

## Reviews

### **The Path of a Genocide: the Rwanda crisis from Uganda to Zaire**

edited by HOWARD ADELMAN and ASTRI SUHRKE

New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1999. Pp. 414. US\$49.95.

Moving past simplistic media depictions of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, editors Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke successfully present a collection of nuanced and sophisticated analyses of the events leading up to, and immediately following, ‘the Rwanda crisis’. Divided into sections that focus on ‘The Movement Toward Genocide’, ‘Preventive Diplomacy’ and ‘Peacekeeping’, the edited volume’s sixteen chapters offer a multitude of perspectives that embrace the regional and international context of the 1994 bloodshed, never straying far from local concerns and realities. Each chapter is well researched and documented, balanced in its approach and compassionate in its tone.

The five chapters that address the period preceding the 1994 killings explore the evolution of the Rwandan refugee community that took refuge in Uganda beginning in 1959, the rise of the Rwandan Patriotic Army and its subsequent ‘invasion’ of Rwanda, the impact of neighbouring Zaire on this process, and the emergence of Rwandan extremists and their use of ‘hate radio’ to mobilise the forces of genocide. The chapter on extremism is an especially instructive, and quite sobering case study. Chapter authors Joan Kakwenzire and Dixon Kamukama trace the advent of extremism to Belgian colonialism, when ‘the ideology of separating Rwanda on ethnic grounds’ was used as a ‘tool by the colonial masters’ to effectively govern the Rwandan kingdom (p. 90). This strategy was subsequently followed by independence leaders Grégoire Kayibanda and Juvenal Habyarimana, who systematically ‘politicized, and later militarized an ethnic ideology’ in Rwanda (p. 90).

The failures of preventive diplomacy are carefully documented and critically evaluated in the second section of the volume, with chapters that examine the ineffectiveness of the Organization of African Unity, the limitations of the Arusha Peace Process, and the controversial and often inconsistent diplomatic initiatives of the French, Canadian and American governments. The chapter on French foreign policy in Rwanda is especially insightful, given France’s controversial role throughout the conflict. According to Agnès Callamard, French diplomatic activities ‘responded to and reflected the usual framework of Franco-African relationships’, where France provided military and diplomatic support to dictatorial regimes, which was reinforced by ‘patrimonial relationships between leaders and possibly by secret business, military, or other deals between the two countries’ (pp. 157–8). The only limitation of this section is the breakdown of copyediting rigour, and the misspelling of key names is a bit distracting, although it does not necessarily detract from the overall usefulness of the information provided.

The final section of the book highlights the inadequacy of the international community’s response to the genocide, especially in terms of United Nations

peacekeeping, the French-led Operation Turquoise effort in Western Rwanda, and non-governmental/United Nations High Commission for Refugees humanitarian attempts to meet the emergency needs of the post-genocide Rwandan Hutu refugee population in Eastern Zaire.

In addition to the sixteen substantive and well-documented case studies, the subsequent glossaries of personal names, foreign terms and technical words and phrases, and abbreviations and acronyms, enrich the usefulness of this volume. *The Path of Genocide* is essential reading for anyone interested in learning about the anatomy and immediate aftermath of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Policy-makers, scholars, students and the general public can all benefit from this book, which successfully balances scholarly rigour with analytical clarity and intelligent parsimony, thanks in large measure to thorough primary and secondary source research, well-written and integrated case studies, and the strategic use of detailed endnotes.

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**Museums and History in West Africa** edited by CLAUDE DANIEL ARDOUIN and EMMANUEL ARINZE  
Oxford and Washington, DC: James Currey and Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000. Pp. 182. £35.00, £14.95 (pbk.).

This, the third short symposium volume emerging from the West African Museums Programme and from the inspirational leadership and organisational efforts of Claude Ardouin in particular, results from a workshop in Ouidah in 1995. It follows the format of its predecessors (see *Museums and Archaeology in West Africa*, 1977, reviewed in *JMAS*, 36, 1998, pp. 344–6); this one consists of twenty-four contributions, whose average length is six pages, with generous margins and plentiful illustrations interspersed with the texts. These essays are mostly statements of the policies and aspirations of the individual museums (or their umbrella organisations) or summary descriptions of particular institutions and collections. While most are, in a direct or indirect way, state or regional institutions, a few are privately owned, their housing and exhibition being dependent on local initiatives and enthusiasm. Also represented in the volume are historical buildings, including palaces and coastal forts, a number of which have appropriately been turned into bigger museums and activity centres, thus raising bigger issues of management, conservation and public presentation. Some contributors concentrate on this public role (and cite visitor numbers as a measure of success). Several, predictably, add pointed reminders of the perennial difficulties of staffing, maintenance and finance. While few difficulties are able to suggest realistic or permanent solutions, a sense of faith pervades the volume, together with the occasional touch of healthy self-criticism. This is an encouraging trend. So even if only a small part of Claude Ardouin's vision of developing museums into imaginative educational and community assets has been realised yet, his message has not been in vain.

Ardouin's concern goes further than this, by questioning many museums' persistent philosophy and concept of history. They have, as he writes in the

Introduction, been content to reproduce an ‘ethnographic, a-historic, if not downright folkloric image of the societies that they present’. It is easy to blame this on the colonial legacy, but one of the barely concealed messages of these WAMP symposia volumes is that the same antiquarian approach is perpetuated by many of those who have in recent decades been placed in charge of African museums, and by their controlling boards consisting largely of institutional and government representatives. This has resulted in a widening intellectual gulf between museums, especially state ones, and the modern schools of social science, history included – and that means archaeology too.

The difficulty with the book under review – and with the campaign which the West African Museums Programme is hoping to spearhead through the Ouidah workshop – is that it does not really define what belongs to the ‘history’ category as opposed to the ‘archaeology’ category, which was pronounced the subject of the previous symposium and collection of essays in this series. In effect, the contributors to that preceding volume mostly bore the label archaeologist, or were responsible for museum collections or departments designated as archaeology, whereas in the present case the labels ‘history’ and ‘historian’ predominate. But in so far as these curators are expected to handle, study and display artefacts, however recent, and are responsible for buildings and other monuments, they need an archaeological approach, and equally training in relevant conservation and laboratory techniques. Conversely the more ancient, so called prehistoric, archaeological collections serve little purpose if they are not historical in the broad sense. It happens then that a false dichotomy has gained a hold in the museums, one which this volume seems to be perpetuating within the profession. In practice the distinguishing criteria are not always consistently drawn; but generally, materials and buildings of the colonial era, or precolonial ones connected with existing or recent kingdoms or with the wider world – and especially the slave trade – tend to be placed in the ‘historical’ category, whereas anything defined as indigenous is labelled ‘ethnographic’ or, if demonstrably old or found in the ground, is defined as ‘archaeological’. It may be relatively easy to recognise conceptual shortcomings here, but it is much more difficult to correct them since that requires reforming the museums and their organisational structures, with their entrenched departments and staffing.

Nevertheless, this volume, in unison with the two preceding it, has a clear message, that museums matter in modern societies and need to reach out to their communities – and that all this requires is renewed and more imaginative efforts. In that endeavour these neat publications of the West African Museums Programme are valuable symbolically. But there is not much of substance in the contributions (and in places this reviewer feels that the editors have been too charitable in their efforts to make scrappy and uninteresting statements presentable in print. On the other hand, the workshop from which these pieces derive was doubtless a very instructive event for all involved.

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**Great Ideas for Teaching About Africa** edited by M. L. BASTIAN and J. L. PARPART  
London: Lynne Rienner, 1999. Pp. 244. £39.95, £23.95 (pbk.).

This book certainly does contain some of the 'great ideas' that its title claims, and is likely to be of value to all those who teach on Africa in universities. In its nineteen chapters, the book seeks to introduce a range of ideas gained from experiences of teaching to undergraduates that individual authors believe are worth sharing with their colleagues.

The volume usefully considers a range of topics. In its first section, there is some valuable reflection on the use of materials from literature, art and religion as ways of stimulating and developing student interest in Africa. Several of these chapters (and the later piece by Ralph Austen) provide valuable reflections on how the use of a cultural focus can be used both to address prevalent Western stereotypes of the African 'other' and to inform cross-disciplinary perspectives in the social sciences. Indeed, it is this cross-disciplinary focus that is one of the strengths of this volume. Whilst still maintaining the African Studies bias towards the humanities and social sciences, there are a couple of papers in the areas of medical and environmental aspects of social studies that provide a taste of a broader conceptualisation of cross-disciplinarity.

The volume also contains some interesting reflections on the teaching of controversial subjects and current issues. The areas covered here are slavery, HIV/AIDS, ethnicity, peace, female circumcision and gender. Several of these chapters provide high quality introductions to these debates as well as advice on how to teach them.

