

## REVIEWS

### ANCIENT EGYPT

*Egypt and the Egyptians*. By DOUGLAS J. BREWER and EMILY TEETER. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Pp. xviii + 218. £35 (ISBN 0-521-44518-3); £12.95, paperback (ISBN 0-521-44984-7).

KEY WORDS: Egypt, Egyptology.

In the preface to *Egypt and the Egyptians*, the authors clearly state that they have geared their book towards ‘those who know little or nothing about ancient Egypt but want some grounding in the basic history and culture of this civilization’. The book, then, is the latest in the ever-popular genre of introductions to ancient Egypt. It is, however, one of the best of its kind.

The book begins with background chapters on Egypt’s geography, on its history, and on some of the adventurers and scholars who helped form the discipline of Egyptology. Chapters on ancient Egyptian art, architecture, language, societal norms, religious beliefs, systems of government, and other such related topics follow. Each chapter is well illustrated and draws evenly from textual, archaeological, and artistic sources. Although the text is not footnoted, each chapter is provided with a list of relevant English-language books and articles at its conclusion.

*Egypt and the Egyptians* was co-written by two well-respected scholars of ancient Egypt. Teeter is a traditionally trained Egyptologist, while Brewer comes from an anthropological background. Although the preface contains an elaborate apologia for the lack of anthropological theory contained in the book (attributed to the dearth of such theory in Egyptology in general), many of the chapters consciously incorporate discussions of anthropological interest. What attention there is to such issues helps set this work apart from the numerous other overviews of Egyptian culture.

There are, however, a few areas in which the authors might have been more rigorous in their anthropological terminology and discussion. For example, it is inappropriate by most standards to refer to the Nagada II chiefdoms based at Abydos, Nagada, and Hierakonpolis as ‘city-states’ (p. 33). Likewise, the text states that

although Egypt paralleled other early civilizations in many fundamental ways, it also had distinctive, almost contradictory cultural characteristics: Egypt was one of the most centralized early political systems and possessed an extraordinarily complex bureaucracy, yet the majority of the populace lived in small, self sufficient villages and towns, much like their predecessors in the Predynastic Period (p. 51).

Far from being distinctive or contradictory, such a situation is in fact typical of territorial states. The Incas are a prime example.

Small quibbles aside, Brewer and Teeter do an admirable job of covering a great breadth of information in a concise format. The most recent scholarship in the field is represented, and the text is clear, informative, and well written. The chapters on ‘Cities, towns and villages’ and ‘Homes for the people, the pharaoh and the gods’ are particularly strong. Both make liberal usage of primary sources, such as ancient Egyptian administrative documents, house models and architectural drawings.

As it stands *Egypt and the Egyptians* achieves its stated purpose admirably. The book provides the newcomer to the study of ancient Egypt with as thorough an understanding of ancient Egyptian civilization as a slim volume could provide. One cannot help wishing, however, that Brewer and Teeter had utilized their formidable backgrounds in Egyptology and anthropology to produce a work that, rather than adding to an already crowded genre, served to fill one of the obvious gaps in the Egyptological literature.

For example, there are very few books geared towards introducing ancient Egypt to an anthropological audience. The authors in their preface state that 'it is impractical at this time even to test complicated hypotheses and models related to much of Egyptian cultural evolution' (p. xviii). There is, however, a great deal of both textual and archaeological information that could be gathered and presented to an audience interested specifically in cross-cultural comparisons. A volume focused upon such typically anthropological issues as kinship, social stratification, economy, ideology, frontier maintenance, and the like would make a substantive contribution.

Short of this, there is still a very real need for an introduction to ancient Egypt which, in addition to acting as a suitable overview, could admirably double as the textbook for an undergraduate survey course on ancient Egypt. Brewer and Teeter's book is almost there. Were the chapters a bit longer, and were they organized in a more logical and orderly progression, *Egypt and the Egyptians* could laudably have served such a dual function. As it is, however, anyone wishing to employ this book as a class text would need to supplement it or utilize it in a creative manner.

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## GENERAL HISTORIES

*L'Afrique et les Africains au XIXe siècle: Mutations, révolutions, crises.* By CATHERINE COQUERY-VIDROVITCH. Paris: Armand Colin, 1999. Pp. 304. FF 140 (ISBN 2-200-25057-6).

*A History of African Societies to 1870.* By ELIZABETH ISICHEI. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Pp. vii + 578. £50 (ISBN 0-521-4544-1); £17.95, paperback (ISBN 0-521-45599-5).

KEY WORDS: General, pre-colonial.

Here are two works of synthesis, presumably aimed at teachers and students of introductory courses in the pre-modern history of Africa. Catherine Coquery's book is short, brisk and well organized around the general theme of the opening-up of Africa during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century. Her basic premise is that during this period most of Africa enjoyed unusually beneficent climatic conditions, with good rainfall and a marked absence of epidemic and epizootic catastrophes. Human and bovine populations increased, the former reaching a total of perhaps 150 million by 1880, before declining drastically under the impact of colonial occupation. This increase, rather than pressures coming from the outside world, was in her view the main factor in political consolidation, economic growth and social change. Seen in this perspective, the forceful expansion of Islam from minority to majority status throughout the Sudanic latitudes of the continent is her leading theme for this region. The economic and political penetration of central Africa from its already Islamised eastern coastline provides the second, and the planting of Christianity in western and southern Africa the third.

It is an attractive thesis and one seen at its most persuasive in the Sudanic region, where the successive Fulbe jihads in the western and central Sudan represented, on the one hand, a genuine movement of Islamic reform generated within the region, and on the other the seizure of political power by a pastoral minority over their agricultural and urban neighbours. The jihads resulted in larger political units and greater urbanization. They also created a glut of war captives, which greatly intensified the use of slave labour in agriculture, in urban industries, and in the caravan trade, besides helping to supply a continuing export of slaves to the Maghrib on one side and to the Guinea coast and the transatlantic world on the other.

It is a pity that Coquery has paid so little attention to the pastoral dimension of the Fulbe, for it is here that she could have found important points of comparison in her other two regions. For example, it would seem that the nineteenth-century enlargement of the Tutsi kingdoms of Rwanda and Burundi was motivated more by the expansion of the bovine population than of the human one. And the same would be true of the Maasai expansion down the line of the Eastern Rift. Again, in south-eastern Africa the rapid spread of Nguni-ruled kingdoms from Zululand northwards to Tanzania represented primarily the search of pastoral minorities for new grazing for their expanding herds. Instead, Coquery's treatment of the East African scene is tied essentially to the southward outreach of Muhammad Ali's Egypt and the penetration of the East African mainland by well-armed, coast-based caravans patronized by the Omani rulers of Zanzibar and their Indian capitalist supporters. It is nicely done, but it reads almost like old-style colonial history, in which initiative for change comes always from the outside.

The same could also be said about Coquery's treatment of Christianity in Africa south of the Muslim belt. She disavows any desire to see the matter through the eyes of the missionaries, but in fact presents a story organized mainly around the deployment of missionary societies, with scant mention of the part played by early African believers in spreading the gospel message to their neighbours, or their influence as interpreters, translation assistants, catechists and teachers, or even the special relevance of the Bible story to a continent experiencing colonial subjugation. African Christianity does not really come alive in her account until the formation of independent African churches well on in the colonial period. Still, she has seized the main point when she says on the last page of her book that colonialism would inevitably transform African societies on a scale which would need the help of the great monotheistic religions if it was not to be overwhelming. Altogether, this book, though controversial in places, will attract and stimulate both students and teachers, and an English translation is much to be desired.

Elizabeth Isichei's book is of a very different kind. It deals with African societies from the earliest times until the eve of the colonial period. It is twice the length of Coquery's, and the main emphasis is on ethnic and linguistic groups as such, rather than on general themes. The organization is in two sets of regional chapters, the first running to the sixteenth century, and the second from the seventeenth to the nineteenth. Each chapter, however, is broken up by a succession of sub-headings, often one to a page and grouping only two or three paragraphs. The result is an historical handbook rather than a history. It is a work that should be referred to rather than read straight through. As such, it has a real value. Isichei is immensely learned. Her reading of the printed secondary sources has been exhaustive, her judgments on them mostly sharp and shrewd, and her citations brilliantly selected. But anyone who has attempted to teach an outline course on early African history will recognize the problem which has defeated her. It is that no student, whether of African origin or not, can learn in a year to handle a thousand-odd ethnic and linguistic units simultaneously. A teacher who attempts to be comprehensive is sure to fail. In the early days of African history teaching, it was this consideration,

far more than any neo-imperialist respect for large political units that caused the initial over-concentration on larger kingdoms and empires, because they helped to make the subject more manageable. Many teachers will be glad to have Isichei's book within easy reach, but as a work of reference rather than a textbook to be prescribed to beginners. It is announced on the flyleaf that a second volume, now in preparation, will cover the period from 1870 to 1995.

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## EARLY HISTORY OF THE UPPER GUINEA COAST

*Africa Encountered: European Contacts and Evidence, 1450–1700.* By P. E. H. HAIR. Aldershot: Variorum. 1997. Pp. xx + 324. £57.50 (ISBN 0-86078-626-9).  
KEY WORDS: Western Africa, historiography.

This book is a compilation of eleven articles that originally appeared in diverse, primarily Africanist journals between 1966 and 1992. Nine of the chapters cover West Africa, and eight focus on the early history of the Upper Guinea Coast. P. E. H. Hair is undeniably the authority on European written sources for this area before 1700. His expertise, as reflected in the copious footnotes, extends to Portuguese, German and Dutch (as well as French) sources. This is a particularly useful volume for historians, especially as several of the articles initially appeared in local journals in Africa and were not widely available.

This book contains no previously unpublished material. In fact, there are no major revisions to the original articles, seven of which date to 1970 or earlier, nor is there significant updating of the bibliographies. Nevertheless, the articles – or at least the pieces on the Upper Guinea Coast, the area of this reviewer's expertise – still stand as important contributions to the pre-colonial history of the region. This attests to the soundness of the scholarship.

Several of the chapters have become what one might term minor classics. For example, 'Ethnolinguistic continuity on the Guinea Coast' first proposed, in 1967, that the geographical configuration of languages spoken along the coast shows remarkable continuity from the sixteenth or seventeenth century. In its thesis and in many of its details, Hair's presentation remains valid, in spite of minor revisions by younger scholars to his historical map of linguistic groupings. Likewise, the discussion of the use of African languages in European–African commerce to 1560 (Chapter 6) still provides important information, even if the terminology ('each tribe had its own language') sometimes betrays the assumptions of an earlier era. Hair's groundbreaking work on cultural interaction and mutual influence between Europeans and Africans in sixteenth/early seventeenth-century Sierra Leone effectively correlates English sources and the Portuguese sources that the author knows so well. Current scholars (including the present reviewer) continue to profit from Hair's meticulous spadework in these written sources. And the conclusions, e.g. 'at the level of the political elite, "traditional" African cultures had been modified by a century of regular Portuguese contact', are certainly accurate.

The decision not to update the bibliographical citations in articles now three decades old, nor to add recent scholarship, is unfortunate, though Hair's coverage of primary sources is already comprehensive. If such an undertaking for each individual article would have been prohibitively time-consuming, the introduction might nevertheless have afforded an opportunity for the author to add references to more recent scholarship. Most recent historical writing on the Upper Guinea Coast before 1700 builds upon Hair's work; some reaction to the more recent

corpus would have been useful. Instead, the author limits himself to a brief, five-page introduction that amounts to a 'plaidoyer' for his rather conservative interpretation of the methodology of pre-colonial West African history.

Professor Hair is not a fan of 'the cult of oral traditions'; European sources, he argues, 'represent the essential sources for African history'. While the latter assertion is warranted for the Upper Guinea Coast, which is exceptionally well-documented in Portuguese, French and English sources before the eighteenth century, it would be difficult to sustain the argument for the interior. And for regions such as the inland delta of the Niger River, Mande oral traditions, correlated with Arabic written sources and complemented by the archaeological record are indisputably more important than European written records for pre-nineteenth century history. Admittedly, there was a period of perhaps 20 years, beginning in the 1960s, when many historians showed a tendency uncritically to credit oral testimony as providing an 'African view' of the past. But Hair characterizes all non-written sources, from diverse societies, as having severely limited usefulness as historical sources. His rather broad assertion that 'all other records – oral, archaeological, ethnographic...etc. – provide useful glimpses of Black Africa before European contact' (p. viii), but little more than glimpses, is too facile. This perspective simply ignores the historical insights that come from studies of the generation, replication, and transformation of oral traditions (c.f. Diawara's recent work on the Soninke), or the very real historical knowledge archaeologists have derived from the study of sites such as Jenné-jeno.

In fairness, the above criticism applies only to a small part of a very brief introduction. The scholarship that constitutes the body of this book is of the highest quality and argues eloquently for Professor Hair's methodology. The author demonstrates the effectiveness of 'digging out all extant primary sources and examining them in detail'. The lasting value of his meticulously researched articles derives from that painstaking method and from the effective critical interpretation of those sources.

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## SLAVE-TRADING PORTS OF THE NIGERIAN HINTERLAND

*Ports of the Slave Trade (Bights of Benin and Biafra)*. Edited by ROBIN LAW and SILKE STRICKRODT. Stirling: Centre of Commonwealth Studies, University of Stirling, 1999. Pp. vi + 189. £10, paperback (ISBN 1-85769-101-6).

KEY WORDS: Western Africa, slave trade.

This book is a collection of ten papers – with the addition of an introduction and a further paper contributed later – from a conference held at the University of Stirling in 1998. The conference was part of the 'Slave Trade of the Nigerian Hinterland' research initiative, coordinated by Robin Law, Paul Lovejoy and Elisée Soumonni under the UNESCO 'Slave Route' project, which has done much in the past few years to illuminate hitherto ignored aspects of the slave trade, and particularly, though not exclusively, the sources of the trade from within West Africa.

The papers – most in English, two in French – cover a wide variety of aspects of the history of ports serving the Nigerian hinterland, from where more than a third of the slaves exported to the Americas originated. The first group of papers looks at Atlantic slaving ports. David Eltis, Lovejoy and David Richardson provide an overview of the period 1676–1832, analyzing the impact of the slave trade on

entrepots all around the Atlantic basin and stressing the concentration of the trade in a few European ports; Nicoué Gayibor examines the fortunes of ports between Ada and Grand-Popo from the seventeenth to the late nineteenth century; Soumonni considers Ouidah, 'the single most important slaving port within West Africa' and looks at the tensions in its relationship with Dahomey, while Law, also on Ouidah, stresses the progressive alienation of the port's merchant community from the Dahomey monarchy during these years. Finally Ralph Austen looks at an often neglected slaving entrepot, Douala, compares its fortunes with Old Calabar and examines the impact of the trade on later issues of identity in the city. The next two papers examine networks of slave supply. Caroline Sorensen-Gilmour looks at Badagry, particularly during its declining fortunes in the nineteenth century, while Femi Kolapo extends the analysis of slaving ports to the Niger-Benue confluence, bringing out the links of this area both southwards to the Bight of Biafra and northwards to the desert. The final section focuses on the ending of the trade. Adam Jones looks at Little Popo and Agoué through the Lawson correspondence of the 1840s and 1850s and shows how such a figure as George Lawson was able to maintain a clandestine trade in this period, while Michel Videgla considers Porto Novo between 1848 and 1882. Waibinte Wariboko analyzes developments at New Calabar in the nineteenth century and the impact of the transition to 'legitimate' trade, while Kristin Mann examines Lagos and the links between abolitionist imperatives and British expansion into the port and its hinterland.

This is a valuable collection. All these papers can be read with profit while some are of outstanding quality; certainly there is not a weak chapter in the volume. Further, tight editing and a resolute focus on the theme have avoided the usual failing in such collections, in which individual authors follow their own interests with little reference to the broader picture. The volume thus acts as both a useful survey of the current state of knowledge and a valuable pointer to future research. For the former, its particular importance lies in its drawing attention to the significant role played by these entrepots in the slave trade and particularly its stress on their demographic and economic expansion and contraction during this era. Much of value is also said on the political tensions that the slave trade, and its demise, helped to generate within these ports. For the latter, especially useful is the stimulus this collection deservedly ought to give to further research on a number of issues. One in particular is the progress, both political and economic, of the merchant communities of these ports, a topic Law and Austen address in their contributions. Clearly more also needs to be established on the slave sources tapped by these ports and the way they maintained such supply networks inland. Kolapo and Sorensen-Gilmour directly, and several contributors indirectly, consider these issues and in doing so open up valuable questions of how these systems operated. Above all, the editors might next wish to consider those other ports of the slave trade of the Nigerian hinterland, namely those of the Sahel and the trans-Saharan commerce, and how these compare with the ports of the Bights. That said, this collection represents a significant addition to our knowledge of the slave trade and deserves the widest possible distribution.

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## WARFARE AMONG THE YORUBA

*War and Peace in Yorubaland, 1793–1893*. Edited by ADEAGBO AKINJOGBIN. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria), 1998. Pp. xi + 526. No price given (ISBN 978-129-497-3).

KEY WORDS: Nigeria, military.

The nineteenth century was a tumultuous period for the Yoruba-speaking world. For 100 years rebellions, civil wars and invasions from the outside brought about untold suffering and loss of human life. Property, towns and three entire kingdoms were destroyed. Political and economic institutions changed in fundamental ways. Previous scholarly literature – the largest literature for any period in Yoruba history – focused primarily on the wars themselves. This volume's distinguished editor, Professor Adeagbo (I. A.) Akinjogbin, has asked his authors to stress the wars' causes, course and consequences, and to describe the creative ingenuity to which an era of violence gave rise.

The result is a volume representing the work of 44 scholars, ranging from the most prominent members of Nigeria's historical establishment to numerous promising young academics, and even to lay historians, including retired Major General O. Olutoye, who writes on the implements and tactics of war (Chapter 18). Quite fittingly, this group was initially brought together in 1986 on the hundredth anniversary of the signing of the Kiriji/Ekiti Parapo Peace Treaty, which concluded a century of civil strife that changed the human and physical landscapes in ways so profound they affect political interactions to this day.

The volume is divided into four sections. The first is a set of useful overviews that treat warfare through topical lenses (ethnicity, gender, alliances, geography and fundamental causes) or focus on specific localities (Ondo, Ede, Igbomina, Iwo and Ilorin Ekiti). A curiously singular but rewarding addition to this section is an account by the Revd. B. F. Adeniji (Chapter 13) of the dilemma of the Oni-elect of Ife during the Kiriji-Ekitiparapo war, who was pulled in so many opposing directions that he refused to assume one of the most revered offices in the land.

The second section addresses generals and their war strategies, ranging widely from the use of supernatural and herbal weapons, systems of communication, war songs and dance, to fortifications. It contains, in addition to biographical essays on the famed war leaders Latoosa and Ogedengbe, a compelling study of the ethics of warfare and human rights. Professor A. Akiwowo (Chapter 17) draws on traditional texts which show that, as a counter to conflict, leaders were exhorted to maintain peace by acquiring, among other things, knowledge of the dehumanizing effects of evil deeds and their consequences and to perform unforced acts of altruistic sacrifice.

A third, relatively brief section explores peacemaking, including the use of educated elites in the search for peace, and the role of external powers in expanding, but later curtailing, conflict.

The largest section, the fourth, focuses on a wide range of political and cultural consequences of warfare. In addition to expected themes such as economic development and demographic adaptation this segment is unique in its ability to inspect the nooks and crannies into which the influences of war wended their way. Writers look at festivals, songs, language use, drama and body arts, all of which reflect, comment on or represent warfare in imaginative ways. But the most significant outcome, actually treated in an earlier section of the book, was the subversion of the primary prize over which the nineteenth-century wars were fought. This was sovereignty – the ability of each polity to determine how it would be governed. As Dr J. A. Atanda points out (Chapter 26), external imperialists seized on the vulnerability of the war-torn Yoruba by stepping in themselves. Even

after their departure, any yearnings for sovereignty were overtaken by global events that rendered the Yoruba peoples subordinate to another larger entity, the body politic of Nigeria.

