

In the first section, the book draws heavily on Somali poetry from the era to capture Somali sentiments about the crisis. It is an unexpected choice, but Kapteijns makes it work by masterfully contrasting 'prestigious' poetry that condemns clannism in safe, general terms, with the 'non-prestigious' street poetry designed to attack rival clans and mobilise the poet's lineage.

The book has its share of flaws. The design of the book does not provide a clear introduction to the Somali crisis for a general reader, making much of the text difficult for non-Somali specialists to follow. The insertion of the chapter on Somali poetry at the outset of the book was especially unfortunate in this regard; the material will lose some of its significance for general readers, unless they opt to return to that chapter after completing the book. Analytically, some of the claims in the book are open to contestation or at least refinement. The claim, for instance, that weak social groups in southern Somalia joined in the anti-Darood purge is only partially true – the vast majority of those communities lacked weapons and were the principal victims of repeated looting and assaults by both Hawiye and Darood militias. Likewise, evidence from 1990 demonstrates that the retreating government militia, composed mainly of the clan of President Barre, engaged in collective punishment and scorched earth tactics in Hawiye inhabited zones, needed to be emphasised more. But the author's overall message – that critical decisions made by the USC leadership to turn a liberation movement into a campaign of clan cleansing propelled Somalia into a period of war and division from which it is only now emerging – is an important claim that needs to be explored and considered seriously, not dismissed as an attack on one clan.

An important part of Somali political discourse is claiming victim status – every clan has a powerful grievance narrative that justifies their claim for compensation, land, representation, asylum and more. Intentionally or not, Kapteijns' book provides one clan, the Darood, much more ammunition in its grievance narrative than others, and for that reason will be heavily contested. But the bigger question arising from this book should not be the parochial debate over which clan suffered most and which is most culpable. It is the enduring and troubling question of the lack of any accountability for crimes against humanity that occurred in Somalia – under the Barre regime, in 1991–92, and most recently in the 2011 Somali famine which claimed 260,000 lives. Violence entrepreneurs and their gunmen continue to get away with murder in a land crying out for both peace and justice.

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Dealing with Government in South Sudan: Histories of Chiefship, Community and State by CHERRY LEONARDI

Woodbridge: James Currey, 2013. Pp. 271. £45 (hbk)

doi:10.1017/S0022278X1400055X

Cherry Leonardi has published extensively on the role of government in South Sudan, on legal pluralism and the history of urban settlements. *Dealing with Government in South Sudan* brings all of this together in one comprehensive

history (or histories) of government–society relations in South Sudan since the 1840s.

After an excellent introduction that sets out all her main arguments, the book proceeds chronologically in three parts. Part I, the shortest of the three, deals with the period from the first conquest of the South in the 1840s to the onset of increasing bureaucratisation of British colonial rule in the 1920s. Part II discusses the consolidation of local government and chiefs' courts in the late colonial period until independence in 1956 while Part III describes independent Sudan until the South's secession in 2011, a period characterised by militarised repression and exclusion but also by wider participation in the urban realm of bureaucracy and governance. These chapters are full of fascinating details and new nuggets of information gleaned from hundreds of oral testimonies and from the archival records that the author, who is based in Durham, has prime access to.

Yet, some overarching themes are of particular pertinence. In contrast to the colonial-era evolution or invention of chiefship in other parts of the continent, Leonardi shows that South Sudanese chiefs did not root chiefly authority in time immemorial but in their ability to negotiate between rural people and state power which was, and continues to be, associated with urban areas. Thus, men (fewer women) could rise to prominence due to their skill in dealing with government along the 'internal frontier zone around the urban government centres' (p. 217). Critically, chiefly authority did not necessarily entail a position of superior authority in local relations where oftentimes seniority and membership in certain lineages mattered more.

Moreover, in contrast to their frequent portrayal as passive victims of subjugation, slave raiding and exploitation, South Sudanese were in fact able to exert agency, for instance by insisting on cattle as the unit of economic transactions (p. 22). Instead of only as an alien imposition, 'the history of town and state formation should also be understood in terms of local relations and long-term political cultures' (p. 7) in which some South Sudanese were drawn to the towns and the opportunities they offered while simultaneously trying to shield the community from the state's often predatory reach. The chief's role was thus to regularise and render predictable the forms of extraction by the state and various military actors, including the SPLA.

This is both an untimely and a very timely book. Untimely in that it was published in 2013 and thus before the savage civil war that erupted in December 2013 and continues in various forms at the time of writing (July 2014). For the very same reason, however, this highly informed and informative volume is a great addition to the literature on state-society relations in South Sudan because it goes beyond the high-power machinations inside the governing Sudan People's Liberation Movement and aims to show how 'the local histories of chiefship [...] reveal in turn how state and local community have been mutually constituted since the nineteenth century' (p. 2). In this objective it succeeds masterfully.

Thus, it is unfortunate that the editors/publishers decided to squeeze it into 224 pages (plus appendix) by using a small font with no spacing, which makes reading a bit of a drag. Nevertheless, *Dealing with Government in South Sudan* is likely to become a measuring stick for future anthropological works on South

Sudan (the list of acknowledgements reads like a who's who of Sudan scholarship) and should also be of interest to scholars of state–society relations and traditional authorities in other parts of Africa as it challenges key assumptions about the evolution of chieftaincy in the colonial period and beyond.

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Transitional Justice for Child Soldiers: Accountability and Social Reconstruction in Post-Conflict Contexts by KIRSTEN J. FISHER

New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Pp. 228. US\$95 (hbk)

doi:10.1017/S0022278X14000561

The victories of international human rights law (namely, more law – particularly at the global level – protecting more classes of people) may prevail without much critical thinking about whether these victories actually help the declared beneficiaries. Such is the case with many of the legal and policy developments prompted by the aching transnational concern for the child soldier. These developments root themselves in universalised portrayals of the child soldier that ooze narratives of helplessness and incapacity. They also tend to depict the children as little more than dehumanised tools of war and as damaged goods in the war's aftermath. This imagery is personified through the physicality of a prepubescent boy barely able to hold an AK-47 and, thereby, skips over the reality that the majority of such children are in the 15–18 age cohort and that roughly 40% are girls. These portrayals, moreover, are deeply Africanised notwithstanding the fact that child soldiery is a global phenomenon.

In this book, Kirsten Fisher joins a chorus of critical voices from diverse disciplines who contest the universalisation of these portrayals as well as the essentialisation and exoticisation of child soldiers into other images much more sinister in tone (for example, that of a crazed irredeemable bandit). Fisher, however, takes specific aim at what she calls the 'unhelpful and deceptive' narrative of child 'non-responsibility', according to which 'no person under the age of 18 can possess the capacity to be responsible for acts of atrocity they commit as a member of an armed force or armed group'. Drawing from ethnographic studies, she observes the occluding effect of this image. She notes the problematic fact that the reintegration experience of child soldiers who have committed acts of atrocity is tricky and unsettled. Fisher argues that attributing responsibility to these specific children would serve justice needs and also enhance the durability of their social reintegration.

Fisher tracks the pre-existing critical literature and its source material quite closely. In this sense, her book reinforces the salience of this emergent literature, which is beginning to get traction within global civil society. Law- and policy-makers need to think hard about how to recognise juvenile agency, how to support the best interests of youth in the post-conflict period and how to build an active culture of juvenile rights and citizenship.

Although Fisher's book unpacks much of what has already been written, she also makes some thoughtful and original additions. She references her own fieldwork in northern Uganda, although this aspect of the book could perhaps have been brought out more. Fisher, moreover, parts company with other