The third theme of the book is the use of new technologies. Some of the discussion here is very valuable for its accounts of practices and sources of information. The use of web-page design as an assessment tool may well be one of the areas discussed that will attract increasing interest in the next few years. This section also includes the mouth-watering suggestion of Tamara Giles-Vernick that one cannot understand the ecology and economy of Africa without understanding its staple foods, hence her bringing of the kitchen into the lecture room. However, there is a sense in reading this section of the book that much of it is already dated. First, references to internet resources suffers from the great volatility of the medium. A reference written about a year ago may no longer be valid. Second, and more seriously, some of the chapters reflect a low level of staff and student ITC literacy that may already be a thing of the past in universities in North America (and many places elsewhere).

As already stated, the primary focus of this book is on undergraduate teaching. This serves to limit, but not eliminate, its relevance for those engaged in teaching on Africa where large undergraduate numbers and survey courses are rare. The volume is also heavily focused towards North American concerns and resources, Elizabeth Isichei's reflections from New Zealand being the only chapter written from outside this perspective.

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**A Saro Community in the Niger Delta, 1912–1984: the Potts-Johnsons of Port Harcourt and their heirs** by MAC DIXON-FYLE  
 Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1999.  
 Pp. xx + 279. £35.00.

The Krio diaspora in West Africa has long been recognised as being of importance in illuminating many aspects of the region's nineteenth and twentieth-century history. The resilience of the Krio in maintaining their culture and their links with their Freetown homeland is remarkable, as is the process whereby they adapted to the opportunities provided by their host societies. Not least in importance in this is the way such communities, given their outsider status and given their apparent Anglophilia, adjusted to the rise of nationalism during the 1940s and 1950s. Mac Dixon-Fyle's study of one such community, that which settled in Port Harcourt in Nigeria (where Krio were called Saro) is therefore to be welcomed. Using one Saro family, the Potts-Johnsons as the focus of his analysis, Dixon-Fyle sets out to examine the fortunes of this community during a time of major political change in Nigeria. His intention is thereby to throw light on Saro society more broadly as well as to illuminate the history of Port Harcourt after its foundation in 1912. In doing this, Dixon-Fyle makes the Reverend L. R. Potts-Johnson (1886–1949) – patriarch of the Potts-Johnson family, leading light of the Saro community of Port Harcourt, owner of the *Nigerian Observer* and from 1947, member of Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly – the central figure in his study.

His story is one that stresses the successful initial adaptation of the Saro to Port Harcourt. At the heart of this was the Sierra Leone Union. The social and cultural activities that the SLU encouraged, allied to the community's stress on thrift, self-help and economic self-reliance and to the role of the Churches, helped to engender a sense of community that allowed Saro like Potts-Johnson to become more wealthy and important figures in the town and to play an important role in local politics. These political activities included campaigns over land occupation – not least in the face of segregationist policies of the British administration – sanitation, employment and such like. In time these campaigns foundered, not only on British obduracy, but also as divisions within the Saro community between the relatively wealthy and the relatively poor, came to the fore. These divisions resonated with a more significant strain, namely that which developed between the Saro and the local society. By the 1940s the House Tenants Union had emerged to defend the interests of the local tenants against plot holders, many of whom were Saro. Further, as militant nationalism developed in Port Harcourt during the 1940s, figures like Potts-Johnson found themselves increasingly marginalised from this new politics; indeed, no Saro figure was to play a major role within the nationalist movements of this area. The problem of relations with local society took on further dimensions following independence in 1960, and again once the Biafran war broke out in 1967. Saro status as aliens caused acute difficulties when they came to claim restitution of property when the war was over.

These issues are analysed with a deft hand by Dixon-Fyle. He combines a grasp of the wider context against which this story occurs with a sure

understanding of the local politics of Port Harcourt. His understanding of the minutiae of Saro history in these years is however both a strength and a weakness. Saro activities are outlined in detail but little of the broader mechanisms that made this Saro community cohere are revealed; the reason for the resilience of Saro society remains curiously distant from the reader. There is a tension in the book between the demands of a biography of Potts-Johnson – which in some ways this is – and the needs of a broader sociological study of Saro society in Port Harcourt. This tension is never resolved and once Potts-Johnson leaves the story in 1949, much of the drive of the book is lost. The 1950s and the 1960s, perhaps the most critical phase for Saro adaptability in the face of an evolving Nigerian identity, are treated with much less illumination than the earlier decades. Arguably a further study of the Saro in Port Harcourt, or in Nigeria more generally, is needed for this period. That said, however, this remains an interesting and valuable study, commendable in its vision, its grasp of the issues and its originality and one that deserves wide readership among Nigerian historians.

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**The Nile: histories, cultures and myths** edited by HAGGAI EHRLICH and ISRAEL GERSHONI  
Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner, 2000. Pp. xi + 305. US\$55.00.

This collection of essays results from a conference in Israel in 1997. Given all the specialised work that has been done on the Nile, the purpose here was one of 're-establishing eye contact' between people who have worked on different geographical regions and historical periods. It was perhaps inevitable that there is a preponderance of Israeli scholars, but there are also contributions by American, British, Ethiopian and Sudanese scholars as well.

The chapters are divided into four parts. Part I is on the medieval period, and includes the last paper of the late David Ayalon on *The Spread of Islam and the Nubian Dam*, and the book is dedicated to his memory. Part II, entitled *The Nile Seen From a Distance* is particularly strong on the myths of the title. Part III on *Old Waters, Modern Identities* looks especially at the claims towards the river in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with particular regard to the growing consciousness of water issues in Egypt and Ethiopia. Part IV, *Contemporary Voices*, considers a number of recent and current issues.

With twenty chapters in total, it is impossible to give more than a general overview here. The editors' aim is to bring the various Nile studies together in the belief that the Nile Valley as a region is becoming more relevant rather than less, in the face of growing concerns about the reliability of the water supply of the whole river basin, and with rising demographic projections. This need stands in contrast to the political trajectories of the Horn of Africa and Egypt in particular, which in the last century have tended to distance the two ends of the Nile from one another. Ethiopia's leading role in the early years of the OAU, and Egypt's coincidental preoccupations with pan-Arabism (behind the supposed safety net of the High Dam at Aswan), tended to isolate source

from Delta. Facing a growing contemporary interdependence, a review of past links is a worthwhile contribution to improved mutual understanding. Not that the editors wish to exaggerate the unity of the Nile Basin; rather they seek to present what they describe as the 'polysystem' of the region.

Personally, I have a good deal of sympathy with their thinking, especially with regard to the whole environmental picture of the Nile basin which increasingly calls for greater cooperation amongst riverine states, though thus far producing more by way of mutual suspicion and intermittent threats. This contribution is broadly to be welcomed in terms of raising awareness and encouraging 'eye contact', but I could not help noticing the absence of pieces by Egyptian scholars; while East Africa and the White Nile hardly get a look in. Something of an omission in any attempt to promote awareness of the whole Nile Basin I would have thought.

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**Oil in Nigeria: conflict and litigation between oil companies and village communities** by JEDRZEJ GEORG FRYNAS

Munster, Hamburg and London: Lit Verlag 1999. Pp. 263. DM 49.80 (pbk.).

*Oil in Nigeria* is a timely, up-to-date and factual publication. From a methodological perspective, it has succeeded where similar and related publications on the subject failed. For example, in dealing with the issues under review, the book adopts a socio-legal approach that combines the analysis of concrete institutional arrangements with an investigation of personal experiences and perceptions of the legal system. As such, it is a very interesting account and clearly written book with well-defined aims. First, it provides insights on social relations in Nigeria, especially with respect to the allocation of resources between the various ethnic groups in the country. Second, there is a detailed analysis of the specific nature of legal disputes between oil companies and village communities. Third, the book contributes to research and debate on the role of multinational corporations in developing countries.

The first chapter of the book sets the context for understanding the materials and arguments presented in the book. Chapter 2 discusses the Nigerian oil industry and the government petroleum policy, and shows that foreign oil companies and the Nigerian state depend on each other. It explores the link between political decision-making and community conflicts in the oil producing areas with a view to determining the position of the government (neutral or biased) towards the oil companies. Evidence presented in Chapter 3 suggests that the Nigerian legal system tends to be biased in favour of the state and the oil companies at the expense of village communities. Chapter 4 examines the impediments to the functioning of the legal process and the judiciary. The constraints and opportunities faced by litigants on oil-related litigation are identified. Chapter 5 uses court judgements as factual evidence to assess the impact of oil exploration, oil production and land acquisition on village communities in terms of the resulting environmental and social

damage. It shows that legal provisions in Nigeria do not appear to have been particularly effective in minimising the adverse impact of oil operations. It also presents evidence to exemplify oil companies' cultural ignorance of the problems faced by village communities as a result of oil operations. 'This ignorance has been reflected, for instance, in the failure of oil companies to properly investigate the local ownership structures before awarding compensation for land acquisition' (p. 180). Chapter 6 provides in-depth analysis of the nature of the legal disputes between oil companies and village communities. Evidence presented suggests that there has been a trend towards the adoption of substantive and procedural rules which render it easier for village communities to successfully litigate against oil companies in Nigeria. Chapter 7 provides a synthesis of the main findings and relevance of the book. It also examines the directions for future research and the future of the conflicts in the Niger Delta due to oil exploration activities.