One of the most challenging issues in the book arises out of the paradox that the wars intensified divisiveness among Yoruba sub-groups while simultaneously fostering their integration. Professor J. F. Ade Ajayi (Chapter 1) argues that the era of warfare interfered with ongoing processes of unification and instead created rivalries that undermined peacetime efforts to achieve solidarity. Even today, he laments, Yoruba turn on themselves in times of stress, provoking problems in nation-building. Yet ample evidence is provided for the integrative effects of nineteenth-century warfare. Both G. O. Oyeweso (Chapter 5) and Funso Afolayan (Chapter 6) discuss large in-migrations and subsequent cultural diffusions that permeated Ede and Igbomina areas and brought about fundamental shifts in social, economic and political practices. In the same vein, Dr G. I. O. Olomola, Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs in Ondo State, uses demographic data (Chapter 31) to show there was a large amount of sub-ethnic mixing and that a significant number of communities were formed from culturally heterogeneous fragments imported from disparate places, all of which leads Olomola to suggest that the legacy of war is not to blame for continuing internal divisions. Rather, his view is that they represent selfish rivalries among political elites who play on contemporary parochial sentiments to mobilize people to act on their behalf.

Many other contributions deserve mention, but two cannot be excluded. One is a valuable periodization of the nineteenth-century wars by Professor Akinjogbin (Chapter 3). The other, by the Principal Librarian of the University of Ife's Library, A. Olaosun, is an extensive bibliographic survey of more than 140 general works and 36 local histories that contain accounts of war (Chapter 42).

In a large collection there is always some unevenness in the quality of the contributions, as is the case here. A few are weakened by attempts that seem more forced than organic to link the subject matter to broad social issues. But these are minor in comparison with the exceptional contribution the book makes to understanding a significant era in Yoruba history. This is an especially rich and focused collection. It provides a remarkable social history of conflict and its various permutations that is unmatched in the historical literature of this region of the world.

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## WARFARE IN AFRICA

*Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500–1800.* By JOHN K. THORNTON. London: UCL Press, 1999. Pp. xiv + 194. £15.99 (ISBN 1-857-28393-7)

KEY WORDS: General, military, slave trade.

While there has been considerable debate over the causes of war in pre-colonial West Africa, especially concerning the relation between warfare and the European slave trade, surprisingly little has been written on how war was actually being fought between African states during this period. African warfare is often more or less dismissed as a mere extension to the slave trade. In exchange for slaves European factors provided Africans with firearms, which they in turn used to acquire more slaves. African warfare is regarded more as a form of economic than military activity, and the raiding for slaves by African states becomes equated more with hunting than with military operations devised to achieve political goals.

In his book John K. Thornton seeks to modify this one-sided picture by concentrating on war as experienced by African states themselves during the



period of the slave trade. Europeans operating on the coast are relegated to the background as potential sources for firearms and auxiliary forces, and as eye-witnesses on whose evidence Thornton mainly relies. In this way he seeks to demonstrate that from the African point of view it was the Europeans who were merely providing an extension to African wars motivated by local political, economic and social factors.

Geographically the book covers a wide area, stretching along the West African coast from Senegal to the Niger River delta and including also the coastal regions of Angola. This huge territory with its multitude of states and non-state societies has been sub-divided into five sections. The first is the open savannah bordering coastal West Africa, a landscape suited to cavalry, which often dominated local warfare. The next chapter deals with the riverain cultures of the coastal forests from Senegal to Sierra Leone, where watercraft held great military importance. The following two chapters deal with the dense rainforests of the Gold Coast, where infantry ruled, and the more open landscape of the Gap of Benin, where cavalry, infantry and watercraft all had their place in a complex military environment. Last comes the savannah of Angola, where climate excluded cavalry, and infantry again dominated. In the final chapter the scope of the book is extended even further with an interesting, albeit somewhat cursory, attempt to find vestiges of previous African military experience from American slave revolts.

Having compressed such an extensive subject into a single, relatively short book, Thornton has naturally been compelled to generalize and he therefore fails to make a close analysis of any of the military systems included. The most detailed description is of Angola, where the author has been able to draw on Portuguese accounts whose own colonial armies in this region relied basically on the same model of organization as their local African opponents. As a result, Thornton is able to provide a more coherent picture of the social and political background of the armies of such indigenous Angolan states as the kingdom of Kongo.

Whereas the scope of the book has not allowed the author to take a very close look at any single African army, it has enabled him to make comparisons between military systems that tended to dominate in specific environmental conditions. However, more could perhaps have been done in this respect. For example, a comparison of the cavalry-dominated Sudanic savannah and the infantry-dominated Angolan savannah, where climate did not suit horses, would have been of interest to military history in general. Sometimes rather loose generalizations are also made, such as those regarding close-order infantry as a tactical reaction to enemy cavalry, rather than a possible reaction to the enemy's use of close-combat weapons.

The period covered by Thornton coincides with the time when firearms were being introduced into West Africa. The relatively poor performance of early handguns until about the late seventeenth century has often been noted by historians of European conflicts, although such weapons were nevertheless eagerly coveted by those who had no firearms. It would seem that the psychological impact of firearms, especially their noise, is still being underrated by some historians, and Thornton provides some interesting examples of the sound of guns deterring enemy cavalry. He also notes the skirmishing tactics generally adopted by African musketeers, a development that has been found in many places all over the world, but which contrasts curiously with its late adoption by European armies.

Despite occasional unsupported generalizations, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa* provides an excellent starting point for a general military history of the region. It also serves as a useful reminder that one must treat African military history on the basis of its own merits and not merely as a passive recipient of European initiatives.

## TRANSCENDING THE LIMITS OF MICROHISTORY

*Rogues, Rebels and Runaways: Eighteenth-Century Cape Characters.* By NIGEL PENN. Hilversum: Verloren, 1999. Pp. viii + 195. F35, paperback (ISBN 90-6550-054-5).

KEY WORDS: South Africa, social, biography.

The benefits of microhistory are well-known, as are its perils. The former lie in the advantages which can be gained from the detailed investigation of individual life histories that open up avenues of investigation into spheres that are difficult to approach in other ways, notably those which, in the cultural world in question, are considered private, and thus beyond the purview of the official world. The perils come from the difficulties of relating the details of the stories presented to the wider trends of which they are supposed to be exemplary, a problem exacerbated by the fact that in general those stories which historians can tell in detail are exceptional. Almost always, the information which allows such a narrow focus derives from some extraordinary happening which in some way generates a wealth of documentation.

In this collection of essays, three of which have been published previously, Nigel Penn just about manages to avoid these dangers. The longest piece, with the format of a novella, investigates the goings-on within the household of a rich brewer, Willem Menssink, a member of the Cape Town elite in the early eighteenth century. Menssink went down to economic and social ruin, essentially because he could not resist the temptations in a slave-owner's power over his young slave women. The estrangement that this caused between Menssink and his wife led to his divorce, and his expulsion from the Cape elite. But his fate was minor compared to that of one of his slave paramours, Trijntje, who together with a number of male fellows attempted to murder her mistress, Elisabeth Lingelbach, Menssink's estranged wife. As a result, she, and they, were executed. Menssink himself may have been lucky to escape, but was probably aided in this by his connections to one of the major factions in Cape Colonial politics at the time, that centred around Adam Tas.

The other essays in this book concentrate on the wild lands of the Cape's northern frontier, and are thus spin-offs from Penn's magisterial Ph.D. thesis, 'The Northern Cape Frontier Zone, 1700–c. 1815' (University of Cape Town, 1995). Three may be known to readers of this journal; the fourth, an overview, is the slightest in this volume. Nevertheless, they are all worth re-reading, and not just by those who seek raw material for a South African film tradition which, in subject matter, could match that of the American west. Two of them, on Estienne Barbier, transcend the limits of microhistory by describing in great and fascinating detail events antecedent to, and in the former case around, two of the major political stirrings in what was generally a strongly depoliticized colony, namely the burgher revolt of 1738 and the Patriot movement. Indeed, the Menssink story can only be understood in full as *inter alia* a by-play in the shadows of a third, that surrounding the dismissal of Willem Adriaen van der Stel. But their fascination derives from the discussions Penn provides of the violent and uncertain life of the Cape's northern borderlands. It was a region where the writ of government ran only intermittently – often enough for us to know something about it. Nearly all Penn's sources derive from Cape government archives, particularly the crime records – but not with such permanence that it could shape society. In time, though, it would. Penn is thus able to document and analyze this process, to show through his vignettes how a colonial order was created which eventually, though after the period covered in these essays, was to conquer the chaos.

Penn claims that his concern with the marginal figures, both metaphorically and

spatially, of the Cape Colony illuminates ‘a hitherto rather obscure period of South African history ... and draw[s] attention to the forces and processes which were shaping it’. In a sense this must be the case, since historians have in the end to work with the words and actions of individuals, or with the abstractions from those words and actions into ‘forces and processes’ made by contemporaries. There can be no doubt that anyone reading these essays will learn much about the eighteenth-century Cape – about slavery, gender, the life of the burgher elite, the frontier and more. But there are other reasons for reading them. They are superbly researched and well written pieces, and should thus be enjoyed by all those who can savour a historian’s craft.

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### CLAPPERTON’S DIARIES

*Clapperton in Borno: Journals of the Travels in Borno of Lieutenant Hugh Clapperton, RN, from January 1823 to September 1824.* Edited by JAMES R. BRUCE-LOCKHART. (Westafrikanische studien, 12). Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 1996. Pp. 239. DEM52, paperback (ISBN 3-927620-54-8).

*Difficult and Dangerous Roads: Hugh Clapperton’s Travels in Sahara and Fezzan (1822–25).* Edited by JAMIE BRUCE-LOCKHART and JOHN WRIGHT. London: Sickle Moon Books, 2000. Pp. xiii + 365. £9.99, paperback (ISBN 1-900209-06-3).

KEY WORDS: Northern Africa, Nigeria, exploration/travel.

The narratives of African travellers have enjoyed several stages of academic attention. Originally the accounts of nineteenth-century African expeditions were largely responsible for bringing ‘the unknown continent’ to the knowledge of Europe, hitherto largely ignorant of even its basic geography: Mungo Park, Lander and Livingstone, Bruce and Burton, Caillié and Nachtigal. A scholar like Barth first opened European eyes to the history and civilizations of Africa. A century or so later, their writings were closely revisited by the first generation of professional African historians in the UK and USA in the 1950s and 1960s, and several enterprising publishers responded to the scarcity of their works by reprinting the travelogues. Exceptionally, Everyman’s Library had kept Mungo Park’s *Travels* in print since 1907. Towards the end of the twentieth century the focus shifted from explorers’ observations of Africa to scrutiny of the explorers themselves, within the vogue for psychoanalytic enquiry and the reinterpretative deconstruction (by now in television documentaries too) of colourful explorers like Burton, Speke, Baker and Stanley, many of them arguably travelling as much in search of themselves as in search of Africa. Only occasionally, as with the discovery of Barth’s cache of letters in Hamburg in the 1970s, has a fresh item been added to the traveller’s known *oeuvre*. Now, thanks to a fortunate break in a South African library, James Bruce-Lockhart has made a significant archival addition to our knowledge of the literary legacy of Hugh Clapperton.

It has long been assumed, by both nineteenth-century armchair scholars and twentieth-century African historians, that the complete account of the Borno Mission undertaken in 1822–5 by Denham, Clapperton and Oudney, was Major Denham’s own *Narrative*, published (twice) in 1826 and reprinted by the Hakluyt Society in 1966 as *Mission to the Niger*, in four volumes meticulously edited by E. W. Bovill. Apart from one chapter derived from Oudney’s diary and Clapperton’s own account of his journey from Borno to Sokoto and back via Kano

in 1823, the record was entirely that of Denham. Indeed, his relations with Clapperton over, *inter alia*, the leadership of the mission were so calamitous that he had no qualms about pushing Clapperton's role and record squarely into second place. The Public Record Office has long held Clapperton's journals, which he kept in Borno in 1823 and on his journey to Sokoto in 1824. The surprise to scholarship now offered us by the diligent Bruce-Lockhart, lately of HM Diplomatic Service and Councillor in Lagos in the 1980s, is a transcript of two long parts of Clapperton's unpublished diary. This he located in the manuscripts collection of the Brenthurst Library, Johannesburg. He does not make it clear how he came to learn of the existence of this unique 175-year-old find (beyond a reference to the stimulus of his wider interest in researching the career of Hugh Clapperton), but he suggests that it found its way to Johannesburg (a long way from London and an unexpected destination for archives of north-west African relevance), along with other Clapperton papers of the Borno mission. This was thanks to the philanthropic offices of Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, who in 1945 had acquired the diary piecemeal at auction in London, in all probability sold off from the John Murray archives where it had lain for 120 years.

This summary of the saga of Clapperton's diaries is not as clearcut or complete as it might seem. We know that Clapperton did leave the diary of his journey from Borno to Sokoto in 1824 in the care of John Barrow at the Admiralty before he returned to Africa in 1825, asking him to see it through the press. Despite Barrow's assertion that he had 'carefully abstained from altering a sentiment or even an expression, and rarely had occasion to add, omit or change a single word', a comparison of his processed version – which appeared as an addendum to Denham's 1826 narrative and comprises Volume 4 of Bovill's 1966 *Missions to the Niger* – with the new manuscript version reveals sufficient differences of content and style to query Barrow's supposedly hands-off editing. Bruce-Lockhart emphasizes that Clapperton carefully avoided commenting on things he did not understand and stresses that the diaries are not coloured by much subjectivity or introspection. There are, however, 'glimpses of humour, exasperation, self-deprecating self-awareness [and] frustration...spontaneous human reactions rather than studied attitudes'. He also finds Clapperton's value judgements less Eurocentric than those of many early pre-colonial travellers.

But we now learn that the Barrow diary is not the complete Clapperton legacy. Whereas the diary Barrow reproduced, or was given, only covers the Kukawa and Sokoto months, from 14 December 1823 to 10 July 1824 ('today the Sheikh sent me three pairs of slippers, two loaves of sugar, and a supply of coffee'), what Bruce-Lockhart has valuably given us in *Clapperton in Borno* is not only the raw Clapperton entries for the same period (other than the Sokoto visit, a project to come) but also his major Borno diary entries, from 25 January to 13 December 1823 and again from 3 June to 25 September 1824. Besides indulging in reading the hitherto unseen journals (virtually covering the whole of 1823 and three extra months of 1824), the historian of Borno will be able to construct a comparative analysis of the two texts. Nigerian scholars consulted by Bruce-Lockhart, including the late Professor John Lavers of Bayero University, Kano, assured him that the diary contained fresh insights into pre-colonial Borno history, society and economy.

*Difficult and Dangerous Roads* presents a different research picture. Here is the totally unpublished diary of Clapperton's Sahara and Fezzan interludes on the Borno mission, both before and after the Kukawa, Kano and Sokoto sojourns. The diary thus covers the period from May 1822, when the expedition left Murzuq to their arrival in Borno in January 1823, and again from when Clapperton left Borno in October 1824 and his return to Tripoli in January 1825. Thus this volume constitutes the Sahara doughnut (1822–5) encasing the Borno (1823–4) jam of the

first volume. Both are equally sweet; while the doughnut casing is quite fresh, a bit of the jam has been on partial offer before. *Difficult and Dangerous Roads* is a larger work than its present companion, admirably edited by James Bruce-Lockhart and with a masterly introduction by John Wright, and published with the active support of the British Academy and the Society for Libyan Studies. Inevitably – and indispensably – the biographical material on Clapperton and the necessary explanation of editorial practice, problems and sources cover pretty much the same ground in both books. Both carry a conscientious index and excellent maps.

Whether the complete Clapperton diary of 1822–25 (and Bruce-Lockhart promises us two more volumes) is, 180 years later, not held to be of sufficient interest by a single publisher, the fact remains that the editor has had to accept the publication of parts of the diaries in two separate – and hence partially overlapping in editorial apparatus – volumes by two different publishers four years apart, neither of them a mainstream name in African history texts in English and one a German publishing house. Yet there is fine and dedicated scholarship here, along with evidence of reservoirs of enthusiasm, patience and much labour of love. Having struggled to decipher Clapperton's handwriting in the illustrated excerpts, this reviewer would also like to endorse the editors' acknowledgement to 'Flip' for her painstaking transcription of the manuscripts. Here is a notable example of accessible scholarship.

A final reflection, on all such African explorations. Denham was no intellectual like Barth and Clapperton and was not all that easy a diarist (the editors retail their delight in retaining his idiosyncratic orthography). But as historians we are fortunate to have their – and others' – published narratives and sometimes their unpublished diaries. Yet one legacy that many a social historian of Britain as well as many an historian of Africa can but regret is *not* having evidence from the voiceless (and sometimes illiterate) 'also-rans' of all those nineteenth-century expeditions: in the Denham/Clapperton/Oudney instance, the uneducated shipwright Hillman; the Gibraltar Jew Jacob Deloyice, who became the mission's mess-steward; the enthusiastic and well-connected Ensign Toole; the freed slave Adolphus Sympkins; and, the most silent of them all, the African guides and interpreters, servants and escorts, cameleers and dragomen... If only!

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## BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

'*Il flagello degli shiavisti*': *Romolo Gessi in Sudan, 1874–1881*. By MASSIMO ZACCARIA. Ravenna: Fernandel, 1999. Pp. 269. 32,000 Lire (ISBN 88-87433-08-9).

KEY WORDS: Sudan, biography, imperialism.

Since Carlo Zaghi, one of the serious Italian scholars working on colonial and African history during both the Fascist and post-war periods, had published a notable biography of Gessi in 1939 and an admirable collection of relevant documentation in 1947, it is somewhat surprising that a young scholar should have chosen to devote many years of research to a new biography. Dr Zaccaria has, however, two great advantages compared to Zaghi. He has grown up within the post-colonial period and hence has a detachment from his subject rarely found in writers of an earlier era. Secondly, he can read Arabic and he has taught recently in Khartoum. He can therefore place Gessi far more securely within a Sudanese context, and he shows a natural, sympathetic understanding of the Sudanese, especially those of Khartoum.

To these advantages, he also brings some of the basic qualities of a dedicated historian: the determination to track down and assess carefully all the available sources, and then the ability to produce an analysis, notable for its insights and balance. Besides locating and publishing here thirty-three letters and reports written by Gessi, including some important ones to Bishop Comboni, he has painstakingly compiled a complete chronological list of all Gessi's writings. On the basis of this material, and of recent publications unavailable to Zaghi, Zaccaria has been able not only to present in some respects a fuller portrait of Gessi, but also to evaluate more convincingly his place in Sudanese history.

He clarifies the basic motive – the need to provide for his young family – which led Gessi casually to accept Gordon's invitation to go with him to Equatoria; a motive that continued to bring Gessi back to the Sudan despite severe disappointments and physical exhaustion. Zaccaria's discerning and balanced assessment of the mercurial relationship between these two great adventurers sheds light on the characters and behaviour of both of them. He brings out clearly the talents that undergirded Gessi's successes, but also reveals the facile optimism which led him continually to underestimate the administrative difficulties facing him, a foolhardy optimism that finally led him to persist with his last disastrous journey.

