

The scope and breadth of medical research in East Africa today is vast. This book provides a timely reflection on previous medical research encounters in East Africa and adds to anthropological literature critiquing historical and contemporary medical interventions more broadly. The historical ethnographic analysis raises important lessons to be learnt from previous research endeavours, lessons that, as the material in this book illustrates, are unfortunately all too often overlooked. The discussions on past research encounters remain relevant with the findings applicable to research today.

A further aspect of the book that is therefore of particular interest given the subject of the book is in fact in the preface, where Graboyes writes a reflexive account of her own experience of fieldwork; of the methods she used for collecting data and her reflexions on negotiating ethics in the field. Some readers may want to read more about these processes, as this account provides an immediacy of the impact and realities of the subject matter of the book.

Covering a lot of ground, this book provides an insightful analysis of some of the social consequences of conducting research. While providing a critique of medical research endeavours, Graboyes work also demonstrates an approach to research that engages in this critique. Methodologically, therefore, the book invites reflexivity in research methods and ethics. This book, relevant for people interested in the history of medical research and interventions in East Africa, is especially valuable for those embarking on research in East Africa and elsewhere. While the book focuses on medical research, with the expanse of transnational research in other fields, the lessons from the analysis bear resonance to research practices more generally.

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**Understanding Contemporary Ethiopia: Monarchy, Revolution and the Legacy of Meles Zenawi**, edited by GÉRARD PRUNIER and ÉLOI FICQUET

London: Hurst, 2015. Pp. 416. £19.99 (pbk).

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This is probably an indispensable book on today's Ethiopia, giving us an original and well-written overview of the country and its recent transformations. It addresses recent history but also the current social, economic and political developments as well as the demographic and 'religious' situation. As so often noted, Ethiopia indeed has gone through dramatic changes in the past decades since the take-over of power in 1991 by the former insurgent movement, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (with at its core the Tigray People's Liberation Front, TPLF). This is despite the baseline of strongly authoritarian political governance being maintained and reinvented in new forms. The title of the book covers the scope and contents quite well, but some readers wondered if mentioning the late PM Meles Zenawi so prominently as having bequeathed a dominant personal 'legacy' is not overdoing it a bit: certainly such a legacy is cultivated by current rulers for political-symbolic reasons, but the policies inaugurated were broader than just the role of one man.

This book is loosely based on the French collection *L'Éthiopie Contemporaine*, edited by Prunier and published by Karthala (Paris) in 2007, with a number of the same authors and subjects retained. But it has become a very different publication in style and substance, with seriously rewritten texts and new contributions. In the 16 chapters, of differing quality, we here get good state-of-the-art overviews of the various domains of 20th-early 21st century Ethiopia, including many of the controversies and disputes that mark this country, from the 'ethnic-based federal' political model to elections to the 'developmental state', and on issues of governance and rights, ethno-regional conflict and economic challenges. Ethiopia is by now certainly one of the best studied countries of Africa, and the literature on it is enormous. Still, this book, often in lively and engaging language, breaks new ground. It presents a kind of integrative synthesis and an essential introduction to the complexities of this country, starting from the observation – no doubt correct – that it '... tends to be oversized in the minds of its own inhabitants, who are the first to believe in the mythical qualities of the motherland' (p. 1). But Ethiopia is indeed of growing importance in Africa – due to population size, its historic role in Africanist causes, and its recent economic upsurge, despite political stagnation and a repressive atmosphere.

Although the editors clearly indicate (p. 4) that the book is not 'exhaustive', the chapters give broad and fairly complete coverage of the key themes: religious communities, political organisation, the Eritrean issue, economics, and population dynamics, including a chapter by G. Bonacci on African-American and Caribbean communities (but mainly on the Rastafarians) and their bonds with the country. This chapter is nice reading but having a narrow focus fits less well within the general perspective of this book. The chapters are up-to-date and well-attuned to modern readers who wish to have solid information on the Ethiopia of today. What might have been given more attention in such a book, however, are ethno-cultural issues and problems of social structure. Some of these aspects are nevertheless referred to in the long opening chapter by E. Ficquet and Dereje Feyissa on the structure and transformation of the Ethiopian population, a crucial issue: population dynamics – its rapid growth, composition, social and ethnic divisions – is essential stuff to consider in assessing the country's future. Of course, there are also the necessary historical chapters, without which any grasp of this country is impossible. Shiferaw Bekele writes in measured prose about the 19th-century history of Ethiopian state formation and slow entry into modernity, Christopher Clapham lucidly about Emperor Haile Selassie, Gérard Prunier emphatically about the dramatic period of the Ethiopian revolution (1974) and the Derg regime, and Medhane Tadesse gives a history of the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front, the core movement in the current ruling party EPRDF.

The last section of the book groups six chapters on more contemporary issues, like S. Vaughan's benevolent analysis of the post-1991 political dispensation (ethno-federalism, 'revolutionary democracy'), and P. Gilkes on the Ethiopian parliamentary elections of 2005 and 2010 (a pity that the 2015 round, with a 100% seat-win for the ruling party, could not be discussed). He lauds the EPRDF but his discussion does not support the idea that a democratic system is in place in Ethiopia. Medhane's second chapter is on Ethiopia's

growing influence in the wider Horn region, and he predicts a clash with Egypt. There is also an insightful chapter by Perrine Duroyaume on Addis Ababa and its urban renewal (or some, like many of the displaced inhabitants, would say: urban upheaval and disfiguration) and programme of forced high-rise building, also for small owners, and social safety-net subversion. The chapter by R. Lefort on the Ethiopian economy and the one by Prunier on the 'Meles Zenawi era' are bound to be (and probably meant to be) provocative and debatable. Indeed, this contentious character is what makes this book as a whole so interesting and engaging (e.g. read some of the claims in the Introductory chapter). It generates new research questions, challenges easy interpretations of the country's entry into 'modernity' and 'development', and prevents us from following an adulatory mode of writing on this fascinating but also deeply problematic country (to which some authors here and there succumb, however). The editors hope for a 'democratic and prosperous' Ethiopia (p. 14), and one cannot but share this hope, although it is probably utopian in the case of the democracy aspect.

The book has an excellent index, and a nice map section with information about the distribution of ethnic and religious groups, natural features, and administrative divisions, and presents the interesting V-shaped Rift Valley-oriented map, indeed giving a 'new perspective' on Ethiopia. A final detail: a typo on p. v gives the date of birth of Jacques Bureau, the noted French Ethiopianist to whom the book is dedicated, as 1956 instead of 1946.

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**The Struggling State: Nationalism, Mass-Militarisation, and the Education of Eritrea,** by JENNIFER RIGGAN

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In her book *The Struggling State* Jennifer Riggan critically analyses the Eritrean governments' policy of societal militarisation and its impact on educational sector. She highlights the relations between the teachers and students of the high school at Assab in southern Eritrea. The author shares her personal experiences as a teacher in order to exemplify the suffering of the people through the narratives of students and teachers and she problematises the legacy of the EPLF/PFDJ's 'warrior ethos' that is perpetuated by indefinite national service.

The book follows a chronological flow that takes the reader inside the prison state of Eritrea and illustrates the militarisation of the entire society. The author presents an empirical study based on her sample group's imaginations of a coercive and punishing state, which has forced the younger generation to flee *en masse*. She describes how the teachers' role as educators has been challenged, since they are torn between the government's policy to produce soldier students and the societal need to create educated citizens. Accordingly, some of them have turned to be as punitive as the coercive state itself against their own students.