Based on my personal and professional knowledge of environment and development issues in Nigeria, I firmly agree with the author that 'unless the government and the oil companies change their attitude towards the local people in the Niger Delta, conflict and litigation are there to stay' (p. 231). On the other hand, I failed to see the relevance of the statistical analyses presented in Chapter 4 of the book. These could have been omitted from the text to enhance the logical flow of the main arguments in the book. Overall, I would highly recommend this book to everyone interested in understanding the complex story of the oil industry in Nigeria, the role of both the state and oil companies and the impact of oil exploration on local communities in the Niger Delta.

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**Fire from the Ashes: a chronicle of the revolution in Tigray, Ethiopia, 1975–1991** by JENNY HAMMOND  
Lawrenceville, NJ and Asmara: The Red Sea Press, 1999. Pp. xxii + 456. US\$29.95 (pbk.).

Jenny Hammond's *Fire from the Ashes: a chronicle of the revolution in Tigray, Ethiopia, 1975–1991* is a sympathetic account, based on an extensive field observation, of the origin and evolution of the Tigray People's Revolution Front (TPLF), the forerunner of the ruling party in Ethiopia. In addition, Hammond's data derives from interviews with some ordinary Tigrayans, the rank and file and leading members of the TPLF. The interviews with the leaders of the TPLF, including the current head of government in Ethiopia, are particularly significant since they tell us a lot about how these leaders wanted to portray their organisation and themselves, if not necessarily about their veracity.

Hammond collected the data during her stays in and journeys through Tigray in December 1986–March 1987, May–July 1989 and January–May 1991. Among other things, the author discusses the changing role of women in the territory during the different stages of the revolution; the anatomy of



famine in the area as well as the military strategies of the front that had been used for taking on and eventually defeating the superior force of its adversary. The Orwellian stories (esp. see pp. 34–41; pp. 98–101) as told by those who were made to experience them first-hand in the prisons of the Ethiopian government also constitute a significant part of the book, along with Hammond's own reflections on what she observed. In short, with graphic details, the book acquaints the reader with the fundamental philosophy of the TPLF, putting also in perspective the changes that have been introduced over time in Tigray.

Hammond's work is not however flawless. Some of the limitations of the book seem to have arisen from the very research design she had to use to fulfill the goals of her study. She aptly asks from the outset, 'What drives a people over the abyss from fatalistic acceptance of routine misery to armed struggle?' (p. 4). Despite such a clear statement of the theme of her project, nevertheless she does not pursue its answer in the most logical and helpful way, but dwells instead on disparate personal narratives, thereby leaving the reader in the dark as to what generalisations ought to follow from the anecdotal evidence.

Other limitations include the shadow of doubt cast on the impartiality or objectivity of Hammond's observations. First, the fact that she was invited by the TPLF (p. 9) to study the revolution puts a question mark on whether she was in fact able to observe much more than what the TPLF leaders wanted. Hammond did indeed recognise this dilemma, but was not in a position to do anything about it: 'The Front has invited me here to conduct an independent investigation, but I cannot go anywhere without their support' (p. 31). Second, the fact that she had not only to witness, but at times, personally taste the bitterness of the intermittent bombardments by Ethiopian MIGs, and often experience the fear of them, may have also made her observation less than impartial. Again, as she herself remarks, 'in some obscure way [the air raid] turns me from an observer of a revolution to its participant' (p. 5).

A few details that are neither of much interest to a reader nor have a direct bearing on the subject matter also appear here and there in the book. These include the passages about her urge to pee (p. 10); how many hours she spent at the latrine (p. 19); her being sweaty and dusty (p. 41). Furthermore, there are also descriptions that – accurate as they may be – are both irrelevant and potentially offensive to the community she was studying (for example see, pp. 107–8). These minor flaws could have been eliminated easily through a couple of rounds of ethical proofreading.

Judging also by the fact that the book reads more like a carefully written diary than an analytical account of a structured field observation, it might have well been titled 'a chronicle of Jenny Hammond's journey in Tigray' since much of what is written in the book pertains to her encounters rather than the revolution *per se*. Undoubtedly, Hammond spent much energy as well as time and often under truly dangerous circumstances (see for example, p. 115) seeking the truth and trying to observe first-hand what she could. This is not an easy task at all considering the fact that she is a Westerner and also a female who had been used to the comforts of life at home. She deserves credit and commendation for her effort and determination as well as her accomplishment.

Despite its minor limitations, it is still safe to say that overall the book is invaluable for a number of reasons. Since more or less the same TPLF leaders hold the reins of power in present-day Ethiopia, Hammond's book is likely to provide a fresh insight into the philosophical, intellectual as well as social origins of the policies of the current regime. The book is rich in detail and could easily become a very useful source of reference for a comparative and fuller examination of the dialectics of movements that challenge central governments in different parts of Africa and elsewhere.

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**Political Liberalisation and Democratisation in the Arab World**

edited by BAGHAT KORANY, REX BRYNEN and PAUL NOBLE

Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner, 1998. Pp. 288. £17.50 (pbk.).

This is the second volume of a project on democratisation and liberalisation in what the authors term the 'Arab world', and covers ten countries. Since the main theoretical issues concerning democratisation were dealt with in the first volume, none of the pieces are especially theoretical, and they generally content themselves with providing a general guide to the political systems of a diverse range of North Africa and Middle Eastern states. Some of these, such as Yemen, Morocco and Sudan are not particularly well covered in many student texts. In addition, there is a chapter on Palestine, which, although not a sovereign state, was felt to be of major importance in general questions concerning democracy in the Middle East.

The collection asks three basic questions of what, why and how democratisation and liberalisation have been secured. There is some diversity though in the way that different authors approach their case studies. Some adopt a societal approach, focusing on the workings of the political system and attempts to create electoral politics; others branch out a little to examine the nature of the state and the wider socioeconomic and class forces operating the political system.

Students of African politics will find the volume useful for its coverage of Morocco, Algeria, Egypt and Sudan. In the case of Algeria, Baghat Korany and Saad Amrani examine the roots of the crisis of the 1990s linked to attempts at radical economic restructuring and the rise of a variety of strands of Islamism at the grassroots level. Writing in early 1998 at a time when there was a bitter civil war in the country, the authors do not see any easy way out of the impasse in which the state has found itself, and warn of a possible 'Hobbesian anarchy' since the political system has evolved so quickly in the late 1980s from extreme authoritarianism to a limited form a democratic opening. The authors stress the role of external involvement in the Algerian crisis, but throw no new light on the role of the Western powers, especially France, in supporting the ruling Algerian regime.

In the case of Egypt, Baghat Korany sees a more diverse historical pattern of reform than that of Algeria, since before the 1952 revolution there had been a liberal phase of limited state involvement in the economy. This was followed

by the Nasserite experiment with Arab socialism which Korany argues was really a form of social democracy that stressed the social and economic preconditions for successful democratisation. After twenty years of authoritarian rule, a limited democratic opening began in the early 1970s, leading in 1976 to the fragile multiparty system established by Anwar Sadat. Korany fails to develop the international dimensions of this process that occurred alongside US-orchestrated peace efforts with Israel leading to the Camp David peace talks. The chapter though does not refer to the progressive emergence in civil society of a variety of new associations, though this still led to only a patchy process of democratisation marked by continuing state intervention in the electoral process.

This model of a patchwork or qualified process of democratisation is replicated in the case of Morocco, where Baghat Korany has developed the concept of Hassanian democracy to explain a process of limited democratic opening under the rule of King Hassan. In contrast to Algeria and Egypt, the Moroccan state has so far managed to avoid some of the same problems of political legitimisation by securing a religious legitimacy to monarchical authority through Hassan's title of *Amir al-Mu-amin* and his claim to be descended from the prophet and 'God's shadow on Earth'. The relatively light form of French colonial rule ensured too that there has never been any major cleavage in Moroccan politics, and formal political independence in 1956 was also meant to be the birth of constitutional democracy. In practice, authority was wielded by the monarch, and an adroit manipulation of political culture tended to delay the emergence of a mature civil society. The leaders of many civil associations still tend indeed to be upper class, while Korany sees the state as remaining effectively omnipotent in the political system. Unfortunately, the chapter does not examine the role of external actors in buttressing Hassan's rule, though it acknowledges the importance of bodies such as the World Bank and IMF in securing this support. Korany remains optimistic that the groundwork has been laid for a progressive democratic opening in the years ahead.