The author rightly emphasizes that the violence and anarchy that confronted Gordon and Gessi in the south, the legacy of which later continued to influence the British bog barons, was not caused by some defect in northern Arab or Turco-Egyptian racial characteristics, nor by a presumed Islamic approval of the slave trade, but was the result or 'the product of far wider dynamic forces' (p. 170), or what now might be termed globalization. Following the work of Anders Bjørkelo, he begins to distinguish fruitfully between Khartoum capitalists, some of whom were intimately linked with European traders or with the Turco-Egyptian regime, and on the other hand the itinerant petty traders on the frontier whose capital might consist of a donkey, a musket or perhaps merely the ability to purvey an amulet. He also insists that the peoples of the south were by no means united, and that some threw in their lot with the invading forces. He stresses the folly of Gessi's expulsions of northerners from the Bahr el Ghazal, but he underestimates the significance of Gessi's appreciation of the potential economic and human resources of the south. The tragedy of much of the subsequent history of the Sudan, and of its current disasters, has been the failure of successive administrations, both British and Northern, to appreciate and assist in the equitable and just development of these resources. Zaccaria's study has therefore wide implications, and one hopes that it will reach the readership it richly deserves, both in the Sudan itself and in the wider world.

It is a pity that the maps are inadequate and that there is no index even of persons and places, but the book does make good use of Buchta's photographs, especially that on page 134 of a detachment of 'Egyptian soldiers', all of whom might well now be identified with the SPLA.

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## 'PYGMIES'

*Central African Hunter-Gatherers in a Multidisciplinary Perspective: Challenging Elusiveness*. Edited by KAREN BIESBROUCK, STEFAN ELDERS and GERDA ROSSEL. Leiden: Center for the Study of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies (CNWS), Universiteit Leiden, 1999. Pp. v + 327. Dfl. 50, paperback (ISBN 90-5789-018-6).

KEY WORDS: Central Africa, social, ethnicity, environment.

Anyone who has ever written about Africa's equatorial forest has had to confront the sticky question of what to call particular groups of forest-dwelling people, whom many Africans, policymakers and scholars refer to by the politically-incorrect term 'pygmies'. Many works simply avoid the issue altogether, labelling people by the names that they use to refer to themselves. But *Challenging Elusiveness* confronts the category 'pygmy' directly, questioning what – if anything – unifies these diverse equatorial Africans. Contributors to the volume, who include both scholars and non-governmental agency practitioners from the Netherlands, France, Britain, Denmark, Japan, and the United States, assert that finding a better label is not the answer. Instead, they examine the social, historical, political and environmental processes shaping 'pygmies', rendering them similar to and distinguishing them from other equatorial Africans. Many contributors recognize that 'pygmies' share some 'elusive qualities' and that they are not exclusively nomadic hunter-gatherers or forest dwellers (Wahle, Leclerc, Thuret, Biesbrouck).

The volume is organized around four themes: authenticity, the physical environment, social change and the international scene. In the authenticity section, contributors focus on the historical processes influencing who 'pygmies' were and how they have interacted with other equatorial Africans, often referred to as 'villagers' in the volume. The diversity of approaches to these questions is striking. Frankland, for instance, traces Colin Turnbull's pervasive influence on scholars of hunter-gatherers, but also on tourists and agents of development. Clist, an archaeologist, finds evidence that hunter-gatherers have inhabited parts of the Gabonese forests since 40,000 B.P., have lived in association with 'villagers' from 8,000 B.P., and left descendants in the form of contemporary 'pygmies' (pp. 86–7).<sup>1</sup> Klieman marshals the tools of historical linguistics to trace hunter-gatherer activities in the trading systems in Gabon and Congo from 1000 to 1800. She makes a lucid and compelling case that hunter-gatherers 'participated in multiple trade networks and thus retained a strong degree of autonomy well into the era of Atlantic trade' (p. 103; see also Rossel). While one dissenter (Blench) wants to argue that contemporary 'pygmies' are not indigenous to the equatorial rain forest, most contributors contend that they have been shaped by historical processes in highly diverse ways, and that their past experiences cannot be separated from the villager groups with whom they have interacted.

The following section on the physical environment confronts relations between hunter-gatherer groups and the forest. Again, the range of approaches is impressive. Ichikawa argues that Mbuti people have helped to promote the growth and dispersal of particular flora and fauna, and have not destroyed the forest. Kenrick undertakes an ethnographic analysis of the *molimo* hunting ritual,

<sup>1</sup> Whether 'pygmies' were able to survive in the forest independent of agriculturalists has been the focus of heated debate. But Michelle Kisliuk has aptly argued that the debate has strong ideological underpinnings and conflates an autonomous hunting-gathering livelihood with egalitarian social structures in her *Seize the Dance! BaAka Musical Life and the Ethnography of Performance* (Oxford, 1999), 145–7.

concluding that relations between Mbuti and the forest cannot be understood through a western lens of accumulation and male dominance. Rather, he contends, the ritual is a quest for social, environmental harmony between the person, other people, and the forest's flora and fauna. LeClerc's comparison of the Medzan in forest and savanna regions of Cameroon draws from cultural ecology, arguing that the spatial and social organization of hunting, farming, and fishing practices are shaped by a multitude of factors, including ecology, kinship, and economic and political relations.

The subsequent contributions focus on social change, addressing how processes of mobility, sedentarization and agricultural production has affected various 'hunter-gatherer' groups. Biesbrouck disaggregates the concept of mobility, arguing that Bagyeli in Cameroon participate in several different kinds of mobility, and she effectively challenges the assumption that agriculture necessarily leads to sedentarization. Köhler, in one of the volume's highlights, explores how Baka villages have come to make their homes along roads in northern Congo. Interrogating '[w]hat actually makes a particular place a home', he eloquently shows how Baka have accommodated 'Bantu-style village settings' though they display a 'tension ... between the inclusivity of lived social relations and the boundedness of the adopted domestic structure' (p. 219). The final section examines how international interventions in the form of conventions on indigenous peoples, World Bank investments and international capital have the potential to shape how 'pygmies' define themselves and claim access to natural resources.

On the whole, *Challenging Elusiveness* makes an important contribution to equatorial African literature. Specialists will find a broad range of recent hunter-gatherer scholarship, a welcome corrective to earlier starry-eyed scholarly and popular perspectives on 'pygmies'. Minor difficulties, however, weaken the work and narrow its audience. Some chapters remain mired in highly technical language, while others fail to transcend the limited social, cultural contexts of their studies. The editors could have countered these tendencies by including introductions to each section or a sufficiently synthetic conclusion. The volume thus struggles with its own elusiveness, leaving unanswered just what these diverse people share.

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## NILE VALLEY STUDIES

*The Nile: Histories, Cultures, Myths*. Edited by HAGGAI ERLICH and ISRAEL GERSHONI. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2000. Pp. xii + 305. £40.95 (ISBN 1-55587-672-2).

KEY WORDS: Northern Africa, Northeastern Africa.

This attractive and stimulating volume gathers eighteen short studies for which the river Nile serves as a unifying theme. They are among the papers presented at a conference in May 1997 at Tel Aviv University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Part One is entitled 'Peoples and identities in medieval times'. The late David Ayalon calls attention to the role of Christian Nubia as a 'dam' that long blocked the southward expansion of Islam. Richard Pankhurst explores the sources supporting the myth that Ethiopia might threaten to block the flow of the Nile flood upon which Egypt depended. Paul Henze describes his visits to the historically significant monastery of Mertula Maryam, located near the headwaters of the Blue Nile. Steven Kaplan critiques the idea that Judaism reached Ethiopia



primarily from Egypt via the Sudan, and at an early date before the Common Era. Nehemia Levtzion explores the knowledge of several important medieval Arab geographers concerning the Nile, its environs and their inhabitants.

Part Two is entitled 'The Nile as seen from a distance'. Yaacov Shavit offers a critical review of the American Afrocentrist debate assigning to Egypt ostensible influences upon the rest of Africa, and vice-versa. Benjamin Arbel surveys the image of north-east Africa in the writings of several geographers of the European Renaissance. Emery van Donzel revisits the question of European treatments of the myth concerning alleged Ethiopian threats to block the course of the Blue Nile. Joachim Warmbold, in a contribution most pleasing to the present reviewer, introduces an eighteenth-century German work of Enlightenment utopian fantasy placed in an Ethiopian setting. Uoldelul Chelati Dirar opens a discussion of missionary activities best to be seen as a religious 'Scramble for Africa'.

Part Three is entitled 'Old waters, modern identities'. Bairu Tefla presents the several images of the Blue Nile as they appear in Ethiopian literature. Eve Troutt Powell records the views of two late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Egyptian politicians concerning the Sudanese. Haggai Erlich examines the attitudes toward Ethiopia manifest in several currents of Egyptian public opinion at the time of Mussolini's invasion. Israel Gershoni traces the conceptual and political contributions of the eminent twentieth-century Egyptian geographer Sulayman Huzayyin.

Part Four is entitled 'Contemporary voices'. Yoram Meital explores the revolutionary political symbolism of the Aswan High Dam. Gabriel Warburg studies the role of the Nile and its waters as an occasional source of contention in Egyptian-Sudanese relations. Ismail H. Abdalla reviews the resettlement of Sudanese Nubians at Khashm al-Girba. Robert O. Collins is given space to trace in greater detail the controversies of policy and diplomacy surrounding management of the Nile waters in the twentieth century. The editors conclude with the reasonable proposition (p. 269) 'that the Nile basin should be redressed academically as a theater of common political relevance, a civilizational microcosm of diversity and mutuality, and a cultural polysystem'.

If any critical generalization about such a diverse collection might be advanced, it would be that the literature from and about the pre-colonial Sudan is almost totally ignored; a few examples must suffice. If the issue at stake be Arab geographical knowledge about the Nile, the encyclopedic Sudanese source anthology prepared by Giovanni Vantini must surely have priority over the understandably limited collection of primarily West African materials cited here. If the issue be the possibility of movement by Jewish people between South Arabia, Ethiopia and Egypt in early times, how can one ignore the Sudanese travel account of David Reubeni? If the issue be Renaissance geography of north-eastern Africa, Lorenzo d'Anania should not be passed over in silence. If the issue be pre-colonial European knowledge about the Nile, consultation with the writings of James Bruce is not enough; where are the accounts of Theodoro Krump and his contemporary travellers? Let mention of these shortcomings be taken in the spirit of an invitation to extend and expand each of the very worthwhile lines of investigation introduced in this volume.

## PRE-COLONIAL SOCIAL HISTORY

*Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856–1888.* By JONATHAN GLASSMAN. Oxford: James Currey; Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann; Nairobi: EAEP; Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 1995. Pp. xvii + 293. £35.00 (ISBN 0-85255-677-5); £15.95, paperback (ISBN 0-85255-617-9).

KEY WORDS: Tanzania, social, political.

*Feasts and Riot* is an imaginatively conceived and meticulously researched study of the tumultuous changes accompanying the expansion of trade and increasing commodification within one community on the East African coast in the nineteenth century. Eschewing broad analytical categories, such as class, ethnicity or tradition, Glassman carefully explicates the perceptions and social categories of the historical actors themselves in order to make sense of events in local terms. Further, he considers a broad range of different actors – Omani plantation owners, Shirazi caravan traders, ordinary townspeople, people from the countryside, women and different categories of slaves – in order to explore the grounds for social conflict within the wider urban community. This is local social history at its best, and given the paucity of sources (most of which emanate from outside the society), the author does a marvellous job in bringing the inner lives of diverse members of the community vividly to life.

On a second level, Glassman addresses issues regarding African resistance to colonial conquest and rule. His research started by focusing on resistance to German rule in 1888, but it soon carried him back through the nineteenth century to uncover the bases of local conflicts that undergirded that resistance and sprang into the open with it. Closing with penetrating comments on the (in)consequence of colonial conquest, he shows how Africans continued to march to the tune of their own historical drummers into and through the colonial experience. In so doing, he demonstrates the problematic nature of such concepts as ‘resistance’, ‘tradition’ and ‘moral economy’, all of which tend to presume that Africans monolithically resisted colonial rule ‘in defense of tradition’, and reveals the degree to which tradition itself was an ongoing discourse about the nature of a moral community, in terms of which the people of Pangani faced not only colonial conquest, but the process of commodification that had been increasing throughout the century.

The impact of expanding trade and increasing commodification is a third level of analysis. Much has been written on this general topic, especially for northern Tanzania and the coast, but again Glassman steers clear of mechanistic analysis, seeing the process as a very uneven one, in which ideals of generosity and clientage continually conflicted with those of the market. Similarly, he is able to show how changing forms of slavery developed unevenly with the abolition of the slave trade and the development of commercial plantations.

Finally, Glassman approaches the vexed debate regarding the origins and nature of Swahili coastal culture, providing the most vivid case study to date of the complex economic, social and cultural dynamics involved in the forging of these unusual stratified urban societies. His comparisons with Bagamoyo and Saadani, for example, show how different communities responded to the problems of the nineteenth century in very different ways. More generally, his subtle explication of the dynamics of patron-client relations; of the contested nature of Shirazi cultural hegemony; of the respective roles of Indian financiers in creating debt, Arab officials in enforcing it, and Shirazi landlords in experiencing it; and of the ‘contradictory consciousness’ of lower social orders, who paid deference to authority in order to contest it, all fundamentally revise our understanding of coastal history and societies.

This is an empirically and theoretically exciting study, more than deserving of the Herskovits prize awarded by the African Studies Association for the best book in African Studies, and it is rapidly becoming a modern classic.

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THOMAS SPEAR

## CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES IN UGANDA

*Mission to the Upper Nile: The Story of St Joseph's Missionary Society of Mill Hill in Uganda.* By ROBERT O'NEIL, MHM. London: Mission Book Service, 1999. Pp. viii + 363. £7.50, paperback (ISBN 095-202-3814).

KEY WORDS: Uganda, missions.

This book was commissioned by the Mill Hill Mission to commemorate the centenary of its entry into Uganda in 1895. The sudden death in 1992 of Fokko Ros, an historian and missionary working in Uganda, led to Robert O'Neil being asked to take up the task. O'Neil had been a missionary of the society in Cameroon and was researching a major work on Cardinal Vaughan. Vaughan was instrumental in securing entry into Uganda for the society which he had founded at a time when the British were anxious that the political implications of religious conflict within Buganda should be defused.

A commemorative work of this nature might be expected to perform three functions: to furnish a record of personnel and stations for the use of the mission itself; to provide a coherent narrative of events for supporters of the mission, both in Uganda and outside; and to offer a critical appraisal of the mission's work, from historical and missiological perspectives. The book only satisfies the first of these criteria to any extent. O'Neil gives a comprehensive account of the personnel, with brief biographies of the background of a substantial number of the nearly 500 men, largely from Holland and Britain, who have served in Uganda. He also mentions some of the sisters who worked in association with the society, of whom Mother Kevin was the most famous. She was acerbically described by Edel Quinn, as 'the second bishop of Uganda' (p. 181): Quinn's efforts to establish the Legion of Mary did not meet with much success in Buganda!

The book is based on substantial reading in the Mill Hill archives and of material available in Uganda. O'Neil has also interviewed many of the missionaries still serving in Uganda or living in retirement. Unfortunately, this research does not translate into a very convincing 'story', despite the subtitle of the book. O'Neil is quite good at providing the background of Uganda's religious history, but he tends to present his research findings as raw data, which he has not succeeded in shaping. This is no hagiography by any means; a considerable amount of material reveals failings and conflict. To take one particularly serious example: the Kiggen affair of 1928. Allegations of brutality by a missionary working in Teso led to his becoming *persona non grata* to government, and the mission felt obliged to withdraw him. O'Neil presents a variety of voices concerning this embarrassing situation, but does not provide the reader with much guidance about how to interpret or understand what was happening. He himself admits the problem: 'The case... is very difficult to follow. Some readers with a little knowledge of the case and the background will be able to read between the lines' (p. 147). But surely it is the job of the writer, if he is going to introduce the case at all, to help the uninitiated reader to make judgements on the basis of evidence. One might also have expected the historian to use this case to reflect on issues of power and its abuse, of racial attitudes and cultural arrogance, which were by no means confined to this incident or this particular mission society.

There are many other issues which are glimpsed in the data but which are not explored in any systematic way. For example, one gets a strong impression of a malaise in the quality of educational provision in the 1920s and 1930s – but what were the causes, and why was it so difficult to rectify the problem? What was the wider significance of the very different ethos which missionaries arriving after the Second World War brought? Why were Mill Hill missionaries so sceptical of, and unresponsive to, the changes initiated at Vatican II? The hostile testimony about Bishop John Grief sitting through the proceedings in Rome quietly saying his rosary, uncomprehending and disapproving (p. 241), needs some elucidation. O'Neil is content merely to say that this may be a partial picture, but he is unwilling to commit himself to a judgement or to provide sufficient detail for the reader to come to his or her own conclusion. One gets the impression from a handwritten fragment of Fr Ros included as an appendix that he would have dealt with issues like these much more thoroughly: 'Pope John XXIII prayed for a new Pentecost...except for few individuals, Mill Hill kept silent for another twenty years. We were often good at ridicule and called it humour' (p. 351). Ros also contrasts the flexibility and ingenuity with which the Comboni missionaries in the north adapted to their environment with the apparent inflexibility of his own mission.

It is insights like this that seem lacking in the work as published. A whole series of interesting themes might have been tackled. There is nothing on the training and spirituality of the society, and how it changed over time. There is little about the engagement with the different cultures and societies of eastern Uganda, of changing styles of sacramental discipline and pastoral practice. There is little about the more general social and political role of the society. Their coming in 1895 was meant to have a pay-off in terms of Catholic relations with the British authorities. To what extent were these hopes achieved? For the independent period, there is an interesting vignette from Fr John Sweeney of Namilyango College. Without warning, a helicopter lands on the basketball court outside his house and Amin steps out. He enthuses about the discipline of the school and wants more MH missionaries in his schools; they have 'a clean political record'. Sweeney points out that the General has been expelling missionaries for some time. Amin promises to grant work-permits and provide cooking oil for the school kitchen. What we do not get from O'Neil is any sense of why so many MH missionaries were expelled during the Amin regime, whether they suffered more severely than other Catholic orders, and whether the 'clean political record' is accurate, and, if so, something of which to be proud or ashamed.

The final sections of the book abandon any attempt to provide a comprehensive narrative, dealing with generally inconsequential reminiscences culled from the interview material. The book ends abruptly without any overall assessment of the work of the society. But it does end on an interesting note: the ordination of the first Ugandan Mill Hill missionary, Fr Andrew Mukulu, on 15 August 1998. Alas, the significance of this development for the mission of the society, or the possibly ambiguous attitudes of Ugandan diocesan bishops, are not explored.

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## MUSLIM SOCIETY IN MARADI

*Les voies de l'islam au Niger dans le Katsina indépendant du XIXe au XXe siècle.* By OLIVIER MEUNIER. (Mémoires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie, 35). Paris: Publications Scientifiques du Muséum, 1998. Pp. 232. FF160, paperback (ISBN 2-85653-521-6).

KEY WORDS: Niger, Islam.

Olivier Meunier's painstaking study of the shifting religious landscape of the Maradi region over two centuries deserves a wider readership than its apparently specialized subject might at first suggest. Meunier traces the history of Islam's presence in an exceptional region of Hausaland into which the embattled aristocracy of Katsina retreated in the face of the nineteenth-century jihad of Usman Dan Fodio. Because the Muslim aristocracy in exile had to accommodate itself to local non-Muslim practices in order to survive, this region offers a particularly rich case study of how West African Islam has gradually expanded through peaceful means. The long accommodation of Islam with indigenous beliefs makes this a fruitful setting from which to reflect upon more recent waves of conflict over how Islam should be practiced.

The book captures the many varieties of Islam without reducing them to polar opposites (Sufism, anti-Sufism) or staid categories that do not quite reflect Islam as praxis (a series of brotherhoods). Instead Meunier shows that different strands of Islam could co-exist and overlap, giving rise to a spectrum of cognate practices and beliefs that at either extreme could nevertheless give rise to conflict. Thus he sets out first the shifting legal sub-stratum, over which he places the later sequential reformist influence of the Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya and Tijaniyya Ibrahimiyya tariqas, which are then shown to be in a subtle relationship to the visual markers of outward prayer. What emerges is that the two categories through which people of Maradi have often marked differences over Islam, *sadalu* (those who pray with their arms straight) versus *kabarou* (those who pray with their arms crossed), corresponds more with a conservative versus reformist sensibility than with particular fixed sects. Another important discovery is that, quite apart from the Sufi, anti-Sufi debates in the region that developed with the rise of the Izala movement, Maradi has long harboured a strong, if quiet, rationalist strand of Islam that claims no attachment to Sufism.

