. Mustafa Mirzeler's 'anthropology of storytelling' reiterates the lesson that oral tradition is performed in new ways with new meaning in each new historical context, creating a dialogic relationship with the past. Though this is not a new insight, it becomes an indiscriminate dismissal of the historical use of oral tradition.

Mirzeler lived in Karamoja for two years and learned the language well enough to perform the stories himself, returning frequently over the next seventeen years. Perhaps most impressively he apprenticed with Lodoche, a master Jie storyteller, and sought out storytellers' performances within their cultural context. He follows the story of Nayeche and the Gray Bull Engiro as a 'key cultural event' or 'master narrative'. His accounts of performance and audience interaction, focusing on the poetics of 'pastness' and his evocation of place and people are masterful. Mirzeler is interested in discourse analysis of memory and performance as they make meaning in the present. The Nayeche story is evoked in the context of interethnic peacemaking, dispute mediation, alliance network formation, personal identity construction, moral judgment, harvest and marriage rituals, and as a counter-narrative to modernization. Performers use the 'double image of the hero', who both embraces and rejects tradition, to comment on social responsibility and change in a variety of current contexts. For Mirzeler, there is no inherent or fixed meaning in historical tradition without the performance context. Local and personal experiences are filtered through oral tradition to legitimize present actions.

Landscape memory is critical to storytelling with the descent of Nayeche from the Jie agro-pastoralist Karamoja Plateau to the pastoralist Turkana Plain, passing specific