Finally, the chapter by Ann M. Lesch on Sudan deals with a considerably different model of failed democratisation that has become rather more common in Sub-Saharan Africa. Here we encounter a basic issue of radical ethnic and religious diversity which makes the chances of securing a successful model of democratisation on a weak economic base extremely difficult. Lesch points out though that the major political divisions in the country, especially that of secessionism in the South, are really 'an expression of the lack of democracy rather than an obstacle to it' (p. 203). She outlines the state manipulation of communal identities in Sudan and follows the complex path of failed democratisation as, following the overthrow of Al-Numayri in 1985, the National Islamic Front won power in 1986 with the intention of securing an Islamic state rather than democratic consolidation. Democracy was always going to be a hazardous business in such a fragmented society, where political actors failed to transcend ethnic and religious divisions to secure a wider basis of support. Identity politics thus intruded on democratisation, though there is also an untold story of why a more populist agenda failed to take off in the Sudanese political system, and the communal identities that Lesch writes

about at points emerge as having an all encompassing if not primordial nature despite being subject to continuous manipulation. This is a complex and difficult area of research where the work of historians and anthropologists can enrich and enliven that of political scientists in such a polarised and fragmented society.

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**The History of Islam in Africa** edited by NEHEMIA LEVTZION and RANDAL L. POUWELS

Ohio University Press/James Currey/David Philip: Athens/Oxford/Cape Town, 2000. Pp. x + 591. £40.00; £16.95 (pbk.).

What might the history of Islam in Africa be? A history of Christianity in the continent would be dumbbell-shaped, in time and space. An initial expansion in antiquity to the north of the Sahara, and up the Nile and Red Sea to Nubia and Ethiopia, would reflect the extent of Africa's incorporation into the Ancient World of Egypt, Greece and Rome. A period of retreat in the ensuing Middle Ages would leave only the thread of Coptic Christianity linking Egypt and Ethiopia, Africa north and south of the desert. From the fifteenth century onwards, the accent would be on the introduction of Christianity to the south of the Sahara, from the arrival of the Portuguese in West Africa to the exponential growth of the faith in the nineteenth and especially the twentieth century. The intervening years of survival would be explained, and the subsequent expansion of Christianity to the south of Sahara accompanied by, the history of Islam in Africa, a continuous progress from its origins in the Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries to its present dominance to the north of the forest, and down the east coast as far as Mozambique. How is the history of this majestic progress to be described, and above all explained?

The first thing to be said is that in both cases, modern historiography still has a long way to go – so far, in the case of Islam, that the volume under review is the first to lay claim to its title. The great difference is that the history of Christianity in Africa has been written from the inside, that is by scholars who have for the most part been Christian. That of Islam on the continent has been mainly written from the outside, not simply by non-Muslims, but by scholars brought up in a Western tradition to which Islam has appeared as 'the other'. With or without prejudice, they have approached its history in Africa on the one hand through the classical Arabic texts, treating it either as part of Islamic history to the north of the Sahara and east of Suez, or as peripheral to this mainstream. On the other hand, they have done so initially as ethnographers and social anthropologists, looking at the subject either locally or regionally. Thirty or forty years ago, the overview was supplied from an anthropological point of view in a collective work entitled *Islam in Tropical Africa*, whose long Introduction by the editor, I. M. Lewis, was designed to establish 'a sociological framework' for the study of 'the interrelations between African and Muslim beliefs and institutions'. For this purpose the history, including that of Islam in North Africa, was briefly summarised in a

highly typological analysis by J. S. Trimingham. Since then historians, archaeologists and students of literature have all had a great deal more to add on West, East, and increasingly South Africa. At the level of the continent, however, their findings have been subsumed in histories of Africa as a whole. With the exception of Mervyn Hiskett's *The Course of Islam in Africa* (1994), the present volume is the first to address the history of Islam in Africa as a subject in its own right.

Its largely North American scholarship is a measure of the distance travelled from the immediately postcolonial days of *Islam in Tropical Africa*, with its British, French and Belgian expertise; only the redoubtable figure of Ivor Wilks is common to both. Its aim, as stated in the Preface, is 'to limn specific ways in which Islam and Muslims have played a creative role in the story of Africa's development', rather than 'outline a sociological framework' for the study of 'the interrelations between African and Muslim beliefs and institutions'. The subject itself, however, 'the interactions between Muslim and African civilizations', remains very much the same. Both works, therefore, beg the question for this purpose, of Islam on the one hand, Africa on the other. They receive, in the *History*, at best a limited answer.

Africa turns out to be sub-Saharan Africa. Whereas in Hiskett's work, Egypt and North Africa accounted for a third of the whole, here they are treated, along with the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, as 'gateways to Africa', to be disposed of in 16 out of the 600 pages of the volume – about a page a century. On the one hand, this simplifies the task; in effect, it assigns the history of what the editors are pleased to refer to as 'white' as distinct from 'black' Africa to a different sphere, avoiding the vexed question of its status on the continent as well as the long story of its Islam – neatly, but necessarily briefly, summarised by Peter von Sivers. On the other hand, it precludes any more extended discussion of Islam as a religion; a way of life; and a world-wide civilisation, capable, in the course of its long evolution, of generating on the continent what *Islam in Tropical Africa* calls a 'complete cultural system'. Something of the dynamism of that civilisation is evoked by M. N. Pearson, but his excellent chapter is aligned on the *longue durée* of the Indian Ocean rather than focused on the prosperity of the world created by the Arab conquests. Without that prosperity, and the long-distance trade which it generated, Africa south of the Sahara might have remained as untouched by Islam as by early Christianity; but here, it can only be inferred.

The same applies even more strongly to Africa itself, the definition of which as sub-Saharan is taken for granted. So too is the African civilisation alluded to in the Preface. The editor's Introduction is the briefest of factual outlines of the history of Islam on the continent, with no discussion of the context, or of the twin issues of Islamisation and Africanisation, which might be thought crucial to the spread of the faith and its character. Such issues, which in *Islam in Tropical Africa* were given pride of place, are here left to the final section, where they are intended to benefit from 'the regional and chronological chapters' which form the bulk of the book. The reader, in consequence, is plunged into the history region by region, to alarming effect. Neither maps nor Index are an adequate guide to the avalanche of names, of persons, peoples and places, which effectively assumes a working knowledge of Africa and its

history on the part of the reader, and a reference library to hand. Even one who has both may well be baffled by the degree of compression involved in reducing the history of a thousand years, in the Western, Central and Nilotic Sudan, for example, to some thirty-five pages of text. The same may be said of Ethiopia and the Horn. Wilks alone builds his account of the Juula, as one of the first clearly West African Muslim peoples, upon the rationale of their religious accommodation with their non-Muslim fellows, and it is a pity that Robinson, writing well on the subject of the West African *jihads*, does not expand in the same way on the opposite reasoning of the revolutionaries. Matters are not helped by the endnotes, which refer only to volumes, not pages, so that checking up is barely possible.

By comparison, Pouwels' chapter on the East African coast down to the end of the nineteenth century is a model of what might have been done elsewhere to locate the establishment and spread of Islam in its African context. It is well matched by Sperling's similar account of the coastal hinterland and East Africa, and extended southwards to the Zambezi by Alpers, who brings his story down to the present day in Mozambique and Malawi. Shell does the same with his very welcome history of the Muslim population of South Africa, exceptional because of its immigrant origins, before Chande takes the story back northwards to the political situation in independent Kenya and Uganda. His chapter links up with those by Voll, Kaba and Miles on Islam and politics in the independent states of West Africa and the Sudan to round off the narrative history of Islam in Africa – somewhat patchily, since there is nothing on developments in Senegal, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and the Central African Republic, while Kapteijns passes briefly over the past fifty years in Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia.

After this narrative bulk, the thematic chapters of the final section represent that meaningful discussion of Islam in Africa to which *Islam in Tropical Africa* was intended as an introduction. Christelow on Islamic law provides a welcome definition of the faith as the Law of God, before discussing its reception in Africa, including the Maghrib. Except in passing, however, he does not raise the question of *urf* or non-Islamic local custom, as a form of law sanctioned by the jurists, and thus effectively Islamised as an element in the way of life of a Muslim people. The irony of his final picture of the *qadi* dispensing a customary Muslim law in preference to the official law of the modern state, is lost. Islam as an African way of life is central to Dunbar's discussion of Muslim women, from a Western point of view unsympathetic to patriarchy. She is therefore concerned to demonstrate some of the ways in which such women have constructed for themselves a religious life parallel or alternative to the Islam of the men, from scholarship to participation in the life of the *tariqas* or brotherhoods to spirit possession.