Meunier draws inventively upon an exhaustive range of sources of information to build this profile, and the book would be useful reading for students of other Islamic regions of Africa simply as a model for how to coax as much as possible from apparently recalcitrant colonial era evidence ranging from surveys of Koranic schools to booklists and *silsila*. The author also interviewed scores of men in the region, of every imaginable stripe of Islam. Meunier shares long passages from these interviews, leaving one with a sense for Muslims in the region as thoughtful and articulate commentators on their own world. The second half of the book is particularly strong in its evocation of the human emotions and sociopolitical struggles that undergird conflicts between Wahhabi-influenced reformers and the many Muslims who feel themselves to be under attack. Although Meunier gives little context for the interviews, he nevertheless manages to use them to evoke a subtle and multi-vocal world.

Given my own work on gender in the region I am struck by the relentless masculinity of the study. This reflects the remarkably separate worlds of men and women in the region, the gendered hierarchy of Islamic knowledge and authority in Maradi and the long history of neglect of gender within scholarship on the sociology and politics of Islam. It would have been useful to have discovered what women in Izala schools, elderly wives of Wangarawa scholars and the daughters of

'rationalists' might have to say about the history of Islam in the region given the importance of debates about issues related to women in the conflicts surrounding Izala. Nevertheless for selfish reasons I am grateful that the book takes the form it takes – it contains a wealth of information on Islam in the Maradi region and is strong in precisely those areas in which my own relentlessly female-centred work is weak.

For the author's sake, though, I do regret that his editors did not push him to shorten the opening segment of the book and place much of his evidence in footnotes and appendices. I fear that scholars of settings no further afield than Zinder, Kano and Dogondoutchi will find his presentation of this material tedious and unnecessary. Extensive quotes from the published works of other scholars of the region make it difficult for the reader to detect Meunier's own interesting and important argument readily. Readers who find the first half of the book rough going are urged to dive to the second half rather than drop the book entirely! Meunier provides an unusual overview of the lived history of Islam in a West African setting and a useful window on to contemporary debates about Islamic reform.

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BARBARA M. COOPER

## SENEGAMBIA

*From Frontier to Backwater: Economy and Society in the Upper Senegal Valley (West Africa), 1850–1920.* By ANDREW F. CLARK. Lanham, MD and Oxford: University Press of America, 1999. Pp. xiii + 278. \$47 (ISBN 0-7618-1438-8).

KEY WORDS: Western Africa, economic, social.

This book places between hard covers the author's doctoral dissertation completed at Michigan State University in 1990. It is based upon extensive archival research in the National Archives of Senegal and the National Archives of Mali, the author's interviews with informants in the Upper Senegal River valley and a combing of the secondary literature published up until *c.* 1989. The author has used these materials to produce a dense, well-documented socio-economic history of the Upper Senegal River region in the period 1850–1920. His work of synthesis fills a lacuna in the historiography of the western savanna.

Clark has organized his work in seven chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter discusses the available sources and their limitations and the regional historiography. The essay brings together useful information, and future researchers will likely find the table of 'Principal explorers and directors of missions in the Upper Senegal Valley, 1800–1895', a valuable checklist to consult.

The second chapter, based upon published materials, introduces the reader to the politics, economy and society of the region. The material is handled competently, but there is little new here in the way of perspective. The third chapter, 'the regional economy in the late nineteenth century', moves to the empirical data that give the book its principal value. It synthesizes the evidence of other scholars' works,<sup>1</sup> and introduces new detail culled from the archives, much of it presented in useful tabular form. The following chapters make original contributions to the historical literature. Organized into chronological and regional sections, the fourth

<sup>1</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison, 1975).

chapter discusses the political economy of the region in the period 1850–90. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the central, riverine towns in the Upper Senegal River valley in 1850–90 and 1890–1920, respectively. Chapter 7 considers the evolution of the political economy of the hinterland during the period 1890–1920.

In these chapters, the author brings out the destructiveness of the Umarian jihad and the centrality of slaving and raiding to the political economy of the region; the impact of the extension of French military and administrative control; and the consequences of the 1913–14 famine, war recruitment, the end of slavery and mass emigration from the Upper Senegal. Clark draws important distinctions between the patterns of social and economic life in the riverine towns and in the hinterlands, and makes it clear that different forces determine the prosperity and decline of each.

*From Frontier to Backwater* is a well-researched text, but it would have benefited from a broader view of regional economy. A treatment of the gum arabic trade in the lower and middle Senegal River valleys, and a discussion of how and why the trade evolved over the second half of the nineteenth century, would have thrown welcome light on the experience of the Upper Senegal, where gum arabic was the principal product exported into the Atlantic sector. The book would also have benefited from an engagement with more recently published literature, such as the books of Michael Gomez and François Manchuelle that have so enriched our understanding of this region.<sup>2</sup>

The principal strength of the book lies in the depth of the author's archival research. Regrettably, it has been published without an index, which makes it difficult to consult for research purposes. But it is nonetheless a volume that those concerned with the history of the western savanna will want to have on their bookshelves.

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## SENEGALESE SOLDIERS IN WORLD WAR I

*Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War.* By JOE LUNN. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann; Oxford: James Currey; Cape Town: David Philip, 1999. Pp. xiv + 264. £40 (ISBN 0-85255-688-8); £16.95, paperback (ISBN 0-85255-638-1).

KEY WORDS: Senegal, military.

Il faut bien du courage pour entreprendre trente ans après d'autres des recherches sur un terrain que les prédécesseurs ont déjà creusé, sillonné, labouré. Joe Lunn a sans doute été animé de ce courage et aussi de la volonté de renouveler les visions admises. Encore faut-il que l'entreprise soit justifiée et juste. Sous un titre particulièrement bien trouvé et alléchant, l'auteur entend donc nous présenter donc une histoire *sénégalaise* et 'orale' de la première Guerre mondiale. Joe Lunn la traite en sept chapitres aux titres aussi bien trouvés que le titre général de l'ouvrage, le premier d'entre eux affirmant d'emblée la position de l'historien: rendre la parole aux vaincus ('The vision of the vanquished').

Le projet était remarquable. Il appelle cependant d'abord quelques remarques

<sup>2</sup> Michael Gomez, *Pragmatism in the Age of Jihad: The Precolonial State of Bundu* (Cambridge, 1992) and François Manchuelle, *Willing Migrants: Soninke Labor Diasporas, 1848–1960* (Athens, OH and London, 1997).

méthodologiques. Pour réaliser son entreprise, Joe Lunn s'est appuyé sur un peu moins d'une centaine d'interviews dont la moitié environ d'anciens combattants recueillis au Sénégal en 1982 et 1983. On remarquera donc d'abord que les 'vétérans', moins d'une cinquantaine, interrogés avaient à l'époque au moins 80 ans et on peut se demander si cet échantillonnage était bien représentatif des 25,000 recrues de cette colonie, et plus de 165,000 pour l'ensemble de l'A.O.F. quant aux témoignages postérieurs, il est permis de douter de leur authenticité quand on sait les déformations que la mémoire enregistre. Eternel problème de l'historien confronté aux 'témoignages' – et non à la 'tradition'. Quant aux témoignages eux-mêmes, on ne voit pas hormis un chapitre 'Postscript: Discordant Voices: The Veterans Speak', ce qu'ils amènent de vraiment neuf. A regarder de près les notes de références des chapitres, ils sont bien invoqués fréquemment, mais en appui aux autres sources et aux études précédentes auxquelles d'ailleurs il renvoie avec scrupule. Au passage, observons qu'une réflexion plus systématique aurait pu d'ailleurs être menée sur les transformations de la représentation de la Grande Guerre.

Mais, l'auteur soutient aussi une thèse: ses prédécesseurs se sont trompés; les 'Sénégalais' (entendons ici l'ensemble des soldats noirs de la première Guerre mondiale et non les soldats du Sénégal à laquelle se réfère en principe cette 'histoire orale') ont bien été des troupes de choc, sacrifiées volontairement dans les combats, dont les pertes ont été beaucoup plus élevées que celles de leurs compagnons d'infortune blancs. Elle est respectable, mais nous ne pouvons toujours pas la partager. Bien entendu, à écouter les témoignages cette impression n'a rien de surprenant. Mais, la réalité peut avoir été différente. On ne peut reprendre ici cette discussion des chiffres de recrutements, d'engagements et de pertes que nous avons faite il y a fort longtemps. Les 'Sénégalais', comme les 'Algériens' d'ailleurs ne furent pas plus victimes des combats que les fantassins blancs engagés à leurs côtés. Hélas, dirons-nous, pas plus ni moins. Que les Sénégalais aient été les principales victimes de la malheureuse offensive du Chemin des Dames en 1917 ne fait pas de doute. Qu'ils aient été employés systématiquement comme de la 'chair à canon' relève du mythe et ne pose pas la question correctement. Le commandement fut-il si ignorant, tellement cynique et si bête qu'un emploi inutile, en pure perte, des soldats ne lui ait jamais été sensible? En réalité, le commandement hésita sur cet emploi tout au long de la combat, sans amalgame de divers niveaux avec des troupes blanches. Ajoutons aussi que les pertes furent, pour la moitié au moins, causées par les maladies et non par les combats.

Est-ce ignorer pour autant la 'valeur' (au sens militaire) de ces troupes, leur loyalisme exceptionnel (une seule mutinerie d'unité 'sénégalaise' affecta un bataillon dont la valeur fut considérée comme exceptionnel pendant la guerre)? Ce loyalisme les fit même 'instrumentaliser' de façon suspecte car les Sénégalais furent souvent utilisés comme troupes de maintien de l'ordre. La véritable question était en fait au point de départ, celle de la 'légitimité' de cet 'Appel à l'Afrique'. C'est d'ailleurs bien comme cela que la propagande allemande la posa.

Au total, le livre de Joe Lunn est sans doute utile pour un public qui ne connaît pas le français, curieux de vues apparemment nouvelles et ignore peut-être une littérature riche aujourd'hui de nombreuses études; toutes les participations 'coloniales' à la première Guerre mondiale sont aujourd'hui 'couvertes' et il est curieux que l'auteur n'ait fait aucune comparaison. On nous permettra de n'être pas totalement convaincu. On doit reconnaître cependant deux grands mérites à ce livre: celui, justement, de mettre à la portée de ce public une grande question avec compétence et celui de 'réveiller les mémoires'.

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## CONSTRUCTING POSTWAR MEMORIES

*Kriegsbevältigung und Geschichtsbewußtsein. Realität, Deutung und Verarbeitung des deutschen Kolonialkriegs in Namibia 1904 bis 1907* ['War Experience and Historical Consciousness. Facts, Interpretations and Memory in the History of the German Colonial War in Namibia, 1904–7']. By GESINE KRÜGER. (Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft, 133). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999. Pp. 344. DM 69 (ISBN 3-525-35796-6).

KEY WORDS: Namibia, colonial, resistance, social.

The history of Namibia in the German colonial period has for a long time been written mainly as a story of colonial oppression and exterminatory warfare on the one hand and of African resistance and survival on the other. The history of the German–Herero War (1904–7) has received much attention over the years, with debates focusing on the war aims on both sides and on the question whether the character of German warfare was 'genocidal'. Recently, Jan Bart Gewald (*Herero Heroes: A Socio-Political History of the Herero, 1890–1923*, Oxford, 1999) analyzed the social and political dynamics of the German–Herero war and its aftermath. Gesine Krüger's book is about the war and the reconstruction process as well, but takes a quite different approach from earlier works. It focuses on the experience of the war and the images and myths it has produced and studies the ways people dealt with that experience over a long period of reconstruction that had social, economic and cultural dimensions.

Krüger's book (with a time frame extending to about 1945 and, in some instances, beyond that date) is about history and memory – about the social history of the war and its aftermath, about the forms in which the war is remembered and about how people dealt with this experience. (The German term *Kriegsbevältigung* comprises all these dimensions, defying attempts at translation as a single term in the English language.)

The author begins with a detailed critical review of the existing literature about the war, stressing – in contrast to Gewald – that the Herero decision to go to war was not just 'accidental'. She leaves no doubt that German war aims were genocidal indeed.

The first two main chapters of the book are largely devoted to German perceptions and policies. Krüger analyses in much detail a number of war diaries written by German soldiers, most of them officers. She focuses on their accounts of violence and cruelties, depicting their experience as one of 'permanent transgression of [psychological] boundaries' (p. 115). She continues with an analysis of the policies and mechanisms of control devised by the German colonial regime after the war, which were fuelled by administrative fantasies of omnipotence, but still were partially subverted by the Herero.

The other three main chapters of the book focus on different aspects of postwar reconstruction of Herero society. Krüger looks at Herero strategies of denying their labour force to the settler farmers. She gives a fascinating account of how the small Herero groups, dispersed on farms under strict control measures, re-established networks of communication among themselves. The German military defeat in the First World War led to a short-lived loss of the state's controlling power. Under the South African administration since the 1920s, more space was available for Herero initiatives of self-reconstruction. Herero secured land in reserves. They made further land claims and symbolically occupied territories, especially at *lieux de mémoire* such as the Herero chief's graves at Okahandja. Krüger devotes much attention to 'the struggle for self-determination and cultural autonomy' (p. 299) of the *otjiserandu* movement, culminating in the creation of 'Herero Day' taking place in August each year since 1923, which has ever since

been a major event of ethnic self-assertion. All these moves and movements combined strategic considerations of material and social reconstruction with extensive references to the past. They prove that a 'culture of memory' (p. 297) existed in post-war Herero society – as against views of some earlier studies that saw Herero society after the genocide as traumatised to an extent that seemed to render impossible conscious and proactive forms of dealing with the war experience.

Besides the main line of argument related to developments and movements connected to the war experience proper, Krüger also looks at a number of other movements that played a role in the reconstruction period, namely women's and millenarian movements in the 1920s and their images of the 'ideal' Herero society.

The book is not only well-researched and well-written, but also gives a good example for the application to African history of innovative approaches in German historical research since the 1980s, such as the 'history of experience' well-grounded in social and economic history, and the history of *Eigensinn* – 'stubbornness', a deficient translation, again – that goes beyond binary oppositions of oppression and resistance. Given the focus on 'experience', however, it is surprising that Krüger solely relies on written sources and fragments, among them missionary and private records, diaries, letters and memoirs. She has collected a remarkable variety of such sources, and interprets them meticulously and with impressive craft. Thus she is able to extract much of the subjectivity, and the experience of the victims, contained even in colonial administrative records. Still, she does not indicate why she did no oral historical research herself. Oral literature about the war experience has been collected by other scholars, namely K. Alnaes. Krüger re-interprets this material, particularly the images conveyed by it, as a specific form of memory (pp. 290–97). But this analysis remains somewhat unrelated to her study of the movements and strategies of Herero post-war self-reconstruction that form the main parts of the book. Krüger's book shares the focus on written material with virtually all other major studies of the German–Herero War. A history of this war and its aftermath from the Herero perspective still remains to be written.

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AXEL HARNEIT-SIEVERS

## LEPROSY

*People are Not the Same : Leprosy and Identity in Twentieth-Century Mali.* By ERIC SILLA. Oxford: James Currey and Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. Pp. xi + 220. £40 (ISBN 0-85255-680-2); £15.95, paperback (ISBN 0-85255-630-6). KEY WORDS: Mali, medicine.

This book is an excellent addition to the continuing wave of scholarly monographs in African medical and epidemiological history for which no end is in sight. Spurred by an initial interest in traditional African healing practices in Mali, the author was drawn into a much deeper analysis of the victims of a single malady – leprosy or Hansen's disease – in Bamako and its surrounding villages. The resulting book is a multidisciplinary study which delves into every possible corner – not simply the etiological, but also the social, psychological, economic, political and cultural dimensions of an age-old problem that is relevant, not only to Mali, but also to other Francophone nations of the Western Sudan with some of the highest incidences of this disease in Africa.

The study is a complex one requiring careful reading, not the least because medical researchers are still not certain about the exact causes and methods of

transmission of leprosy, despite its long history. Among a variety of issues, the chapters discuss popular attitudes towards the disease in both Africa and the Muslim world, since medieval times, interactions between leprosy and colonial rule, leprosy's impact on family life (including marriage and divorce), its relation to employment and welfare (vast numbers of lepers are beggars), and modern economic underdevelopment and social dislocation. In addition to basic documentary research across a wide spectrum of archives, one of the more impressive features is that of field research conducted among nearly 200 individuals in fifteen or more different locations – mainly in the area surrounding the capital city. There is also a listing of Arabic documents.

Not only is the book well researched, but the analysis which the author brings to nearly every major issue and sub-issue is penetrating. There are chapters on leprosy in pre-colonial Mali, leprosy in the colonial context (which receives the heaviest emphasis), individual case studies of victims of the disease, the mental and psychological, as well as the physical implications of becoming a leper and the modern social and political consequences. Each of these chapters constitutes a short monograph in its own right, with its own conclusions. All in all, Silla's criticisms of institutionalized (both government and church) medical facilities under French colonial rule are far lengthier, more detailed and harsher than his criticisms of hospital treatment and medical research on leprosy in post-independence Mali. The former critique includes: (i) the tendency to use medical treatment as a vehicle for gaining converts to the Catholic faith and to enhance respect for the colonial regime; (ii) the failure of the colonial policy for segregation of leprosy patients; (iii) the long-term failure of French officials to understand African attitudes towards the disease and western medicine; (iv) the lack of status accorded given to African medical staff at hospitals; and (v) the overall shortage of medical personnel and the inadequacies of mobile treatment centres. Unlike some other recent studies on patterns of disease in Africa, however, the book stops short of actually tracing the spread of leprosy to the policies and structures of colonial rule.

Although the author does purport to examine medical practice and hospital treatment in post-independence Mali as well, he leaves the reader with the impression that most of the weaknesses on the contemporary scene can be traced mainly to the continuation of attitudes and practices set in train during the colonial period. 'Like their colonial forebears, nurses and doctors rarely belonged to the communities in which they worked and often ignored local attitudes and practices'. Nonetheless, one or two of the substantive facts presented on the post-independence decades are stark and revealing. After independence the new Mali government cut its medical expenditures by more than one-third, reducing greatly the effectiveness of the mobile leprosy-treatment programme, and presumably other sectors of institutional medical care as well. In one disarmingly brief aside, the author notes that in the mid-1960s the only working electrocardiograph in Mali was at the old French leprosarium in Bamako. One is left wanting to know more of the details on the health, hygiene and of scientific medical care for the general population of Bamako and Mali today.

The disturbing socio-psychological dimensions of leprosy, which receive great attention – and are underscored in the book's subtitle – are that the physical disfigurements wrought by the affliction can also alter the human personality and a person's sense of self-worth with disastrous results. Here, Silla builds on the ideas of E. Goffman to demonstrate the continued power of 'stigma', both in traditional African communities and in those urbanized societies undergoing rapid change in the modern world. More strikingly, he also shows that the age-old degradation associated with leprosy is not only a source of great personal suffering, but that, in the face of the Malian government's continued efforts to keep them out

of the main stream of society, lepers have constructively marshalled pent-up feelings of humiliation to organize themselves into associations for social improvement. Aided by some sensitive photographs, this book deepens our understanding of the social history of disease and healing in Africa by giving it a human face. It assists general historians of health and medicine in the continent by evaluating the effectiveness of campaigns for research, medical care and control by colonial governments and missions; and perhaps most importantly, it demonstrates how the resistance of lepers to social marginalization can be used as a weapon for political empowerment.