Neither *tariqa* nor spirit possession however, is explained. For the brotherhoods we have to wait for Viktor, after Reichmuth on Islamic education and scholarship, a chapter which follows Christelow in pointing to literacy as a mark of identity. The question of identity is taken up by Viktor when he shows how the Sufi brotherhoods have greatly increased the following for Islam in sub-Saharan Africa, while dividing its adherents into sometimes rival communities. But although the transformation of Islam on the continent

brought about by their appearance and proliferation over the past 200 years is apparent, no explanation is offered for their immense success. And while the suggestion that their main effect has been 'to internationalize the Islam of Africa' may in one sense be true, in another it contradicts a great deal of what has been said about their African character.

For the spirit world in African belief and custom we have to wait for Owusu-Ansah, on prayer, amulets and healing, to provide the only introductory account of the mentality into which Islam in Africa has entered, and which in turn has entered Islam. The sympathetic magic (largely contagious in the examples given) of traditional medicine has provided the matrix for the acceptance of Islamic belief in God into the prevention and cure of sickness in Muslim and non-Muslim alike. The imagery involved in the making of objects for this purpose, as well as in the ritual performances which put them to medicinal use, is discussed by Bravmann in his chapter on Islamic art and material culture, which begins with Arabic calligraphy as a symbol of the divine, and its frequently eclectic employment in costume and dance. Bravmann, concerned to rescue Islamic art in sub-Saharan Africa from the disdain of connoisseurs of the arts of the central Islamic world, is in fact the first directly to address the question of Islamisation and Africanisation as the fundamental problem of the book; but has no space to do more than sketch the aspects which concern him. Harrow on Islamic literature is more successful in evoking the combination and conflict of Islamic and non-Islamic values in traditional oral and contemporary European-language literature. Charry likewise sets out to evaluate the impact of Islam on music, a more difficult task which he hopes will eventually illustrate 'the African genius for adaptation' on the one hand, 'the adaptability of Islam' on the other.

Although Christianity as an African religion barely enters the equation, with these two phrases the text returns to that interaction between Muslim and African civilisations announced in the Preface as the subject of the volume. Unlike *Islam in Tropical Africa*, the work outlines a framework more historical than sociological for the study of the interrelationship, but while its publication may be a landmark in the historiography of Islam on the continent, it remains a beginning rather than an end to the task of comprehending the whole.

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**Structural Adjustment: theory, practice and impacts** by GILES MOHAN, ED BROWN, BOB MILWARD and ALFRED B. ZACK-WILLIAMS  
London and New York: Routledge, 2000. Pp. 211. £17.99 (pbk.).

This book provides a competent summary of leftist critiques of structural adjustment and the, as yet, fruitless search for viable socialist alternatives. It will be valuable to those wanting a sophisticated yet accessible overview from the left of the key issues of structural adjustment; however, it does not rise above the limitations of the literature it reviews.

The three parts of the book explain the rise of structural adjustment and its logic, the economic, social, political and environmental impacts of adjustment,

and the search for a socialist alternative. It has several strengths which make it a valuable reference and teaching resource. It is a useful literature review that is free of jargon and dogmatic intellectual posturing. It manages to criticise structural adjustment without ignoring the mistakes made by debtor states. It provides not only a consistent socialist perspective, but also compares socialist to structuralist approaches which keeps its ultimate critique of capitalism in focus. And the book acknowledges the evolution of adjustment policies over time, taking account of various attempts to ameliorate its harsh impact, while at the same time correctly noting that these efforts are palliatives meant only to smooth the process of deepening market relations without challenging neo-liberalism itself.

However, the book is much stronger in its critique of adjustment policies than it is in providing a vision of a viable alternative. It suffers, first, from a weak conceptualisation of socialism and democracy, which leaves the reader wondering about important issues such as the relationship between race, gender and class, whether indigenous communities ought to be shielded from broader economic forces, and the advisability of industrialisation in any mode of production. Second, although the authors repeatedly attack the anti-state policies of neo-liberalism and argue that the state ought to be the focus of genuinely progressive alternatives, they never clearly indicate the nature of the state they prefer, nor how such a state could be constructed. Moreover, their review of the search for alternatives to adjustment reveals how little the left has offered in this respect, nor do they lay a significant foundation for this Herculean task. Third, despite the attempt to discuss structural adjustment generally, the book has a distinct African bias. Issues relevant to Latin America (e.g. the impact of adjustment on an industrial labour force) and Asia (e.g. adjustment after crisis in high-growth economies) receive little or no attention. Finally, more effective use might be made of their case studies, however, the book is built primarily around conceptual, and not case study material.

These criticisms notwithstanding, there are few books which provide a more comprehensive treatment, particularly from the left. This in addition to its reasoned and non-polemical tone, make this book a valuable addition to the field.

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**Roots in the African Dust: sustaining the drylands** by MICHAEL MORTIMORE

Cambridge University Press, 1998. Pp. 219. £37.50, £14.95 (pbk.).

The 'roots' are both real and metaphorical. Popular images of modern Africa are of denuded landscapes with thorny *Acacia*, roots exposed, as the last remnants of life. They are also of destitute people rooted tenaciously but precariously in an impoverished existence. How far are these popular perceptions of the so-called drylands correct? Do poverty, drought, degradation and famine continuously afflict them? Or is there an alternative to the conventional view? In this thought-provoking book, Michael Mortimore has



developed what the cover says is ‘an alternative and revisionist thesis’ on the subject.

First, it has to be said that the alternative thesis is no longer new. Indeed, the positive spin put on African environments, pioneered by a brave few in the early 1990s, is now in danger of becoming received wisdom. There is a veritable stream of papers coming out now telling us how we got it all wrong; that African peasants were really planting trees, not cutting them down; that those gullies are but the last vestiges of an old formerly degraded environment getting better by the day; that those spindly looking crops are really a clever indigenous strategy to conserve nutrients; that huge herds of bony cattle on non-existent grass are actually the best way to use the rangelands. Soon, we may be reading ‘Revisiting the Machakos Myth’, as the pendulum swings back! But Mortimore can be forgiven because this book is an assembly and a retrospect of his prodigious research since the mid-1960s in sub-Saharan Africa, most notably in Nigeria and Kenya. He was one of the pioneers. The Machakos story of a farming revolution, 1937 to 1990, supporting three times the previous population density in a transformed biophysical environment, was but a later step in the development of the ‘revisionist thesis’. This first-hand experience of those heretical discoveries is what makes this book so special.

It begins with two useful chapters that introduce the questioning of the doomsday scenarios for dryland Africa in a global perspective. How I wish that those who are currently championing neo-Malthusian predictions of ‘desertification’ would read Mortimore’s history of the word. Desertification was (and still is in some quarters) more about leveraging money and securing reputations, than it ever was about a biophysical or social process. The core of the book is three chapters around the theme of ‘risk’ – in rangelands, to the individual farmer and for the rural household. The author revisits his field research, making a compelling case for considering the diversity of activities and people as a cause for optimism for the future.

Perhaps because I am currently struggling with the subject, I enjoyed most the following chapter on ‘degradation’. Mortimore takes, for example, some of the excellent research of Nick Abel in Botswana on rangeland degradation, putting it into context to show how wrong knee-jerk negative reactions to communal grazing are. He synthesises a complex literature, making it accessibly useful to the reader. The book finishes with a plea, demonstrated through the themes of ‘intensification’ and ‘conservation’, that we would gain far more by looking at the adaptive capabilities of African smallholder farmers than we ever would by trying to develop new technologies and new ways of promoting them to an unwilling people.

So, this was an enjoyable read. To make a convincing case, some use hyperbole. Mortimore avoids the trap. Yet through the whole work the reader can feel his conviction that indigenous technological adaptation has been the driving force keeping African environments viable. The tantalising question is whether these same processes will achieve social, economic, institutional and ecological sustainability. Mortimore would no doubt say ‘yes’ – but I wonder.

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**Exporting Communication Technology to Developing Countries: sociocultural, economic and educational factors** by EMMANUEL K. NGWAINMBI

Lanham, MD, New York and Oxford: University Press of America, 1999. Pp. 240. US\$52.00, US\$31.50 (pbk.).

According to the back cover blurb (by Christopher Simpson of American University), *Exporting Communication Technology to Developing Countries* is particularly valuable because of Dr Ngwainmbi's ability to weave together his understanding of cultural characteristics of African peoples with information about specific technologies and market conditions. Would that it were the case!

The book contains an embarrassment of stereotypical clichés and misinformation about Africa. His generalisations tend to regard Africa as a monolithic whole (when he is talking about Africa he mostly has Cameroon in mind, sometimes extending his frame of reference to Nigeria, but rarely beyond). English is used in most parts of Africa, he says. He talks of 1000 language groups in Africa with Semitic characteristics! He refers *passim* to 'primitive natives', and regards African workers, especially government officials, as lazy and corrupt. Societies that came into close contact with European colonialism (e.g. the Ibo and Akan) have been rendered incapable of independent thinking, while the relatively untouched, such as the Masaai, can still do it.

In chapter 2 on 'foreign telecommunication companies: market dynamics and services', there are no descriptions of African telecommunications operators. The narrative is mostly about the United States, including a lengthy discourse on competing domestic long-distance rate plans, along with generally misleading and inaccurate summaries of the telecoms situation of Canada, China, Japan and Mexico.

The author is himself highly ambivalent about the transfer of communication technology. At times he goes into paeans of praise for what information technology can do for Africa: it is a necessity for development that could 'prevent military coups and unstable governments ... should help curb corruption and stabilize Africa's economy during the 21st century'. At the same time, he sees telecommunications investment in Africa as neo-colonialist or worse. Dr Ngwainmbi excoriates AT&T's Africa One project for a fibre optic network along the coastal regions of Africa for continuing practices 'reminiscent of the international slave trade'.

At one point the author unwittingly reveals the essence of this book in his critique of professors in Africa: 'they [teach from] their own redundant notes, most of which are their own unresearched and untested opinions'. He could have been describing himself. Part I of the book can be none other than a print of the author's teaching notes, bearing the less than compelling chapter title of 'Instructional/Academic Overview of Infotech'. Throughout there are bizarre statistics unsubstantiated by either references or logic, e.g. 80 per cent of Africans abroad own VCRs, and 75 per cent of them ship VCRs to Africa annually!

The research methodology of his survey regarding the export to and use of

telecommunications equipment in Africa is interesting. He claims to have contacted 140,000 government workers in Cameroon, but somehow only 26 participated. He also visited other African countries to conduct interviews, although he does not list the countries visited and admits that only one day was spent in each country. Despite staying only a day in each country, he apologises for inadvertently having interviewed the same person two or three times.

The number of errors of grammar and spelling are downright embarrassing. He talks of zenofelea [*sic*]! Nearly every page features a mismatch of singular nouns with plural verb forms or vice versa. Famous African historians are listed as Kiz-Zerbo and Kenneth Dika. Is it possible that the book went to press without anyone, anywhere, proofreading it? That seems to be the case: the last sentences on some eight pages do not continue on to the next page. The paragraphs that do not end are nearly evenly matched by the phrases that turn up twice in the same sentence, and the subheadings that repeat on subsequent pages. Errors of fact are legion: Ngwainmbi repeatedly refers to the Regional African Satellite Communications Organisation (RASCOM) and the Pan African Telecommunications Union (PATU, since 1999 ATU) as regional telecommunications companies, as if they were telecoms operators, when in fact they are an association of African countries establishing a regional African satellite system, and the telecommunications specialised agency of the Organisation of African Unity, respectively. UNZANET, the highly successful Zambian Internet Service Provider, is credited with providing connectivity in Uganda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Malawi and funding for SAFIRE, the drought and famine relief network, when in reality UNZANET provides connectivity only in Zambia, and USAID is the funder of SAFIRE. At times the text disintegrates into personal opinions and illogic. He does not see why Africans should have to pay for telecommunications services (assuming inaccurately that it is AT&T that would be doing the billing), saying that: ‘telecommunication users in industrialized nations barely manage to pay their bills, hence it is illogical for any company to bill African rural residents who rank among the poorest class in the world’.

In the end, the measure of the book is its content. Its recommendation that Africa’s educated elite adopt Fidonet, a low-cost communication system that was very popular between 1991 and 1996, but which has subsequently been taken over by Internet, is outdated and without the special insight that the author claims.

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**Governance and Democratisation in West Africa** edited by DELE OLOWU, ADEBAYO WILLIAMS and KAYODE SOREMEKUN  
Dakar: CODESRIA, 1999. Pp. x + 378. US\$27.95 (pbk.).

This sixteen chapter volume distributed by the African Books Collective, is the product of a three-year project (1992–95). It was conceived initially as a study on ‘Governance and Democratisation in Nigeria’ by faculty members of the Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria, and the University of Florida in the

USA. Divided into three broad sections of three, nine and four chapters each, the first section (three chapters) discusses broad thematic and theoretical issues related to governance and democracy. The second (nine chapters) is devoted to Nigeria, while the third (four chapters) details the governance and democratisation experiences of Francophone West Africa, and the former British colonies of Sierra Leone, Ghana and the Gambia respectively. Yet, despite the editors' efforts to provide both geographic, cultural and linguistic justifications as to the putative unity of West Africa in the first chapter, this could not hide the fact that the initial plan, and the thrust of the book, was on Nigeria.

The second chapter, 'Rethinking the Study of African Politics' by Goran Hyden, the only theoretical chapter in the volume, provides a broad review of the literature on African studies, and makes 'a strong case for rethinking the study of African state systems' (p. 4). Yet, in his characteristic style Hyden fails to provide a framework within which the remaining chapters can be anchored. In fact, Hyden's chapter focuses less on governance and democratisation 'than on understanding the broader debates in Comparative Politics, and how in recent years it has shifted from being primarily concerned with political economy to interest over governance' (p. 9). It even appears that Hyden mildly chides the editors and contributors to the volume for what seems to him a misplaced focus on governance and democratisation instead on political economy. Hyden concludes his chapter by suggesting that: 'we must ask ourselves how long is this discrepancy likely to last, and will academics abandon their interest in governance and democratisation in the next few years in favour of a return to political economy approaches?' (p. 26). This is the theoretical base, and the continuity that Hyden's chapter could otherwise have provided for the volume is lost. Perhaps, like the edited volume by him and Britton, Hyden's chapter in the volume under review was not meant to provide a tight framework for the remaining chapters, but rather stand as a contribution of its own to the conceptual and theoretical debates in Comparative Politics. What is clear, however, is the discontinuity between Hyden's contribution, and the remaining chapters, which in turn sets an uneven tone for the rest of the volume. While several authors of the remaining chapters ought to overcome this flaw by cross-referencing each others' work, this could not in the end overcome it. This is precisely why the editors could have used the first chapter to provide both theoretical and organisational coherence to the volume.

Paradoxically, it is for individual chapters and contributors, and not as a collective, that the volume stands out as a contribution to the literature on governance and democratisation in Africa. This is because the editors succeed in assembling in this volume chapters by African and Africanist scholars whose works have impacted, and continue to help to chart the current and future discourse on, African political studies/politics. These include, but are not limited to, the renowned geographer Akin Mabogunje, Amadu Sesay, Joseph Aye, Suberu Rotimi, the editors themselves and Goran Hyden. Thus, the individual chapters are in themselves generally engaging, yet cannot compensate for the volume's lack of theoretical rigour and integration.

If the volume were to be limited to the nine chapters on Nigeria, it would

have been an important contribution. Here, Mabojuke analyses the failure of local government in Nigeria to advance the case for building new democratising structures. Olowu's chapter, while not focusing on Nigeria exclusively, provides rich comparative analyses and policy recommendations for African cities seeking independent revenue sources to finance urban projects. Williams' chapter regarding the contributions of writers to the democratic struggle in Nigeria, and Africa generally, is not only informative but refreshing as well. A major strength of this section is the discussion provided by Soremekun on the role of international actors in Nigeria's movement towards democracy and Erero's lucid treatment of Nigerian universities as extensions of state power, and as sites of resistance. Suberu's chapter looks to elite minority group relations, whereas Enemuo, Ikhide, Omole/Olukotun and Ojo analyse the transition programme under Babangida, administrative, and budgetary structures, the media, and the roles of the military register, and of language on the democratisation process in Nigeria respectively. Sa'ad's thoughtful contribution explores ways of adopting informal judicial arrangements to complement the formal judiciary. Together these chapters chronicle the steps being taken at the international, national, sub-national, institutional and group levels to effect transparent, and accountable governance structures in Nigeria.

The final section of the volume is devoted to West Africa. Here, Nwokedi provides an ambitious, albeit informative coverage on democratisation in selected Francophone West African countries. Sesay's chapter on Sierra Leone is both cogent, and prophetic of events in this 'lost paradise', whereas Ayee provides a detailed and balanced treatment of Ghana's managed transition to democracy under Rawlings. The last chapter by Obadare critically looks at societal, military and contagion affects of regional instability on the 1994 coup in The Gambia. This section, however, does not adequately capture the range of democratisation experiences within Francophone West Africa or the sub-region at large.