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## COLONIALISM AND CHRISTIANITY

*Of Revelation and Revolution. Volume II: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier.* By JOHN L. COMAROFF and JEAN COMAROFF. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997. Pp. xxiii + 588. £55.95 (ISBN 0-226-11443-0); 19.95, paperback (ISBN 0-226-11444-9).

KEY WORDS: South Africa, colonial, Christianity.

This, the second volume in the sequence, brings John and Jean Comaroff's monumental study of the impact of colonialism on the Southern Tswana to over a thousand pages. What began as an 'ethnographic history of [a] colonial mission' now starts to show its wider dimensions. Before the story moves forward from where it was left at the end of Volume I, there are a further 60 pages of introduction, in which they reply at length to criticisms and restate their theoretical positions. In a seven-point summary, colonialism is presented as equally and inseparably a political, economic and cultural process; it is vitally realized through other agencies of empire than the state; the colonizers are as much refashioned by it as the colonized; neither 'the colonized' nor 'the colonizers' are internally undifferentiated categories, but colonial orders still tend to be represented through a strongly dichotomous grammar of distinctions; colonized societies are never as simple or unchanging as supposed, and are able to shape colonial outcomes in significant ways; and colonialism itself is shot through with contradictions and discontinuities. These points are repeatedly exemplified in seven chapters which each address one aspect of the great, many-sided 'epic of the ordinary' of colonial evangelism.

Though the Comaroffs see the various dimensions of colonialism as 'indissoluble aspects of the same reality', we still need to separate them notionally in order to be able to ask questions about their relationship. Christian missions were quite variably an element in British colonialism, so the question of how the missionary project related to its more secular strands always has to be put. While the primary theme of the Comaroffs' argument is to stress concordances between mission and secular colonialism – e.g. conversion and civilization are 'two sides of the same coin' (p. 8) – they frequently sound a secondary theme, undercutting it by referring to contrary views held by missionaries. But the more ground is given to the latter aspect, the less sufficient becomes the treatment of mission as essentially a vector of colonial values at the level of the mundane. So they guide the reader back to the major theme by insisting that 'from early on, the colonial evangelists gave up – in practice, if not always in their public pronouncements – on the fragile distinction between salvation and civilization, between the theological and the worldly sides of their mission' (p. 58). I wonder. At least, some other British

evangelicals in Africa felt much *less* certain of the concordance of Christianity and ‘civilization’ at the end of the nineteenth century than they had been earlier, while some German Protestants were emphatic that they were not the same thing at all. Though it is not the business of the Comaroffs here to provide it, a comparative analysis is needed to release us from the premature closure that the juxtaposition of a general model of colonialism and the analysis of one specific concrete case may suggest.

If the Comaroffs write with great cogency and assurance about the mundane materialities of the Tswana/missionary engagement, their touch has appeared less sure with regard to the religious side of the mission. So Chapter 2, ‘Preachers and prophets’, contains quite a measure of reprise and elaboration of matters treated in Chapter 6 of Volume I (‘Conversion and conversation’), but goes on to give a fuller account of the Tswana reception of Christianity, of how local Christians modified it in the light of their own existential needs, and of the emergence of diverse forms of it, correlated with a loosely tripartite structure of social class. The subsequent chapters – successively dealing with agriculture, trade and commodities (including labour), clothes and consumption, houses and town-planning, medicine and health, and concepts of citizenship and ethnic identity – follow a roughly similar strategy. They start with the notions of the evangelical Protestant missionaries, grounded in the cultural assumptions of industrializing, capitalist Britain; bring them face to face with the very different notions of the Tswana; and explore the eclectic ways in which the two sides start to come to terms, largely through the shifting (but always opposed) contents of the categories of *setswana* and *sekgoa* (respectively, Tswana and European ways). All this mostly covers the span up to the late nineteenth century. Then as labour migration, land-loss, rinderpest and formal colonization kick in, the missions gradually fade from the scene and the narrative fast-forwards into the era of *apartheid*, and the time of the Comaroffs’ own fieldwork in the area, between 1969 and the 1990s.

Since these chapters all cover the whole chronological span in parallel strands and make similar general points, often reiterated and recapitulated – the composition is more theme-and-variations than symphonic development – a certain degree of *ennui* sets in as one reads one’s way through them. Still, there are many incisive and cogent analyses to be encountered, such as the parallel between the ‘feminization’ of the countryside and the emergence of a folk women’s dress style; the dilemmas of missionary healing caught between an advancing biomedicine and the Tswana search for a holistic therapy; or the contradictions between discourses of individual citizen rights and of membership of a customary community, both variously endorsed by the mission – thus sowing an ambivalence that has dogged South African politics down to the present. The Comaroffs always write with force and sometimes with eloquence, but the impact of their arguments would have been enhanced by tauter writing and less repetition. *Scriptus et in tergo, necdum finitus*... a third volume, on education, is yet to come.

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## THE POPULAR FRONT IN AFRICA AND BEYOND

*French Colonial Empire and the Popular Front: Hope and Disillusion.* Edited by TONY CHAFER and AMANDA SACKUR. London: Macmillan, 1999. Pp. xv + 264. £45 (ISBN 0-333-72973-0).

KEY WORD: Colonial.

This conference volume treats the Popular Front in all its imperial facets, at home and overseas, from a variety of perspectives. Many of the twelve essays included are excellent, showcasing new and rigorous scholarship; seven are devoted to France and sub-Saharan Africa. Chafer and Sackur argue in their introduction that earlier studies have been dominated by the question of whether the advent of the Popular Front changed French colonial rule significantly. This volume continues to grapple with the issue of continuity and change, but suggests new conceptual frameworks as well. For example, the editors are centrally concerned with exploring the 'tensions of empire', especially the contradiction between practising democracy at home and authoritarianism overseas. A number of the essays confirm that this contradiction became particularly acute in the French case under the banner of a socialist 'colonial humanism'. Does this mean that the contradictions of empire in general became 'intractable' under the Popular Front, as the editors claim? (p. 13) The evidence on this score is less conclusive.

The book is divided into two sections, 'Theory and background' and 'Diversity of outcomes'. The essays in Part I move back and forth between France, New Caledonia, Tunisia and Indochina. The unifying theme here is the problem of how the French under the Popular Front and after conceptualized empire. Gary Wilder convincingly argues against seeing the Popular Front exclusively on its own terms. The social initiatives of 1936–8 cannot be separated from a larger transformation in state politics and global capitalism in the inter-war years, in which welfare now became 'the new organizing rationality' of the 'imperial nation state' (p. 39, 51). John Hargreaves also explores the larger context of Popular Front initiatives. He shows how a new concern for African rights and welfare emerged during the Depression, and was taken up by a wider network of colonial humanists – an 'Africanist International' – throughout Europe. The Popular Front gave these disparate humanists a hearing. They thus represented a new phase in the construction of knowledge about Africa and a first step in internationalizing Africa's future. Yet France in 1936 was a long way off from contemplating decolonization. Indeed, as Martin Shipway shows in his essay on the legacy of the Popular Front at the Brazzaville Conference, deliberations in 1944 proceeded 'along well worn intellectual grooves' (p. 138).

Four of the six articles in Part II chronicle the 'diversity of outcomes' of the Popular Front's policies in West Africa. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch provides a somewhat familiar overview of reformism in West Africa. She reiterates two dominant themes of the volume: no one in the 1930s was yet questioning imperialism, and the timid and short-lived reforms of the Popular Front 'hastened the development of embryonic African nationalist movements' (p. 167). Ghislaine Lydon examines the first extensive report on the condition of women and children in French West Africa, commissioned by the Popular Front and written by Denise Moran Savineau. Drawing on this doubly gendered report (produced by a woman about women), Lydon concludes that the Popular Front governor general of AOF, de Coppet 'introduced a radically different approach to colonial rule in French West Africa' (p. 182). Michel Brot takes up the question of the impact of the Popular Front on the rural majority in Guinea and reaches a clear verdict: in the folk memory of the region, 'the Popular Front means nothing' (p. 199). There was a larger sequence of minor reforms running from 1935 to 1942, but it was men on

the spot who really determined outcomes. His is thus a timely reminder that each part of the empire, indeed each *cercle*, had its own particular *histoire coloniale*. Jean Coufan's analysis of Cameroun in the 1930s further bears out this point. With a more committed Popular Front man appointed as governor there, and a more brutal 'pillage economy' (p. 211) in place before 1936, the years between 1936–7 'achieved a considerable improvement in the conditions in the life and work of the Camerounian people' (p. 214).

There is, inevitably, a certain amount of repetition in the volume, as many historians turned to the same body of large documentation compiled by the Popular Front. The introduction is not as focused as it should be. All the essays are short, which makes substantiation of ambitious theses difficult. One of the many virtues of the volume is that it provides a more nuanced picture of the complex and interconnected world of international capitalism, colonial discourses, and actual administration. A vast panoply of 'actors' – from Prime Ministers and *commandants de cercle* to African nationalists, from metropolitan intellectuals to French and African women and trade unionists – are brought together in a single frame. The volume is thus a model of the kind of transnational and transcontinental collaborative work that empire studies require to begin to capture the diversity of linked experiences under French colonialism.

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ALICE L. CONKLIN

## COLONIAL MILITARY CULTURE

*The African Rank-and-File: Social Implications of Colonial Military Service in the King's African Rifles, 1942–1964*. By TIMOTHY H. PARSONS. Oxford: James Currey, 1999. Pp. xviii + 302. £15.95, paperback (ISBN 0 855 255637 3).

KEY WORDS: Eastern Africa, central, colonial, military, social.

Parson's meticulously researched work is a valuable contribution influenced by present-day thinking on military history – that it is no longer simply a story of battles long ago but accounts of the people who fought them, the societies from which those people were drawn and the overall role of the military in those societies. The work's sub-title is well justified: African peoples and colonial interventions shaped each other.

The work is presented thematically, Parson's introduction providing the *leitmotiv*. Except for the all-important issue of political reliability, the conditions of service in the King's African Rifles (KAR) were determined 'by a process of conflict and accommodation between colonial governments, British officers and rank and file African soldiers', the latter ultimately in an inferior bargaining position but not without real leverage. The areas contested, examined in the succeeding chapters, included labour, pay, food and shelter; ethnic identity; appearance; health; religious, family and sexual beliefs and relations, and social status.

Colonial governments needed a cheap military force to intimidate potential or actual opponents; the soldiers in return saw an opportunity to become a labour aristocracy. In the two World Wars the various KAR battalions generally fought very well, better in the East African campaign than the far away Burma theatre where there were occasions of 'collective indiscipline' and battlefield failures. However, as Parsons records, sinking morale in the Burma jungles also affected Indian and British troops.

In a stimulating chapter on martial races Parsons notes how changes in a

territory's political economy conditioned perceptions of which ethnicities were martial. The early KAR soldiers were often Sudanese or northern Ugandans; after the First World War the Kamba and the Kavirondo figured, and the Kamba were to dominate after the Second World War. In Nyasaland the preference of the Tonga to work in South Africa led to intensive recruitment of the Lomwe. Recruiting was only rarely a problem, traditional military pull-factors – uniforms, status in society and with the girls, the bearing of arms, all being supplemented by pay well above any colony's internal unskilled labour wage rates. Indeed, despite all the pressures of the war, the Kenya government had to constrain recruitment.

Soldiers and British officers alike enjoyed the closed-world military culture, and in his next two chapters Parsons examines 'Military life' and 'army women and military families'. The British, as in Britain's metropolitan army, saw 'married families' (an old military and very illuminating phrase) as a stabilizing factor, a support for discipline and order and some defence against other women and disease. Soldiers were allowed one wife in the barracks, and not too many questions were asked if the lady was not always the same one. Military brothels were only permitted outside East Africa. Basic training initiated recruits into the culture's requirements for hygiene, appearance and language (Swahili, 'Ki-KAR' or Chinyanja). Paternal British officers and resolute African NCOs both played key roles in training, sports, religion, dance and the systems of military general education and specialist training schools. At the same time although military discipline was generally palatable, tensions arose over issues such as food, beer, and pay and allowances, soldiers often turning these tensions to their advantage. Colonial governments frequently expressed their anxieties over the tensions, notably in justifiable, and later justified, fear of the soldier's new found self-confidence turning to arrogance and contempt for civil authority. In his summary on social and family issues Parsons states that military service gave soldiers freer choice of partners and a chance to sire children; wives gained wealth, a measure of privilege and educational opportunities for their children. But at the same time the closed-world culture led to social disruption in wider societies: elders were no longer consulted over marriages, new obligations to kinsmen might have to be met and women were left very much dependent on the military system.

The final two chapters concern control and discipline, and ex-servicemen. Parsons' thesis holds that soldiers saw their relationship with the British military primarily as a labour relationship; indiscipline when it occurred generally took the form of labour unrest and protest over specific terms of service issues, and was not political. While accepting there may have been occasions when individual soldiers or sub-units failed deliberately to fight effectively, Parsons wisely expresses caution over claims that there was much sympathy for Mau Mau among the KAR. In his conclusion, Parsons also sees the 1964 military mutinies as part of this pattern of strikes rather than political events.

The author extends his economic and social themes in his chapter on ex-servicemen. After a detailed examination of demobilization and discharge procedures and of veterans groupings, he concludes that the direct political influence of veterans has been over-estimated despite the claims and grievances of many who felt themselves abandoned, cast off and in some cases exploited by unscrupulous political figures. Rather he sees that the practical experience, education and self-confidence that they gained in service life often made them successful and respected in their own communities, a final example of how colonial intervention and African peoples shaped each other.

Parsons has produced an excellent study. The only mild criticism that can be made is that while the military in Kenya and Nyasaland form the bulk of the work Uganda and Tanganyika lose out. This is to be regretted as in Uganda's KAR units, with their very much more skewed recruitment, lay the seeds of future



disaster. But no student or library interested in the colonial African military can afford to be without this book, containing as it does a wealth of rewarding detail as well as balanced assessment.

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ANTHONY CLAYTON

### MEMOIRS OF A COLONIAL OFFICIAL

*Tanzania: Journey to Republic.* By RANDAL SADLEIR. London and New York: Radcliffe Press, 1999. Pp. xi + 342. £24.50 (ISBN 1-86064-437-6).

KEY WORDS: Tanzania, colonial.

Randal Sadleir served in the colonial administration and post-colonial civil service in Tanzania from 1948 to 1973. The bulk of this memoir covers his Tanzania experience. It began in district administration at Nzega, Kahama, Bukoba and Handeni from 1948 to 1953, continued in central territorial administration at Dar es Salaam from 1955 to 1961, and concluded with service in several post-colonial ministries.

Sadleir suggests that the ambivalent position of his family in Ireland predisposed him to combine faith in the British colonizing mission with sympathy for African aspirations for independence. Born into an elite Protestant family whose ancestors had helped Cromwell conquer Ireland, Sadleir formed strong attachments to both Empire and Irish culture. 'I longed', writes Sadleir of his boyhood, 'to identify myself with the romantic image of Ireland, land of saints and scholars'. He would develop similar affection for Tanzanian culture while remaining committed to an improving vision of colonialism.

Indeed, the delight which he took in learning Kiswahili would lead to the phase of his career described in his most interesting chapters. When first posted to the central administration in Dar es Salaam, Sadleir chafed at bureaucratic isolation and tedium. 'Files could really get one down', he comments, recalling an incident sure to horrify historians, 'and one of my wartime predecessors in the secretariat took all the files in his office out into a motorboat one day and threw them overboard into the deep waters of the harbour'. His superiors soon realized that better use could be made of Sadleir's sociability and linguistic facility. Having demonstrated his Kiswahili as a translator in the Legislative Council, he was placed in the first of several public relations positions.

Now responsible for the Kiswahili publications and radio broadcasts which the government used in its futile effort to dampen popular enthusiasm for nationalism, Sadleir found himself in a unique position to observe the events which led to independence in 1961. Though close to the summit of colonial government, he cultivated many contacts among the nationalists. This vantage point makes his account of the period from 1957 to 1961 absorbing. While historians will probably find no unexpected insights, Sadleir's description of the climate of growing apprehension in government supports the view, advanced forcefully by John Iliffe, that its powerlessness to control TANU forced colonial government to accept the inevitability of independence. By 1958, writes Sadleir,

my own opinion was that, in the light of the existing circumstances and if serious civil disturbances were to be avoided, there was no alternative but to hand over to an African majority government... Something must be done... if the growing unrest was not to deteriorate further into riots and possible bloodshed.

Although Sadleir would serve for twelve years in post-colonial government, after independence he lost access to the decision-makers. For this reason, his final chapters are less interesting than his account for the 1950s.

This is not the grumpy memoir that one comes to expect from old colonial officers. Sadleir had great fun in Tanzania; he enjoyed knowing its people and learning their culture and language. And yet it must be said that he is not a reliable guide to the African experience of colonial rule. Oral accounts and archives (the files which were not pitched into the harbour) provide a much different picture. From Sadleir's viewpoint, his 'band of brothers' in colonial administration appeared 'incorruptible' and quick to assist the famine-stricken; their subordinate chiefs appeared picturesque and, if sometimes 'feckless', generally harmless. In the villages, however, the regime run by these administrators and chiefs appeared neglectful, capriciously oppressive and deeply corrupt.

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JAMES L. GIBLIN

## ITALY AND SOMALIA

*The Colonial Legacy in Somalia: Rome and Mogadishu from Colonial Administration to Operation Restore Hope.* By PAOLO TRIPODI. London: Macmillan Press, 1999.

Pp. xiv + 219. £45 (ISBN 0-333-76351-3).

KEY WORDS: Somalia, colonial, international relations.

The book examines Italian policies vis-à-vis Somalia from colonial times until Operation Restore Hope in the mid-1990s. Tripodi assesses some one hundred years of Italy's presence in the region: as a colonial power up to 1941, as trustee of the UN with mandatory powers to bring Somalia to independence in the post-war period, as a member of the UN military-humanitarian mission to Somalia in 1993-94, and particularly as one of the major donors and supporters of the country's regime until its fall in 1991.

Tripodi's assessment of Rome's policies in the area is altogether negative. With the exception of the critical role Italy played in the US-led humanitarian intervention of the 1990s, Italian policies in the region are described as being poor and 'ragamuffin'. According to the author, Italy was too weak economically and too self-centred culturally to be able to develop a self-standing colonial ideology of economic and political development. Thus successive Italian governments up to the 1960s stuck to colonial possessions in Northeast Africa 'for reasons of prestige' (p. 167). During the trusteeship (AFIS) administration in Somalia (1950-60), a period the author studies in detail, Italian officials maintained a consistently 'prejudicial approach' toward Somali society, which they perceived as basically clan and 'archaic': thus they implemented a process of democratisation based 'solely upon the political experience of the West' (p. 105), namely a constitutional model rooted in the Italian political tradition. As the UN mandate to bring the country to independence was restricted to a fixed time period of ten years, AFIS was literally 'a race against time' which put to serious test well-meaning officials, scant economic resources, and the final drive to achieve Somalization and formal independence. Although Italy educated thousands of young Somalis both at home and at the Mogadishu University Institute (later to become the Somali National University), its scholars and administrators, in the opinion of the author, 'never made a real effort to understand and comply with the features of Somali society' (p. 168). Nonetheless, during the military-humanitarian intervention of the 1990s, Italian soldiers and politicians appear to have learned something from past experience as they are said to have set a valuable example of how humanitarian operations on the ground could be helped 'through dialogue rather than war'.