The third section was not a part of the editor's initial plan for the volume, but the annulment of the presidential election results of June 1993, 'compelled the editors to look beyond Nigeria' (p. 2). This added section, clearly an afterthought, makes the volume uneven as the bulk of chapters focus on Nigeria. Curiously enough, only one chapter is devoted to Francophone West Africa, but even here, the treatment is incomplete as Senegal and Guinea were not included in this group, and are hardly discussed. Thus what could have otherwise been a complete volume on Nigeria alone is undermined by the addition of a third and incomplete section on West Africa. Thus, the book really contains two volumes in one, one on Nigeria that was aborted, and another on West Africa prematurely born. Additionally, a concluding chapter to tie up the loose ends, raise some theoretical and research concerns, could have been useful and a fitting end to the volume. These limitations notwithstanding, the individual chapter contributions make the volume a good addition to the literature on governance and democratisation, and one worthy of being read by scholars and lay persons alike.

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**The Power of Human Rights: international norms and domestic change** edited by THOMAS RISSE, STEPHEN C. ROPP and KATHERYN SIKKINK

Cambridge University Press, 1999. Pp. 318. £37.50/US\$59.95; £13.95/US\$ 22.95 (pbk.).

What causes a state to abandon an historic record of human rights violations and embrace the norms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? This is a central question for scholars interested in the role of human rights within the emergent structures of global governance. While some attempt to answer this question from a traditional realist perspective that stresses the importance of state hegemony, others adopt a political economy line that stresses the processes of modernisation within the context of global trade and finance. A third group, to which all the authors in the volume belong, emphasises the power of norms themselves as an independent variable within the global order. More particularly, the volume reviewed here argues that the increasing plurality found within the current global order can promote justice and human rights wherever injustice and human rights violations are found.

The opening chapter sets out a methodological framework for analysis. At the heart of this framework is what Risse, Ropp and Sikkink refer to as a 'spiral model' of human rights change. Although, for many, the image of a spiral might suggest a downward motion and a movement away from desired outcomes (spiral into poverty, despair, economic decline, etc.), here the authors portray a more uplifting spiral that leads states to adjust their domestic policies to conform to universally recognised standards of human rights. Five phases are identified as important moments along the spiral into a good human rights record: (1) transnational networks gather intelligence on human rights violations; (2) in reaction to this evidence, governments deny the validity of universal norms; (3) governments offer tactical concessions in an effort to stave off further criticism; (4) governments signal acceptance of international norms by ratifying human rights treaties; and (5) social, political and legal reforms eventually bring 'rule-consistent behaviour'. For Risse, Ropp and Sikkink, the motive force for this movement is the formation of transnational social networks, loosely related collections of nongovernmental organisations, churches, sympathetic governments, international organisations and domestic opposition groups, who work to raise awareness of human rights conditions, which demands a response from violators. This approach is rigidly applied in the case study chapters, which include Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Tunisia, Morocco, Indonesia, the Philippines, Chile, Guatemala and the countries of Eastern Europe.

The methodology adopted in this volume is successful in structuring the case study chapters in a way that enables strong description of the various social and political movements that lead to some improvements in human rights for many citizens. However, any claim to explain social change is dependent upon accepting certain assumption that many would question. First, the editors assume that general agreement on human rights norms is widely accepted, an assumption questioned by critics of the current normative order. Second, by

applying the model to a narrow range of civil and political rights, the editors chose to ignore questions concerning the unity of rights, including economic and social rights, which are often at the core of claims for democracy and rights. Third, although non-governmental organisations figure high on the list of actors who press for human rights, so far no secure explanation of how this operates has been offered. This is not to argue that the dissemination of knowledge does not play an important role in securing human rights, but it does make a model that relies heavily upon the activities of such organisations less impelling. Fourth, although the editors insist that their framework offers a better explanation of human rights change than those offered by followers of modernisation theory, they do not engage with recent literature on globalisation, particularly the literature that associates prevailing social values with transnational class interests. In short, if one develops a model that includes only those aspects of social behaviour that support particular interests – civil and political rights, ideas of pluralism, modernisation as a state-centric phenomenon – then it may come as no surprise that this methodology bears fruit.

Although the above remarks may appeal to pessimists, this volume will offer further hope to optimists.

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**The Hyena People: Ethiopian Jews in Christian Ethiopia** by HAGAR SALAMON

Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1999, Pp. 168. US\$48.00, US\$17.95 (pbk.).

Despite the vast number of publications about the Beta Israel (Falasha) of Ethiopia, no scholarly ethnography of their life in Ethiopia has ever been published. With the migration of almost the entire community to Israel, it is also no longer possible to undertake the research necessary for such a work. Hagar Salamon has attempted to do the next best thing, by reconstructing an important aspect of Beta Israel life in Ethiopia on the basis of information gathered from immigrants in Israel.

Her book operates on two separate levels. On the one hand, it is a vivid reconstruction of the multifaceted relationship between Jews and Christians in Ethiopia. However, it also guides the reader through the use of different interpretive tools for the understanding of inter-ethnic relations. These include the analysis of symbols, proverbs and metaphors, social classes (slaves), and rituals such as weddings, burials and conversions. One need not be interested in Ethiopia to benefit from the acuteness of her insights.

While readers inclined to depict the Beta Israel as a persecuted Jewish minority in Ethiopia will find elements to support their position, this reading misses the richness and complexity of Salamon and her informants' reconstruction. While the Beta Israel may have been feared as *buda*, hyenas who took human form during the day and attacked their neighbours at night, they viewed their Christian neighbours as carriers of impurity, whose

eneration of the cross bordered on idolatry. The discussion of Beta Israel's ownership of *barya* (slaves) and their rituals for making them pure enough to share their villages, challenges the common depiction of the Beta Israel as despised craftsmen residing at the bottom of the social hierarchy. The cover photo of the paperback edition, with its arresting image of a Beta Israel woman with a cross tattooed on her chin and a Star of David hanging on a chain around her neck, should give pause to all those agitating for the immigration to Israel of all Ethiopians who claim to be of Jewish descent.

The book is so beautifully written, that it is easy to forget that it is based not on fieldwork *in situ*, but rather on recollections of informants living in a different country and often speaking a different language than their native Amharic and Tigrinya. Salamon is clearly not to blame for the fact that her prose transports the reader so successfully, but she might have returned to this methodological issue in the final chapter. Similarly, one cannot help but wonder what testimonies from the Beta Israel's Christian neighbours would have contributed to this vivid but one-sided reconstruction. It is an affirmation of the richness of the book that the only disappointment it produces are a consequence of its brevity. One wishes it was longer and discussed more issues.

Although published in a series of critical studies in Jewish literature, culture and society, Salamon's book belongs on the bibliography of courses on ethnicity and inter-ethnic relations in Africa. It deserves to be read by students and scholars alike.

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**African State and Society in the 1990s: Cameroon's political crossroads** by JOSEPH TAKOUGANG and MILTON KRIEGER  
Boulder, CO and Oxford: Westview Press, 1998. Pp. xxvi + 283. US\$55.00.

In the study of African transitions to multiparty politics in the 1990s, it is important to examine the many cases where the transition has been very incomplete – where former single parties have retained power, and democracy is definitely limited. Cameroon is an outstanding example, and this thorough study of developments there is welcome.

While emphasising strongly how limited democratisation has been, these authors describe at length the growth of new parties in the 1990s and the development of the independent press, which indeed is one of their main sources. They have used plenty of data gathered on the ground, particularly in the North-West and South-West Provinces (West Cameroon); much of the study is focused on these provinces and on the leading party there, the Social Democratic Front (SDF). The background under Ahidjo and Biya is traced in chapters 2 to 4, and the onset of a dictatorial regime is examined in the light of the scholarly literature – Joseph and Mbembe, but particularly Bayart and Ngayab, whose interpretations are applied to later events at various points. There is a good description of the crisis between Biya and his predecessor in 1983, and the authors rightly note that relaxation of dictatorship was already



visible in the 1980s. They further confirm the importance of *internal* African pressures for greater democracy before 1989–90. The struggle between Biya and his party on the one hand, and the opposition forces on the other, is described at length in chapters 5 and 6. It is a lively account with plenty of details of the parties' organisation, the various constitutional proposals debated despite the maintenance of an all-powerful presidency, and actions on the ground including the *villes mortes* campaign of 1991 and the powerful movement for West Cameroon autonomy.

Throughout, the authors' sympathies are very obvious. While they convincingly expose the undemocratic nature of Biya's Cameroon, his regime's widespread corruption and unscrupulous determination to hang on to power, the depiction of the simple heroic struggle goes too far at times. The authors allude only briefly to the opposition's contribution to the violence in West Cameroon, and do not mention its false report of fifty eight killed at the University of Yaounde in 1991. In chapter 4 the common Cameroonian allegation of Beti ethnic domination is cited without enough critical examination. The authors note in the concluding chapter that there are differences among Beti peoples, but not that these peoples (whom some might not even accept as including the Bulus, Biya's people) have such high rates of education that they would have a large share of the prominent positions even without favouritism. The authors are right to emphasise perception of ethnic domination as a factor. But in Cameroon and elsewhere it is useful to examine the relationship between such perceptions and reality (in fact neither unconnected nor identical).

While noting that the SDF's following is predominantly 'francophone', Takougang and Krieger say little about the areas of its support in former French Cameroun – the Bamileke homeland and the majority Bamileke city of Douala. More should have been said about the Bamilekes, always a key people in Cameroonian politics as well as the economy. On the north, another opposition area, these authors' account is largely confined to the study of sleazy politics (certainly important) behind the Sodecoton privatisation plan. On the economic side, there are omissions too: the impact of changes in cocoa and coffee marketing could have been examined, for example. But what is most regrettably lacking here is a proper study of how Biya and his party have retained power. The impression given throughout is that at every turn they deserved to lose – but they won. The *villes mortes* was a formidable protest campaign, but an almost total failure. Chapter 7 looks briefly at the army, one of the keys to that outcome in 1991, and France's support for Biya is noted. But there is no proper analysis of internal factors keeping the regime in power. Because of this omission, one must wonder whether these authors' ominous predictions of serious trouble if the regime continues on in its present course refer to what Biya deserves, or what is probable. Although it occurred before other events covered, the feeble armed rising by West Cameroonian militants in North West Province in March 1997 is not mentioned here. But if such efforts are all that the regime's most militant opponents can manage, it may last quite a while more.

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**The Gambia and the World: a history of the foreign policy of Africa's smallest state, 1965–1995** by OMAR TOURAY  
Hamburg: Institute of African Affairs, 2000. Pp. ix + 209. US\$13.00 (pbk.).

This is by far the most comprehensive book on the foreign policy of The Gambia to date. It is a timely and an important contribution to the growing literature on the international relations of small states and The Gambia specifically. It covers the thirty-year period from independence in 1965 to 1995. While the book focuses on the interests that have historically shaped both the content and conduct of The Gambia's foreign relations, such as protection of The Gambia's territorial integrity and economic survival, it goes beyond these issues. Consequently, Touray is able to provide a richly textured blend of The Gambia's political history from the colonial to the post-independence period, which he then uses to anchor his discussion of the country's foreign relations. This way, foreign policy issues are not treated separately from the larger political, security and economic concerns that gave rise to them. The outcome is a well-crafted book whose central arguments are grounded in the theoretical and methodological assumptions of 'idealist' international relations theory.

The volume is divided into nine chapters. The first lays out the central argument of the book and questions the central assumptions of 'realist' international relations theory regarding the different foreign policy orientations of small and large states. Touray contends that 'apart from the security implications of smallness, most of the observations made in the literature about the foreign policies of micro-states can not be accounted for by smallness, but by economic disability' (p. 8). Furthermore, he argues that limited involvement of small states in world affairs, emphasis by these states on bilateral relations, and an authoritarian foreign policy decision-making structure, are not peculiar to micro-states. Rather, these have to do more with economic considerations rather than size, *per se*. Together, these arguments provide the theoretical base for the rest of the chapters.

What this study has implicitly and explicitly argued, is that The Gambia's foreign policy was driven by three interrelated concerns: the need for territorial independence, economic survival and regime legitimisation. Touray also emphasises other factors such as national prestige and the desire to be perceived as independent and sovereign as important considerations for policy makers as well. In this regard, The Gambia's foreign policy under Jawara demonstrated considerable leadership and was remarkably successful in spearheading the signing of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, also known as the Banjul Charter, named after The Gambia's capital city. These suggest that success in the foreign policy of states is not the purview of large states alone but also of micro-states like The Gambia. Yet while Touray recognises that The Gambia's foreign relations succeeded in maintaining independence, sovereignty, security and economic survival, it also deepened the country's dependency and vulnerability to external actors.

This is an important book for three primary reasons. First, because it is the first book-length discourse on the foreign policy of The Gambia from 1965 to 1995. Second, in discussing this, the book provides a valuable political history

of this young nation. And third, the book and the theoretical arguments from which it proceeds confirm the efficacy of idealist theory. Thus, without making it very explicit, Touray succeeds in using the Gambian case to illustrate the fertility of idealist international relations theory. Consequently, it is a book that is likely to have a lasting impact on the international relations literature of small states, foreign policy of African states and the ongoing critique of traditional international relations theory. Equally important, however, is that the book is well written and readable by persons outside this specialised area of political science.

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**African Development in a Comparative Perspective** by UNCTAD  
Oxford: James Currey/Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1999. Pp. 113.  
£12.95 (pbk.).

Since the publication of the *Berg Report* almost twenty years ago, references to Africa in terms of growth and development have not always been positive, let alone optimistic. The continent seems to be in a free fall, debt-ridden, littered and shattered economies, a demoralised population, and crumbling state institutions and infrastructures, under the heavy-handed clutch of a corrupt elite. This is the familiar description, almost a signature tune, associated with Africa. The continent has slipped so far behind other developing regions in terms of development indicators that the yawning gap sometimes seems to defy rational explanation. But here comes a refreshing note, not a glorifying one either, but nonetheless an even-handed analysis of the continent's economic future.

In a low-keyed but optimistic note, *African Development in a Comparative Perspective* highlights the short-lived successful periods in African development and explains the key weaknesses that have characterised the African economic trend in the past four decades. The book examines the relative successes, or lack thereof, of some African countries under Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and advances prospects for recovery. It rejects overly pessimistic predictions about Africa's future, and cautions restraint regarding the power and potential of foreign direct investment as a catalyst for speedy change. While recognising the significance of foreign investment, the book argues for policies that, *inter alia*, encourage a culture of private domestic investment, increased agricultural and industrial productivity, and export expansion. It also suggests a supportive international environment, which includes debt relief, improved development assistance, and better access to the markets of the advanced industrial nations.

The book has five chapters: Chapter 1 reviews the trends and prospects for growth and development in post-independence Africa. Set against the extremely high expectations of the newly independent African states, coupled with rapid population growth, the continent's growth performance was relatively strong from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, although lower than in other developing regions, with the exception of South Asia, during the same

period. The 1973 oil price hikes, which shocked the global economy, marked the beginning of faltering growth for Africa. With continued population growth, declines in agricultural productivity and prices of primary commodities, a weak industrial base, and increased borrowing from international financial agencies to compensate for shortfalls in the purchasing power of non-oil exports, many countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) ended the decade with greater general imbalances, economic instability, and increased external indebtedness. Further declines in the 1980s reflected rising costs of manufactures and continued falling commodity prices, particularly coffee, cocoa, tea, and cotton (which fell 40–50 per cent); decline in imports and new investment; a sharp rise in international interest rates and increased debt service costs. SSA countries lagged behind other developing regions because its structural weaknesses were deeper and its elbowroom was narrower.

Chapter 2 examines the role, structure and performance of agriculture in economic growth. Given that agriculture is the key sector in many African countries, the overall economic growth depends critically on the performance of this sector. While some countries recorded improvements in terms of a number of key indicators, including productivity, output and export volumes in the post-1984 period, the improvement has not been sufficient to increase per capita food production and net agricultural exports for a variety of reasons, notably the extremely rapid rates of population growth and urbanisation, as well as taxation of agricultural exports, which may act as disincentives for agricultural producers. The lack of sustained agricultural development stemming partly from undercapitalisation, including inadequate public investment, accounts for the relative weak performance of agriculture in SSA countries.

Chapter 3 focuses on agricultural policies, including sources and constraints of agricultural performance. The evidence presented suggests a public policy geared towards a two-sided approach in which the state taxes agricultural produce but at the same time compensates for this resource outflow by making adequate investment in basic infrastructure and agricultural research to enhance agricultural productivity. In addition, such a policy should encourage increases in profitability for private investment in agriculture and lower risks by providing a stable environment. It is argued that this strategy is responsible for the effective agricultural development in East Asia.

Chapter 4 deals with trade, accumulation and industry. It argues that the major challenge facing predominantly agrarian-based African economies is twofold: high productivity and economic diversification. It argues that the marginalisation of sub-Saharan Africa in global trade is not a result of its resistance to openness, but rather a reflection of its low productive capacity. It identifies low productivity and lack of economic diversification as the major challenges facing predominantly agrarian-based African economies. To meet this challenge, a higher level of investment as well as establishing a link between trade and capital accumulation are required. Increasing opportunities for interregional trade will not only generate regional growth dynamics but also make African exporters in the long run more competitive globally.

The last chapter addresses policy challenges and institutional reform. It argues for domestic policy options relating to structural reform and adjustment

that need to be pursued in order to create a pro-savings and pro-investment climate. It highlights the main weaknesses on financial, trade and agricultural policies and their impact on stability, private incentives and public investment, and suggests alternative policy options. Institutional reforms suggested include, among others, redistributive mechanisms based on the politics of inclusion, promotion of the developmental state, restoration of effective policy-making machinery, and an efficient bureaucracy. The book provides valuable insights for policy makers and development experts seeking to reverse the continent's unenviable record of performance.

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