Paolo Tripodi's 'historical overview' of Italian policies in the region is a serious attempt to assess the intricate relations between Rome and Mogadishu through time. Most documents come from Italian archives, such as the 'hidden' AFIS files

the author went through with some difficulty in Rome, and the interviews he held with ex-colonial administrators and with leading military officials of the Somali contingent. In presenting these little-known source materials, the author has done a real service to research. Yet he writes mainly from the perspective of international relations and Italian history rather than Somali society. Much of the literature assessed in the volume is of recent date and reflects contemporary debates rather than historical research carried out on the ground. No reference is made, for example, to the pre-war works of careful interpreters of Somali society such as Enrico Cerulli or Massimo Colucci. In spite of encouraging developments in Somali studies, the field still lacks detailed monographs of what Italian colonialism meant on the ground and of the contradictory legacies Italy left behind in spite of her institutional and financial shortcomings. The social encounters between Rome and Mogadishu in colonial times are yet to be fully investigated.

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ALESSANDRO TRIULZI

### THE SWISS IN GHANA

*Afrika macht oder bricht einen Mann: Sozialers Verhalten und politische Einschätzung einer Kolonialgesellschaft am Beispiel der Schweizer in Ghana, 1945–1966.* By RENÉ LENZIN. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1999. Pp. 272. S.F. 29.80, paperback (ISBN 3-905141-72-8).

KEY WORDS: Ghana, economic history.

The Swiss connections with Africa are many and varied, from the art history of the Asante gold weights in the Bern national museum, through the Angola ethnographic collection in Neuchâtel to the Mozambique archives in Lausanne and the political and social science schools in Geneva. In Allemannic Switzerland the highest profile is held by the written and photographic archive in the Basel Mission, managed by the technically sophisticated curator Paul Jenkins one of whose protégés, Peter Haenger, has just used the mission resources to write a thesis in German on Gold Coast slavery. The intrepid entrepreneur Pierette Schlettwein has published a monograph in English based on the Haenger thesis and is also the driving force behind the Namibia Resource Centre, the Southern Africa Library and the Basler Afrika Bibliographien, which published the book here under review. This book was also a Swiss thesis, supervised by Albert Wirz from Berlin for the University of Zürich and printed by the firm of Lang in Bern, which shares its name – perhaps by coincidence – with a Swiss civil engineering firm which was active in colonial and post-colonial West Africa and which provided René Lenzin with some of his archival and oral information.

The Lenzin book is an account of the social behaviour and racial attitudes of expatriates in tropical Africa interlaced with anecdotes about the Swiss on the Gold Coast. Before the Second World War there were 150 Swiss in what became Ghana, and after the war their number rose to 500, probably the largest foreign community after the British, though the ‘Syrians’ (including Lebanese) with whom the Swiss trading firms did business eventually rivalled and outnumbered them. In addition to the great Basel Mission, which had arrived on the coast in 1828 and whose trading arm had no less than 159 stores by the 1930s, and the civil engineering firm of Lang which employed 89 expatriates and 7,000 local workers by the 1960s, the most innovative Swiss business on the coast was the Accra brewery. It was the first truly modern manufacturing enterprise to take root in Ghana. Ten years after its foundation in 1933, at the end of the Second World War, it was producing 100,000 bottles (or should that read crates?) of beer a year and 43,000 blocks of ice, each weighing 25 kilograms.

One of the great problems of the expatriate community that Lenzin portrays was inebriation. The young Swiss bachelors who went out to the Coast to escape Alpine poverty were sternly discouraged from establishing domestic comforts of a conjugal type – though the author was told that if every Swiss employee who had a liaison with an African woman had been sent home there would have been few if any expatriates left in the business community. Alfred Lang himself fathered a half-African child whom his white wife subsequently adopted and educated in Switzerland despite the extreme racial sensitivities of the time. In the absence of a home, and with some reluctance to join the British in their parties of polo and bridge, bachelors ended their long days in the office, at the factory and on the building site by taking alcoholic refreshment – and sometimes paying the price in motor collisions on their way home.

One of the more revealing passages in Lenzin's book is the discussion of the way in which business firms groomed budding nationalist politicians in an understanding of the benefits of corruption. When political decisions were not to the liking of the expatriate entrepreneurs, they cut across democratic accountability – transparency in the modern jargon – and persuaded government ministers to make decisions more favourable to trading profits. When an infant civil service took excessively long to process the paper-work which its traditions had inherited from colonial days, businessmen persuaded politicians to take short-cuts through the legal proprieties. In return, the new statesmen were led to expect that their credit limits would be waived in the expatriate stores and that luxuries not normally deemed commensurate with a small agricultural nation in the tropics might be made available from Europe. The post-colonial legacy of bribery bit deep into the African body politic, but it is nice to see blame squarely laid on the bribe-providers rather than solely on the bribe-takers.

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DAVID BIRMINGHAM

## SOMALI WOMEN

*Women's Voices in a Man's World: Women and the Pastoral Tradition in Northern Somali Orature, c. 1899–1980.* By LIDWIEN KAPTEIJNS with MARYAN OMAR ALI. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999. Pp. x + 224. £43.95/\$59.95 (ISBN 0-325-00136-7); £19.50/\$24, paperback (ISBN 0-325-00133-2).

KEY WORDS: Somalia, gender, culture.

This slim volume, the result of collaboration between Lidwien Kapteijns and Maryan Omar Ali, charts the birth and development of modern Somali love songs against an 'ethnography of women and gender norms'. A number of previously unrecorded, and untranslated, women's songs and songs about women are here presented for the first time to a European readership. These are arranged in a fairly extensive appendix and material from them is utilized in the main chapters of the book, which is divided into two parts. The first presents an account of women and 'gender expectations' in northern Somali society in 'The era of fire and embers'. This was the title given by Andrzejewski to the second period, from 1899–1944, in his tripartite periodization of Somali oral literature. Part II continues the story up to 1980, covering the period that saw the emergence of Somali pop songs, pop music, plays and changing views of marriage as 'companionship' and the articulation of romantic love – as well as heated criticism condemning these trends as assaults on 'traditional values'.

At the outset, Dr Kapteijns acknowledges her debt to her first teacher of Somali language and literature, the brilliant Cushitic scholar, the late B. W. Andrzejewski.

Unlike him, however, she has not travelled widely over the Somali terrain to collect first-hand material *in situ*. Most of her previously unrecorded songs and poems-collected, transcribed and translated with the aid of Maryan Omar Ali come from Jibuti, where Kapteijns has spent an unspecified amount of research time. Despite her claims to present an 'ethnography of women and gender norms', her collection thus lacks the rich local contextualization which Andrzejewski was able to mobilize so effectively through his first-hand knowledge – and observation – of the socio-cultural settings of rural Somali poetry composition and orature.

Her 'ethnography', indeed, is based on her literary material and a patchy, often quirky, selection of references to professionally collected ethnography. She does not always distinguish clearly between what is inferred from literary sources and professional ethnographic evidence based on first-hand fieldwork. Her selection of material from both sources is also highly ideological. Hence it is no surprise to learn that 'the Somali stories, sayings, and songs examined here 'constitute a commentary on gender norms and expectations in the pastoral communities of Northern Somalia'. From her feminist perspective, Kapteijns is free to interpret them in this way – but that does not necessarily explain their existence, or why they were in each case actually created and developed. Actually, Kapteijns' treatment of Somali gender expectations is in many respects deficient. She does not fully engage with the ethnographic 'fact' – as I would express it as a post-feminist anthropologist – that Somali female culture is self-consciously oppositional to Somali male culture. In my judgement, there is a deep sense of 'sisterhood', particularly strongly developed in the earlier patriarchal Islamic setting, which in certain contexts, transcends Somali culture and extends outside it to recognize common gender identity with women of other cultures – even those customarily stigmatized as 'pagans'. The oppositional worlds of male and female are perhaps most explicitly voiced in spirit-possession contexts – a theme which Kapteijns touches on, but fails to explore adequately because she evidently has not troubled to master the relevant literature, which is quite abundant. Surprisingly, also, she fails to note that women do not take their husbands' surnames on marriage, despite the fact that it is they who teach children their fathers' genealogies.

She ignores the corporate character of rural marriage and the rights which the partners acquire through the exchange of marriage payments between their families. She wrongly supposes that 'clan sections are exogamous' – in fact marriage constraints depend on the lineage context: in general small, tightly integrated lineages are exogamous, larger lineages ('sections') are not. It is not the case either, as she asserts, that bloodwealth for a married woman is always a joint responsibility of her own and her husband's patrilineal kin. Considerable variations occur. All these issues are amply explored in the existing literature on Somali lineage organization – to which she knowingly refers, but alas does not actually know.

It is odd that someone so preoccupied with gender does not devote more serious attention to the battle of the sexes in the context of Somali polygyny where there is ample scope for exploration. It is also strange that Kapteijns does not notice the ambiguity of Somali pastoral values which uniquely associate men with camels, and yet leave women to deal with the most cantankerous and difficult beasts – the burden camels – which they load and unload with the nomads' tents in the course of their nomadic movements.

On a broader front, Kapteijns naively supposes that 'tradition' is a concept outside the range of Somali invention and imposed on Somalis by their colonial experience. This is nonsense. Actually, the concept of tradition is based in Somali on the term *heer* (*xeer* in the current Somali orthography) which means a 'contract' or 'agreement' and is taken to be the basis of Somali 'custom' – also expressed in the Arabic loan-word '*addo*'. This has nothing to do with the colonial adminis-

trations which never sought to codify or modify 'custom'. This was quite outside the range of activity, and competence, of the colonial authorities in Somaliland. It is, of course, the case that in some colonial territories elsewhere, colonial administrators collected and codified what they called 'customary law' for use in 'customary courts'. But among the lightly administered Somalis this never happened, and in their context Kapteijns is peddling an ethnocentric misconception that no informed Africanist could entertain. Fortunately, as far as I can judge, Dr Kapteijns' treatment of Somali songs and poetry, and her translations, are of a higher standard than her awkward attempts to categorize the Somali world temporally and culturally.

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## FULBE IN SIERRA LEONE

*Fulbe Presence in Sierra Leone: A Case History of Twentieth-Century Migration and Settlement among the Kissi of Koindu.* By M. ALPHA BAH. New York: Peter Lang, 1998. Pp. x + 191. £25 (ISBN 0-8204-2180-4).

KEY WORDS: Sierra Leone, social, economic, Islam.

M. Alpha Bah's *Fulbe Presence in Sierra Leone* has many valuable sections but is frustrating both for what it includes and omits. It contributes to our understanding of Fulbe in Sierra Leone and to the little-known history of Koindu since the 1920s; however, in an apparent effort to frame the case study for a wide audience, Bah has filled the text with background material that might best have been left out. A survey of the history of Fulbe in West Africa, including legends of origin, and an overview of the early Sierra Leone colony contribute little to the book's main themes. Conversely, the footnotes citing local archival records and interviews, plus appended excerpts of sample interviews, suggest that the author gathered a great deal of information that he inexplicably chose not to give the reader. (Incidentally, the bibliography is out of date and marred by errors.)

Despite its small size (6–8,000 in 1991), Koindu became an important commercial centre, particularly because of its location near the intersection of the borders of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. Most resident Fulbe came from Futa Jallon, and their history follows familiar patterns that might profitably be compared with Fulbe settlement elsewhere. The earliest residents were herdsmen, *karamokobe* and traders, and people holding those three occupations shaped subsequent community growth and interactions with local populations. Learned Muslim teachers, a scion of a Futa chiefly family, and other early settlers married local Mende- and Kissi-speaking women and gained landholding rights. Bah also discusses a second, rather sizeable, wave of migration resulting from Sekou Toure's economic and political policies, particularly Toure's repression of Fulbe. Bah makes the point that has appeared elsewhere in recent literature, namely that Fulbe seem to have intermarried less with local people than, say, Maninka immigrants, and that Fulbe also had devices for patrolling ethnic boundaries and maintaining solidarity. Bah shows how Fulbe were business pioneers who started with the cattle trade, then expanded into the import – export (commodities) trade and later transport and other fields. They came to own a great deal of prime urban property, took a prominent role in currency exchange, paid for repairs on public roads, contributed considerable sums for school building and scholarships, and in other ways had a significant economic and social impact. According to Bah, certain Fulbe became engaged in illicit diamond mining and trading, but he says little about this critical issue.

Fulbe along with Maninka are credited with planting and expanding Islam. Here again brief biographies give some substance to that process. The most detailed episode Bah treats is the Fulbe-Mandingo conflict of the 1960s, another topic that bears broader comparison. A simmering competition between the two groups over Muslim leadership erupted when it became tied to chiefdom politics and focused upon the erection of a new mosque, which the Fulbe with their far greater resources pledged to construct. Here especially Bah needed to take a more critical stance toward his oral sources, which may have revealed more about the political discourse of the era than he allows. The mosque controversy later became a local component in a national campaign by certain politicians to deny Fulbe voting rights and even expel them from the country. In the 1980s, the Sierra Leone government took steps to recognize the wealth and political importance of the Koindu Fulbe, yet pressured Fulbe to register as foreigners. Bah addresses stereotypes about Fulbe and argues that they have been targeted because they are perceived as political as well as economic threats and because of the status claims they make. He calls for Sierra Leoneans to create a more generous citizenship and a more inclusive national identity that maximizes what groups have in common, yet suggests that the ultimate answer to the national question may come through regional unity.

A short postscript describes the horrendous losses that followed the 1991 Revolutionary United Front attack on Koindu, including the destruction of a hospital erected by the Fulbe community. Can the Mano River Union be revived to facilitate regional economic integration and development? If so, the author implies that Fulbe will play a major role. One wishes Bah had presented a more comprehensive treatment of the important topics he addressed, but one also hopes he will continue researching this border zone so critical for the future.

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ALLEN M. HOWARD

## FULA ENTREPRENEURS IN FREETOWN

*African Entrepreneurship: Muslim Fula Merchants in Sierra Leone.* By ALUSINE JALLOH. (Monographs in International Studies, Africa Series no. 71). Athens, OH: University Center for International Studies, 1999. Pp. xxix + 288. \$26, paperback (ISBN 0-89680-207-8).

KEY WORDS: Sierra Leone, economic, Islam, ethnicity.

Recent literature suggests that the most productive areas of the Sierra Leonean economy – diamonds and foreign exchange – have long been sectioned off to serve the political elite as patrimonial resources, leaving much of the labour force trapped in a stagnating agricultural sector. Elite patronage and/or political office have thus seemed prerequisites for successful indigenous enterprise. Alusine Jalloh's study of the business, religious and political activities of Freetown's Muslim Fula community in the post-independence era is a timely reminder that the reality is more complex. Not even Sierra Leonean-born Fula could wholly overcome the group's reputation as 'strangers'. As a result, Fula businessmen struggled to gain the favour of politicians and were often harassed by government functionaries (especially the police). In spite of these drawbacks, they prospered in the post-war era, becoming major suppliers of food, consumer goods and housing to Freetown's growing population. Fula businessmen also participated in the Kono diamond boom and were especially successful at meeting public demand for cheap motorized transport after the closure of the Sierra Leone railway.

The book explores the reasons for this commercial success. The Fula rulers of Futa Jallon in the savanna zone were major players in the pre-colonial Atlantic trade, and established a commercial enclave in Freetown in the early nineteenth century. The Fula population of Freetown remained small until Fula from the interior – especially French Guinea – joined a massive influx of African economic migrants to the city in the 1930s. The modern era of Fula commercial success was founded upon international livestock trade, itself rooted in a deep tradition of nomadic pastoralism. The Fula achieved such a dominant position in Freetown's post-war meat-supply industry such that neither colonial nor post-colonial governments were inclined to probe too deeply into the legality of Fula immigration and cattle imports from Guinea. The Freetown Fula proved less accommodating in their attitudes to western-style banking and education than other local Muslim groups, and young immigrants were willing to take on menial work in an effort to win starting capital for trading. While these attitudes tended to isolate the Fula from Freetown's social mainstream, they lent them further competitive advantages in commerce. Not trusting external agencies, Fula tended to look to each other for employment, credit and dispute resolutions. Successful Fula businessmen were patrons of their communities, and pressure to find gainful employment for an ever-growing body of kinsmen and clients provided a major impetus for diversification into property development, retail and produce trade, and motor transport. The livestock trade, dependent at the point of production upon the goodwill and co-operation of rural landowners, appears to have given Fula businesses a head start in developing new markets in the post-independence era. Indeed, Fula capitalists seem to have been far more successful than competitors from other groups in securing non-alienable rural land for large-scale rice production.

The book is well organized with three chapters devoted to the major areas of Fula commercial activity, and further chapters on Islam and the political affairs of the Freetown Fula community. Biographical sketches of prominent businessmen (living and dead) illustrate variations and developments in Fula commercial strategies. One of these sketches serves as the author's account of Fula involvement in the diamond industry, which is analytically unsatisfactory given that he states unequivocally elsewhere in the book that diamonds have been the single largest source of Fula capital accumulation. But the major weakness of the book is the author's tendency to generalize without clear evidential support. One is left longing in vain for a detailed case study – either that of a particular business, its activities, organization and personnel, or one in which the testimonies of individual businessmen can be read and compared. The problem does not appear to be lack of data; the author was born into the Freetown Fula community, and he conducted numerous interviews with local businessmen and their relatives in both Krio and Pulaar. He was also granted access to private accounts and papers. Footnotes repeatedly refer the reader to these oral and written sources, but no information is forthcoming about their nature or content. The book began life as a PhD thesis, and unfortunately continues to display many of the limitations of that genre.

These complaints aside, this book will be of considerable interest to historians, anthropologists and political scientists alike. It offers tantalizing insights into the politics of ethnicity and citizenship in post-colonial Sierra Leone and also hints at ways in which the deeply divisive economic gulf between town and country could be overcome. One hopes that Professor Jalloh will reveal more of his valuable research in the future.

*University College London*

RICHARD FANTHORPE



## NAMIBIAN NATIONALISM

*Popular Resistance and the Roots of Nationalism in Namibia, 1915–1966*. By TONY EMMETT. (Basel Namibia Studies 4). Basel: Schlettwein, 1999. Pp. xxii + 389. CHF 55.00, paperback (ISBN 3-908193-03-6).

KEY WORDS: Namibia, nationalism, labour, resistance.

Once again Schlettwein Publishing has succeeded in putting a book into print which in its raw academic dissertation form had already become an avidly sought-after classic for those dealing with Namibian history in the twentieth century. In addition, the publishers have prefaced the work with an introduction that in itself is enough justification for anybody wishing to acquire the book. Frankly, the introduction by Patricia Hayes is the best historiographical overview available of Namibian history in print at the moment. Without wishing to launch into a series of adjectives, the fact is that for anybody with an academic interest in Namibia the work is a delight to read. It is extremely well thought out, perfectly structured, incredibly detailed and, above all, clearly presented.

The central aim of Emmett's work is to trace the origins or roots of Namibian nationalism and provide an overview of its development (p. 33). Essentially the work charts the development and suppression of resistance to colonial rule in the period prior to the Second World War, and the development of truly nationalist anti-colonial movements in Namibia following the war. In each instance Emmett clearly details the socio-economic background of resistance in Namibia, and lays detailed groundwork for each region of the country before developing it further. Thus, for instance, the reader is given an insight into the development of contract labour in Ovamboland, or exile politics in the 1960s, and how this relates to the development of anti-colonial resistance through time, community and region.

Following a lengthy introduction discussing nationalism and detailing the theoretical underpinnings of what is, after all, a doctoral thesis, Emmett has divided his work into four major sections. The first describes the initial colonial context within which colonized and colonizer operated. Emmett details the environmental constraints that determined the manner in which pre-colonial Namibian societies could survive, and how the coming of colonial settler farmers and ranchers placed ever greater strains upon this survival. The extreme nature of German colonial repression in Namibia is succinctly covered, as are the distinct phases of South African colonial rule prior to 1925. This then provides the background to the book's second section dealing with what Emmett sees as the first phase of popular resistance to South African colonial rule. Emmett discusses the Bondelswarts and Rehoboth rebellions, and provides information regarding the origins, composition (class, ethnic and regional), development and strengths of the Industrial and Commercial Worker's Union, and the Universal Negro Improvement Association in Namibia. Emmett argues that this first phase of resistance failed on account of the fragmented nature of Namibian social formation, the composition and nature of the political organizations established, and the 'preponderant power' of the colonial state.

The third section of the book is a detailed overview of the development of the contract labour system from Ovamboland within Namibia. In effect this system created a mass of men who experienced the worst of South African colonial rule, and who came to form the basis of the Ovamboland People's Organization and its successor the South West African People's Organization. In section four the development of an urban intelligentsia is discussed and the various strands of the book are drawn together. Ovambo contract labourers, Herero urban intelligentsia, and Nama and Herero leaders in the Chief's Council are all discussed in relation to one another, the colonial state and their origins. Relying on an extensive body

of personal interviews with nationalist leaders of the first hour, Emmett provides the reader with a unique insight into the inner workings of Namibian nationalist politics in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In the same manner in which the socio-economic background of nationalist politics inside Namibia were discussed, Emmett discusses and describes the stresses and strains experienced by Namibian nationalists in exile. Step by step Emmett describes the manner in which the South West African National Union sidelined itself, both within Namibia as well as internationally; how, even before the first shots of the liberation war were fired at Ongulumbashe in August 1966, the rigidly doctrinaire theorising of SWANU had lost out to the pragmatism of SWAPO.

Unfortunately the book lacks a little in terms of design. It could have been enlivened and made even more appealing through the inclusion of photographs, at least of a number of the main protagonists. Even so, the great strength of this work is the wealth of detailed and clearly presented information that it brings together. Quite simply, this book is essential reading for anybody dealing with Namibian history and society.

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JAN-BART GEWALD

## ZIMBABWE

*Voices from the Rocks : Nature, Culture and History in the Matopos Hills of Zimbabwe.*

By TERENCE RANGER. Oxford: James Currey. Harare: Baobab; Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999. Pp. x+305. £14.95, paperback (ISBN 0-85255-654-3).

KEY WORDS: Zimbabwe, colonial, nationalism, environment.

*Voices from the Rocks* is a highly impressive book that recounts the history of the Matopos area of south-western Zimbabwe from the pre-colonial era to the 1990s with a breadth of coverage and depth of analysis that is testimony to Ranger's skills as an accomplished historian. This is Ranger at his best; weaving a fascinating historical tapestry that combines meticulous historical detail, sensitive understanding of the dynamics of racial, cultural and ideological interaction in a colonial setting and a sensitive appreciation of the nature of African spirituality to produce a fascinating panoramic view of the history of a region of Zimbabwe that has hitherto not been the subject of serious historical analysis. The result is an aesthetically pleasing and academically impressive book that is undoubtedly one of the most significant contributions to knowledge of the forces that shaped Zimbabwe's historical experience.

Ranger weaves many different themes into his narrative. His book is as much about landscapes and the evolution, role and impact of political, economic, social structures and institutions as it is about African spirituality, armed conflict and racial, ethnic and political rivalry. It also explores the inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts that characterised the history of Matopos throughout its history, as competing interests, both corporate and individual, struggled for ownership of, and legitimacy over, the area. In addition, the book explores the theme of colonial appropriation and expropriation of indigenous resources, and African resistance. Ranger skilfully manages to represent the history of Matopos as being both representative of Zimbabwe's colonial experience and yet, paradoxically, unique. It is representative in that the struggle against European colonialism and cultural and spiritual hegemony in Matopos was similar to struggles elsewhere in the country. It is, however, unique in that Matopos was more than simply a home to the indigenous Nyubi and Ndebele peoples; it was also a local and national spiritual centre in which the Mwali cult resided.

Lastly, the book is also about the consistent attempts by the state, both colonial and post-colonial, to regulate and control the ordinary people's lives and the people's determination to resist such efforts. Perhaps the best way to capture what the book is about is to let Ranger speak for himself. He states that he sought to analyze 'the right relationship of men and women to the land, of nature to culture; the dynamics of ethnicity; the roots of dissidence and violence; the historical bases of underdevelopment'. Ranger accomplishes this task fully and authoritatively.

The book comprises nine chapters grouped into three sections. Section 1 analyzes the competing white and African conceptualizations of Matopos as 'landscape' and traces how the white view eventually asserted itself. It documents how, gradually, white settlers appropriated the Matopos, renamed its various sites and turned it into a 'white playground'. Meanwhile, the colonial state, backed by western science, proceeded to evict the original inhabitants to marginal areas and thus set in motion a process of underdevelopment that was to impoverish the indigenous people and create resentments that would eventually lead to the emergence of mass nationalism. Section 2 analyzes the various struggles over land that culminated in the rise of mass nationalism in the 1950s, while Section 3 explores the nature and manifestation of violence in the liberation struggle when both ZIPRA and ZANLA operated in the area, and during the so-called dissident war of the 1980s. The section ends with an analysis of trends in the 1990s showing how the Matopos has remained a contested territory, spiritually, economically and politically.

Ranger is able to tell the above story by listening carefully to 'voices from the rocks'. These include the voices of the Mwali shrine, the white conservationists and colonial officials, the African protests and the sound of guns during the Chimurenga wars, the liberation war of the 1960s and 1970s and during the so-called 'dissident' conflict. When all the other voices were either silenced or muted, the voice of the Mwali shrine was still heard in Matopos, as if to testify to the resilience of the human spirit and the religious institutions and practices that sustain it.

*Voices from the Rocks* is highly recommended to historians, economic historians, environmental conservationists, sociologists, political scientists, policy makers and all those interested in understanding Zimbabwe's historical experience. Both the specialist and the lay reader will find this to be an informative and fulfilling book that is well packaged, suitably and clearly illustrated, and written in easily accessible language.

University of Zimbabwe

ALOIS S. MLAMBO

## A FEMINIST READING OF CISKEI HISTORY

*Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan: A Social History of the Ciskei, 1945–1959.* By ANNE KELK MAGER. Oxford: James Currey, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, Cape Town: David Philip, 1999. Pp. xix + 248. £40 (ISBN 0-85255-685-3); £15.95, paperback (ISBN 0-85255-635-7).

KEY WORDS: South Africa, gender.

The territory known as the Ciskei was a product of European imagination – a territory without fixed boundaries that was mapped and remapped by settlers and administrators for more than a century after the wars of conquest in an effort to construct an 'imagined community' called the Ciskei Xhosa. Anne Mager's reading of this community is a gendered reading that begins at a crucial point in

this history – the end of the Second World War and a new and dynamic phase of industrialization in South Africa, the collapse of subsistence farming in the truncated Ciskei African reserve that foreshadows the collapse of agriculture in South Africa's other African reserves, and conflict within the white ruling elite over how to contain and continue to exploit the majority African population in the reserves. Her story ends 'with the construction of the Ciskei as an apartheid Bantustan' in 1959 (p. 14).

Mager wants to deconstruct the narrative discourses that have hitherto been employed in writing about the Ciskei – a region that has been the subject of more research than perhaps any other in South Africa. She has chosen to read the history of the Ciskei as a two-sided image of 'how gender shaped the mapping of the boundaries of the Ciskei as place' and how this territory 'shaped gender and sexuality' (p. 14). In part, this is a study of the discourses of representation between men and women, between public and private spheres of activity, between people living in rural and urban areas. In part, this is also an exploration of power relations among ordinary people in everyday life.

Mager has succeeded in opening up a new landscape for future scholars to map in reading the history of the Ciskei region. She makes extensive and critical use of relatively neglected primary sources – like magistrates' reports and other court records, and local newspapers – in telling her story. Of even greater importance are the number and quality of interviews she conducted, often in very difficult and dangerous situations, with women (and some men) who lived in the Ciskei during the period covered by the study. This is essentially a feminist reading of the Ciskei story, and Mager succeeds in offering us a snapshot, as it were, of how 'asymmetrical power relations' were moulded 'in the deeply hidden domains of sexuality' (p. 220).

But this is also a reading that poses some problems for this reviewer. While Mager seeks to deconstruct fixed, dichotomous representations of the Ciskei, her own reading implies closure with the demise of the apartheid state. While it is obvious that the Ciskei 'no longer exists' as a territorial entity, it has merely been incorporated into a larger, Eurocentric administrative unit, the Eastern Cape. While the faces in power have changed, have the boundaries of territory and gender really changed?

Mager's arrangement of individual chapters is thematic rather than chronological. To provide a sense of unity and continuity, the reader is told at the end of virtually each chapter what to expect in the next chapter. It works rather well, but since the narrative only covers a period of fourteen years Mager doesn't really need to worry about chronology. One wonders whether the thematic approach Mager uses – focusing on the meaning of power as personal, subjective and anchored in specific, local landscapes – would work if she had examined the Ciskei region over the period of about 150 years that the term has been in use.

This is a reworked PhD dissertation, but in many chapters there are no references to scholars who have laboured in the field. Mager focuses on East London, for example, for her analysis of urban African life, but Keith Tankard's work is not mentioned. In Chapter 8 on educating the African elite, there are no references to Tim White's study of Lovedale, to Catherine Higgs' biography of D. D. T. Jabavu, a prominent figure in the region, or even to J. A. M. Peppeta's MA thesis that tried to explore student memories of Healdtown school. While these scholars might not serve Mager's needs, the material does provide occasional insights that are germane to her project.

There are a few mistakes – such as citing *Inkundla ya Bantu*, 4 December 1952, as a reference (fn. 53, p. 170), when the newspaper actually ceased publication in November 1951. And there are other lapses, such is the use of jargon words like 'problematize' (e.g. pp. 147, 174) without exploring the meaning of the term, and

references to 'young, educated women' migrating to East London without defining what 'educated' meant for African women during this period. The photos used in the book, especially the copies from newspapers, moreover, are generally poor.

Gender relations are rarely mentioned in narratives of South African history, and Mager has done an outstanding job of reading these silences of the past into the record and deconstructing the problematic use of this 'other' in the history of the Ciskei. But many of her insights are based on a few, in-depth interviews. While a great deal of attention is paid to African activities in the private sphere, moreover, precious little attention is devoted to African involvement in the public sphere during these years. While gender relations were certainly 'reproduced, contested, and reshaped in the political processes through which the Ciskei was made' (p. 219), it seems premature to imply that gender relations *explain* the shaping and reshaping of the political process in the Ciskei – or in South Africa.

University of Houston

LES SWITZER

## ECOLOGICAL HISTORY OF TANZANIA

*Custodians of the Land*. Edited by GREGORY MADDOX, JAMES GIBLIN and ISARIA KIMAMBO. Oxford: James Currey, 1996. Pp. xiv + 271. £35 (ISBN 0-85255-725-6); £12.95 paperback (ISBN 0-85255-724-8).

KEY WORDS: Tanzania, environment.

In its preliminary exploration of the ecological history of Tanzania, *Custodians of the Land* covers quite a lot of old ground, including a summary by Kimambo of decades of work on local initiatives, and opens up some new avenues. The introduction signals a move away from political economy in both pre-colonial and colonial history, but most of the contributors are content to add an ecological dimension to what is already in place. The opportunity to think radically about how a history based on the study of ecosystemic change might alter our perspectives on the past century and a half is thus missed. Only Spear's elegant chapter on land, its uses, meanings and contestations on Mt Meru, based on his *Mountain Farmers* but refocused and complete in itself, really combines narrative and conceptual exploration. The book as a whole offers a richer, but not a very different, history.

The book begins with population. Kuponen offers some carefully argued hypotheses about demographic trends since the middle of the last century. He suggests that the onset of colonialism was not a watershed, or rather cliff edge, but came during a much longer period of retrenchment. Kuponen and other contributors are also sceptical of the notion of a terminal loss of ecological control. Colonial conquest did not reverse population and ecological trends, though the high mortality rates from war, hunger and disease in the 1890s and 1900s certainly affected them. What is perhaps most valuable about Kuponen's discussion is the lucidity with which the various factors involved are set out. In his view, population began to increase again in the inter-war years because more people were born, not because fewer died. Mortality levels do not seem to have changed much between 1920 and 1960. Moreover, fertility is not a biological given but intimately related to a range of social, cultural and economic factors. As these changed or were reinterpreted, so fertility levels altered. Maddox's chapter on demographic history in Ugogo takes up some of Kuponen's points, and usefully includes changing patterns and rates of migration in the mix of factors.

Demographic change and its wider effects as a theme in ecological history recurs in Giblin's study of the negative consequences of break-up of population concentrations in Uzigua – a reprise of his valuable monograph – and in Spear's discussion of Arusha and Meru responses to population pressure: they intensified production, moved outwards and innovated to maximize returns to land and labour. Maack's chapter suggests that the Uluguru Mountains were suffering from population pressure before 1900, but she does not say much about how the inhabitants responded before the famous explosion of protest against post-war reclamation schemes. The discussion, especially by Giblin and Maddox, of how labour power was concentrated and controlled through wealth and patronage rather than through 'kinship' *per se* is in some ways the most fruitful result of demographic enquiry here, since it provides a frame for looking both at the impact of shifts in wealth and opportunity and at how such shifts are reflected in ecological relationships.

Demography should be central to ecological history, not merely because change in human population densities clearly affects other elements in the ecosystem and is affected by them, but also because perceptions of demographic change influenced state policy and shaped the conflicts over its implementation which have become a staple of environmental historiography. Colonial officials were increasingly worried by the proliferation of people, animals and bugs, and they were supported in their concerns by the Malthusian orientation of contemporary writings on the environment. Food sufficiency campaigns, like reclamation schemes, were aimed at trying to slow, if not arrest, the apparent downward spiral into dust and hunger. Meanwhile, African populations were solving the same problems for themselves, starting from very different assumptions. Several chapters, including Conte and Monson on forest conservation (a welcome inclusion), deal with the clash between indigenous and colonial ideas of innovation, conservation and development, though readers will need to supplement Monson's chapter by looking at her study of administrative attempts to block rice exports from the Kilombero Valley in the pursuit of food sustainability.

If the book does not say as much as it might about practical ecologies – McCann's call for a more technically informed understanding of agricultural production is more acknowledged than implemented – it does begin to address the important theme of African 'environmental ideologies' and the moral structures governing resource management and use. Wagner, especially, draws on her earlier work on how communities in BuHa perceived landscape in the broadest sense to focus on the role of 'earth priests' as mediators between human and spirit inhabitants of the land and as repositories of ecological knowledge and morality. She shows how such knowledge was revalued – and even commoditized – over time, thus suggesting a link both with work elsewhere on knowledge and the constitution of power and with attempts to hold rulers accountable for 'healing the land'.

Yet, if what Africans knew and thought about their land is now the subject of serious study, so too should be the knowledge-base generated and drawn on by colonial rulers. To some extent, this book follows the trend in seeing colonial 'expertise' as inherently misinformed, baleful and racially arrogant. Colonial interventions may often have been wrong and were certainly authoritarian, but there is a more complex interaction between indigenous and imperial bodies of knowledge, and between what colonial officials assumed and how they interpreted what they saw and were told, than the new ecological history is willing to recognize. Scanting colonial epistemologies threatens to return us to a narrative of interaction which reproduces many of the crudities of 'Merrie Africa' which this collection rightly dismisses.

*Custodians of the Land*, then, is a qualified success. It does not present a new

paradigm, but it offers new ideas and information – and without disappearing into the thickets of post-modern verbiage. The editors provide a conceptual map for the journey, and useful summaries along the way, but the chapters on the whole travel separately and towards somewhat different destinations.

*Bucknell University*

RICHARD WALLER

## THE CONTINGENCIES OF ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

*Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa, 1800–1990.* By JAMES C. McCANN. Oxford: James Currey and Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999. Pp. xvi + 201. £12.95, paperback (ISBN 0-85255-774-4).  
KEY WORDS: General, environment.

James McCann has dedicated his career to the development of the study of the history of Africa's environments. In his own research and in his work with colleagues and students, he has promoted a rigorous commitment to evidence, to 'the signs of the past'<sup>1</sup> as he has put it elsewhere, in the face of too easy recourse to theorization by academics and mechanistic degradation narratives by development workers and popular media. As such, his work of synthesis has been eagerly awaited. The relatively brief book McCann delivers both defies and fulfills these expectations. Readers looking for a grand counter-narrative to challenge the seemingly endless tales of ecological disaster that make up common knowledge about African environments will come away disappointed. Instead McCann offers a concise set of case studies that highlight important themes in the changing relationships between humans and their environments.

McCann's book is organized rather like a course outline, and as such will be very useful in the classroom. He begins with a section called 'Patterns of history' that quickly reveals his method in this work. In his chapter on 'Africa's physical world', McCann places great emphasis on the flux in climate patterns over the last two millennia and in the next chapter, rather than sketch a general picture of human/environment interaction before 1800, he concentrates on three case studies: the empires of the western Sudan, Great Zimbabwe and the Ethiopian highlands. The next four chapters, comprising the core of the book, all follow the same format. Each identifies a theme; respectively desertification, deforestation, food production, and soil erosion. Each uses case studies: the Sahel and Serengeti, the Ethiopian highlands, the rainforests of Ghana, and Lesotho, chosen as a result of the intersection between the quality of research carried out in these regions relative to the uniqueness of the interpretations that result. While some may see little more than a rehashing of other researchers' work, McCann consistently provides new insights into human/environment relations.

All of the case studies explored here do draw on the rapid expansion of research on environmental change in Africa over the last twenty or so years. In each, McCann emphasizes the contingent nature of environmental change. He uses work by James Fairhead and Melissa Leach, work on the Machachos region of Kenya, and on the Serengeti to demonstrate the ability of African farmers and herders to nurture the land and the inevitability of change despite conservationists' efforts to

<sup>1</sup> James C. McCann, 'Agriculture and African history', *Journal of African History*, 32, (1991) 507–13.

freeze time. His own research from Ethiopia then demonstrates the stability in relations between forests and agriculture. In particular, his chapter on agriculture in the rainforests of modern Ghana blends the findings of research usually divided by discipline into a coherent and convincing explanation of a changing landscape from the mythical founders explored by Ivor Wilks through Polly Hill's cocoa revolution to the Sasakawa/Global 2000 initiative of introducing Green-Revolution-type maize farming, and Kofi Amanor's analysis of forest use. His final substantive chapter on erosion in Lesotho shows the impact of political economy on land use, but even here, he argues that periurban agricultural development demonstrates that degradation is not irreversible. He concludes by arguing that rapid urbanization will be the driving force behind landscape change for the foreseeable future.

In all of the chapters McCann emphasizes the contingent nature of environmental history. In a subtle way, his work shows that the degradation narratives so beloved of environmentalists when pleading for money are wrong without devaluing the reality of environmental change and its effects on the peoples of Africa. As a book, McCann's work leaves one wanting more: more detail, more case studies, more pages, more master narrative. One wants ammunition to counter the arguments advanced by McNeill, Crosby, Diamond and even Curtin and Thornton about the ways that African environments limited the potential for social development in Africa. McCann's answer, the only valid one, gives cold comfort; the relationship between humans and environment is a contingent and specific one. Neither the degradation narrative of environmental activists nor the nurturing narrative promoted by Fairhead and Leach capture this ambiguous relationship; only the detailed examination of McCann's 'signs of the past' can provide a clue to 'Africa's environmental future as past'.

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GREGORY H. MADDOX

## MUSLIM NATIONALISTS IN TANGANYIKA

*The Life and Times of Abdulwahid Sykes (1924–1968): The Untold Story of the Muslim Struggle against British Colonialism in Tanganyika.* By MOHAMED SAID.

London: Minerva Press, 1998. Pp. 358. £11.99, paperback (ISBN 0-75410-223-8).

KEY WORDS: Tanzania, colonialism, nationalism, Islam.

In recent years historians of nationalism, like historians of science, have been turning to the stories of the losers. In studies of South Asia as well as Africa, authors such as Allman, Geiger and Mbembe have sought to escape the triumphalist trap of assuming that nationalist politics were shaped solely by the men who eventually took power. A focus on historical dead-ends can illuminate the contingencies that shaped nationalism, and can also help explain many post-colonial political conflicts.

Mohamed Said's book is one such study. Its title is misleading: relatively little is about Abdulwahid Sykes, a member of a prominent Dar es Salaam family, and the book fails to substantiate Said's claim that his hero 'founded a political party [TANU] and made a President [Julius Nyerere]'. Yet the title points to the author's general approach. Using a collection of documents preserved by the Sykes family, as well as the memories of informants drawn from the author's extensive network of personal contacts, Said tells the story of Tanganyika nationalism from the Sykes family's point of view. In doing so, he creates a valuable resource for the



study of colonial Dar es Salaam (a place that has received surprisingly little scholarly attention), and makes a strong case that the prevailing literature on Tanganyika nationalism, much of which is centred on the figure of Nyerere, has underestimated the contribution of Muslim townsmen and needs to be reassessed.

Private sources such as Said's are often available only to interested parties rather than disinterested professional historians. To his credit, Said opens with a forthright statement of his connection to the Sykes family (this statement itself tells the reader much about the ties of neighbourhood that sustained nationalist politics in Dar es Salaam), and he makes his polemical agenda clear throughout. Briefly, his argument is as follows. TANU was created by Muslim townsmen, led by the Sykes brothers, who envisioned the party in 1945 while serving in the Burma Infantry. The Sykeses recruited Nyerere late in the game and made him president of the new organization in a self-sacrificing ploy to encourage Christians to join the nationalist cause. The latter were essential to success because, having been favoured by the colonial regime, they dominated the ranks of the educated elite. But the Christians were unreliable nationalists because of their indoctrination by 'the Church' (Said often assumes that all Christians were Catholic), portrayed here as a highly effective tool of colonialism. After *uhuru*, TANU's new Christian leaders reneged on promises they had made to keep religion and politics separate, and together with the Church plotted to rid TANU of Islamic influence. By 1970, this conspiracy was complete: TANU had been effectively wrested from the hands of the people who had created it, and had become a tool of Christian power.

Needless to add, Said is a tendentious writer. Yet remarkably little of his argument is directly contradicted by standard accounts, and, although it is impossible to evaluate his sources (footnotes are few and not always useful), he presents some fascinating new material. He is most persuasive in the two-thirds of the book that discuss the period before independence. Said surely has a point when he chastises historians for having failed to note the Islamic factor in the nationalist politics of Dar and other towns. Also valuable is his focus on Muslim-Christian tensions within TANU and its predecessor, the Tanganyika African Association (TAA): indeed, such tension was noted by observers at the time but has since failed to capture the attention of historians who perhaps have been too accepting of official myths of nationalist unity.

Yet these strengths are often vitiated by the book's combative tone. Two overargued themes, in particular, come in conflict. On the one hand, Said wishes to convince his readers that the Sykes circle created the nationalist movement virtually single-handedly and, in its early phases, totally dominated it. In this regard, he presents Nyerere in the early 1950s as an utter neophyte, a cipher who was shrewdly manipulated by Sykes and his allies. (This depiction of Nyerere as 'a complete stranger' to nationalist politics is partly a function of Said's Dar-centred perspective.) On the other hand, he perceives the history of Tanganyika nationalism as a grand struggle in which the Muslim townsmen who created the movement fought each step of the way against the wiles of their Christian enemies. These opposing themes catch Said in some absurd contradictions, such as in his narrative of the 1953 contest in which Nyerere assumed leadership of the TAA, immediately before it was transformed into TANU. That narrative portrays Nyerere simultaneously both as Sykes's tool and as his archnemesis.

But the most troubling aspect of Said's tendentiousness consists of his portrayal of a Manichean conflict between Muslims, depicted as uniformly dedicated nationalists since the days of Maji Maji, and Christians, depicted as unsteady collaborators. That such images are often contradicted by his own rich data is all the more cause for disappointment. Said is at his most contentious in the book's closing section, entitled 'Conspiracy against Islam'. It would be difficult to refute the core of his indictment there: TANU's misguided efforts in the late 1960s to

quash autonomous Islamic institutions. (This sordid tale has been told with more convincing detail, albeit on a strictly local level, by Abdin Chande.<sup>1</sup>) Yet in his determination to reveal TANU's plots to impose 'Christian hegemony', Said ignores the fact that these efforts were part of a broader move to control *all* institutions of civil society. Still, as a statement of perceptions that are widely shared by Tanzanian Muslims, perceptions grounded in two generations of historical memory, this discussion, and Said's entire argument, should not be ignored by anyone who cares about Tanzania's future.

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## RETHINKING CHIEFTAINCY IN AFRICA

*African Chieftaincy in a New Socio-Political Landscape*. Edited by E. ADRIAAN B. VAN ROUVEROY VAN NIEUWAAL and RIJK VAN DIJK. Hamburg, Lit Verlag, 1999. Pp. iii + 251. DM39.80, paperback (ISBN 3-8258-3549-9).

KEY WORDS: General, political.

The nationalists who took African states from colonialism into independence and their contemporaries, the scholarly pioneers who chronicled their political movements' epic careers, had a great deal in common. They were, after all, educated men (and with few brilliant exceptions like Peggy Bates, Gwen Carter and Ruth Schachter-Morgenthau, they were mostly men). More importantly, they were, almost without exception, products of a particular moment in the history of the world. By the 1940s an increasingly persuasive political enlightenment had been generated by reflection upon the full meanings of the darkest days of the century, and arguably of the millennium. Assumptions about supremacy and inferiority, and hence about the inherent reasonableness of alien over-rule, lay shattered in the wreckage of fascism. Both nationalists and scholars shared an enthusiasm for modernization and radical social change. With few exceptions, like the more sceptical David Apter, most scholars agreed with the nationalists that political leadership based upon the accident of birth was a thing of the past. African chieftaincy in many cases was, they concluded, the creature of doomed colonialism, a distorted caricature of pre-colonial kingship; and like colonialism, these peripheral tags of a pre-modern past would either fall or be pushed towards inconsequence as had been aristocratic power from Paris to Peking.

Forty years on, those frequent scholarly and political announcements of the imminent death of chieftaincy appear to have been premature. Modern recensions of ancient offices have been re-inscribed in modern African constitutions; chieftaincy is being hailed in some quarters as a more authentic representation of African political imagination than the frequently over-turned imported models of governance. And from many parts of the continent, political scientists and journalists have reported that chiefs are palpably exercising considerable, and in some cases increasing, powers. Many of the predictive claims of social scientists in the 1960s have been undermined by the sheer force of process. This collection of essays by scholars at the African Studies Centre at Leiden seeks to explore this paradox and explain the tenacity of these institutions.

The introductory chapter by the editors attempts to grapple with the confusion in the literature. It helpfully dumps the simplistic understandings that hung on the

<sup>1</sup> *Islam, Ulamaa and Community Development in Tanzania* (San Francisco, 1998).

misleading slogan of ‘the invention of tradition’; instead they lean on Feierman and Mbembe in concluding that modern chieftaincy is better understood as the product of constantly evolving and vividly contested political imaginations. Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal takes the argument further in a stimulating further essay on the hybridity of chieftaincy that would have been even more persuasive had it been more historicized; modern chieftaincy’s ‘hybridity’ is not just the outcome of the twin forces of modernity and colonial manipulation but also of the treatment of chieftaincy in the years of post-colonial government, and the relationship between these skeins is more easily understood over time. The book proceeds to fill out the more general arguments by assembling a clutch of mostly very good essays on a widely varied collection of examples. Jan Abbink provides an intriguing and sadly rare piece on chieftaincy in modern southern Ethiopia. Dirk Beke looks at the ‘fit’ between traditional authority and modern local government in Kivu. The concerns of Wim van Binsbergen’s fascinating essay on the relationship between Nkoya chieftaincy and the Kazanga Cultural Association of West Central Zambia are nicely caught in his sub-title: ‘resilience, decline or folklorization’. Christian Lund and Gerti Hesselning look at the crucial issues raised by the tensions between traditional chieftaincy and the elaboration of modern laws of land tenure in Niger. Ineke van Kessel and Barbara Oomen look at the revival of chieftaincy in post-apartheid South Africa, a matter that has surprised many observers. Piet Konings takes us back into the rainforest with a very sharp essay on chieftaincy in Anglophone Cameroon which is a genuinely original insight into the use values of chieftaincy in making cases for regional autonomy. But among an unusually interesting cluster of articles, that by Werner Zips on Jamaican maroon societies, whose original defining principles were almost certainly Akan, is the most intriguing. His is the best examination of what he regards as a deeply misleading historiography. But its strengths also lie in its reminder that the innumerable forms of African chieftaincy are not solely located in Africa.

This is an invaluable, interesting and timely set of essays which suggests that comprehending the nature of chieftaincy in modern Africa will be high on the research agenda in the new millennium. But with notable exceptions, the significance of the history of individual chieftaincies – surely a vital ingredient in any rounded understanding – remains under-explored in many of the essays at the expense of excessive over-the-shoulder worrying about theoretical correctness.

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### ‘WITCHES’, ‘CANNIBALS’ AND WAR IN LIBERIA

*The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War.* By STEPHEN ELLIS. London: C. Hurst, 1999. Pp. xix + 350. £35.40 (ISBN 1-85065-401-8); £16.50, paperback (ISBN 1-85065-417-4).

KEY WORDS: Liberia, religion, politics.

This is two books in one. The first deals (reliably) with the wartime ‘destruction of Liberia’; the second (more problematically) with the ‘religious dimensions of an African Civil War’. Ellis takes issue with ‘social scientists who believe that religion...is a set of beliefs which actually express [sic] other forces at work in society’. He prefers ‘the assumption that most people who express religious beliefs actually believe these to be true’ (p. 23). To oppose these not mutually exclusive propositions makes little sense, except as a defence of naïve realism (if most people believe something to be true, probably it is true). It is as naïve realist that Ellis addresses his central theme – (political) ‘cannibalism’. He sees this as the clue to

the peculiar brutality of the Liberian war. Pre-colonial masked initiation societies drew upon human sacrifice and flesh-eating rituals to make and control power, but in a rule-guided way. The Liberian state first banned, and then incorporated, the initiation societies, corrupting rule guidance. Ideas about 'eating' and power endured, but – shaped by a strongly patrimonial politics – became 'private' concerns. The war's bestiality is a product of this extreme individualization of traditional beliefs.

Selective in his use of Liberian ethnography (no Bledsoe, Gay, Leopold, or Tonkin, hardly any d'Azevedo, nothing on Sande), Ellis imputes the same ontological, organizational and legal status to the shadowy 'cannibal' associations as to Poro and Sande, the real secret societies. He believes (following a missionary, Harley) that an anti-social 'leopard' society was enfolded within the higher echelons of Poro. In neighbouring Sierra Leone rural people would agree that 'leopard men', and similar, do (or did once) exist, but will insist that these activities are (were) always criminal. Local opinion regards 'leopardism' as absence of good governance, not the degenerate remains of a once-legitimate organization practising human sacrifice.

Ellis might have advanced more securely if he had made better comparative use of early twentieth-century documents on 'cannibalism' in the Upper Guinean forest region (notably, the records compiled for Sierra Leone by Milan Kalous). Neglect of these readily accessible historical sources suggests a reluctance to measure the argument of the book against the linked war in Sierra Leone (1991–9), which developed 'a logic of its own' (p. 93), despite the similarities of cultural background.

Trends in the Sierra Leonean material on 'cannibalism' are clear. The phenomenon occurs where chieftaincy and trade disputes intersect. (Mandingo merchants are regularly thought to be involved.) It 'migrates' across species, attaching itself to the chimpanzee or Mandingo sorcerers when leopards became locally extinct. In 1912 – the year the Monrovia government outlawed Poro, Sande and 'Leopard Society' – the administration in Sierra Leone proscribed the 'criminal' leopard and crocodile associations (but not Poro and Sande) only to discover an emergent 'baboon [i.e. chimpanzee] society' a year or so later. A puzzled official wondered about this new society's 'sacrificial' aims, since the 'human baboons' seemed more intent on wounding than killing their victims (the damage is consistent with what is now known about real chimpanzee attacks on children). 'Cannibals' were once detected by witch-finders (not something Ellis discusses). Under colonial rule witch burnings were banned and 'cannibalism' cases were brought to court, where many accused 'cannibals' were convicted only on the evidence of confession. Colonial assessors rapidly realized admissions were mainly extracted under beatings and torture.

Doubts were also expressed about the quality of other evidence. The Acting Attorney General (van der Meulen) minuted (in 1909) that models could be built from witnesses' detailed descriptions of the instruments with which 'cannibals' supposedly killed and mutilated their victims, but no district commissioner had ever acquired the real items as evidence in court. Ellis, by contrast, has faith in confessional evidence and cases tested in open court in Liberia (p. 256). I am said to be 'coy' about whether 'human flesh is ever actually eaten' (p. 222), because I note difficulties in establishing whether attacks were by real animals, or faked to look like it (villagers believe 'cannibals' go into recess when hunters track down a real leopard). If anthropologists treat the West African 'cannibal' as ontologically equivalent to the witch, this is not to preclude the possibility that human agents sometimes give a politically useful belief a boost by well-timed assassinations or mutilations. Overall, it is evident that Ellis' failure to engage with the wider anthropological literature on witchcraft is a serious weakness.

Primarily valuable for documenting the war, the book concludes with a speculation about how to change the Liberian culture of violence. For Ellis, the key is the religious imagination, viewed in psychological terms. A neo-Durkheimian approach, in which religious values are regarded as collective representations, changing in response to group organizational challenges, might serve him better. In my 1996 book on the war in Sierra Leone I treated cultures of violence as responses to the 'wrong' kinds of group organizational challenges. Far from idealizing anarchy, as Ellis (hiding behind the wilful misreading of a politically-engaged Sierra Leonean critic) supposes (p. 20), my organizationally oriented analysis pointed to the rebel movement becoming, under bush incarceration, and lack of surrender options, formidably durable, if unstable in mood. Alas, those who thought the problems in Sierra Leone lay 'not with rebel war but with bad governance and corruption' (to quote British advisors close to the Blair government) were caught out by the subsequent catastrophic escalation of the conflict in 1998–9.

A task of conflict resolution remains to figure out the organizational dynamic of combat in such a way that it can be channelled in new and more socially productive paths. Differences of conceptual orientation apart, Stephen Ellis and I might end up agreeing that Liberians, despite their awful experiences, are not without the social energy and resource to effect such transformations.

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## RETHINKING AFRICAN STUDIES

*Out of One, Many Africas: Reconstructing the Study and Meaning of Africa.* Edited by WILLIAM G. MARTIN and MICHAEL O. WEST. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press. 1999. Pp. x + 237. £69.95 (ISBN 0-252-02471-0); £18.95, paperback (ISBN 0-252-06780-0).

KEY WORDS: General, historiography.

The title of this book may appear startling at first glance because we know of only one continent called Africa. Yet, after reading it, one will appreciate how successful the editors have been in attracting the attention of readers to what they conceived as an important problem connected with the study of the continent. 'Many Africas' refers to the different ways groups interested in the study of Africa define their area of study as they construct their approaches. The editors identify three main groups. Africanist, continental, and pan-African or transcontinental.

The ten chapters included in this volume 'contain some of the papers presented' at the symposium of the Centre for African Studies at the University of Illinois in April 1994. The symposium itself arose out of two important forces: first, student demands which expressed dissatisfaction with the teaching of Africa as it has been handled by the dominant Africanist institutions; and, second, the conviction of the organizers that time had come 'to engage the issue of reconstructing the study and the meaning of Africa during what we saw as the beginning of the end of the hegemonic approach to the study of Africa and African peoples everywhere' (p. ix).

After a very effective introduction, the ten chapters are grouped into three parts. 'Part 1. The study of Africa and African Studies: Reflection of the *longue durée*' (three chapters, by Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, Christopher Fyfe and Elliott P. Skinner); 'Part 2. Transcontinental power and resources in the production of

knowledge (three chapters, by William G. Martin and Michael West, Horace Campbell and Zenebeworke Tadesse); and 'Part 3. Breaking paradigms and silences (four chapters, by Jacques Depechin, C. Tsehoulouane Keto, Mahmood Mamdani and Micere Githae Mugo).

Clearly this is a careful selection of well-known authors representing the present variety of scholarship on Africa. The crisis centres on the challenge posed to the group that has dominated the scene in the last two generations: the Africanist group. The chapters vividly document that the rise to dominance of African Studies centres in the north after the Second World War, eclipsing the older Pan-African movement and taking advantage of the growing scholarship within African institutions. According to this presentation three phenomena have threatened the so-called 'hegemonic' dominance of the Africanist school: decline of financial support from government and private corporations, the revival of transcontinental approaches and the independent tendencies of continental researchers.

The main aim of the book is to sensitize Africanists to move out of their narrow definition of Africa with emphasis on Sub-Saharan Africa and narrow studies of language, tribes, states etc. This would enable them to respond to wider popular themes like globalization and cultural studies. In North America it would require Africanists to respond better to wider interests, including those of the African American constituency. On the continent it would create enhanced engagement with continental scholars whose activities have been negatively affected by the economic decline of their countries.

This book should stimulate debate. Some of us based in African institutions would doubt that the crisis is as serious as portrayed here. In Tanzania, for example, there has been more research conducted by young and old scholars from North America in the last three years than in any previous period that I can recall. It is quite possible that the rethinking being called for in this book has already started. Second, in order to stimulate more meaningful African-based scholarship, the continental position has to be taken more seriously. The 'golden' period of Africanist scholarship was strengthened not only by availability of resources, but also by the goodwill and co-operation of the continental constituency. Perhaps success in scholarship has created an 'academic apartheid' that has tended to marginalize this co-operation. The decline of African economies should not be an excuse for institutions in the North 'to entice continental African scholars via salaries now impossible at African universities' (p. 28). Nor would it be a mark of success for African Studies to fail to maintain area studies within the context of trends toward globalization.

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## SHORTER NOTICES

*Wall Sculptures of Abomey*. By FRANCESCA PIQUÉ and LESLIE H. RAINER. London: Thames and Hudson, 1999. Pp. 116. £14.95, paperback (ISBN 0-500-28180-7).  
KEY WORDS: Bénin, arts.

Written for a general audience, this beautifully-illustrated book describes a project undertaken jointly by the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) and the government of Bénin to preserve a set of painted mud bas-reliefs from the palace of the kings of Dahomey. The project's genesis grew out of a 1991 visit of a delegation from the GCI to the Historical Museum of Abomey, which is housed in portions of the palace built during the reigns of the nineteenth-century kings

Guezo and Glélé. The *ajalala* (reception hall) of Glélé had been razed in 1988 and 56 bas-reliefs removed for preservation while the building was rebuilt. From 1993–7, a Getty team worked with Béninois professionals to carry out a project with multiple goals: to document and conserve the salvaged bas-reliefs, to train African staff in conservation, to oversee the creation of replica reliefs for the new building, and to display a number of the preserved reliefs within the museum's exhibitions.

Like other royal reception courts, that of Glélé contained long, low buildings with multiple doorways opening on to a courtyard. The walls between the doorways were decorated with bas-reliefs in three tiers: the upper pictured weapons, the middle included narratives dealing mainly with warfare, and the lower showed royal symbols. The palace was burned by the retreating Dahomean army in late 1892 and the French-appointed King Agoliagbo rebuilt portions of the palace in the late 1890s. However, the Glélé *ajalala* may have survived the fire and reconstruction, which would make the reliefs preserved by the conservation team the oldest extant reliefs in the palace remains.

The detailed description of the technicalities of the conservation work is the richest part of the text: the stabilizing of the fragile reliefs; the process of crack-filling and paint touch-up; the analysis of the earth used to model the reliefs and the pigments that produced their original colours; the painstaking testing of a transportation system to move the stored reliefs; and the quarrying of earth for the reliefs produced on the new *ajalala*. Other sections of the book illustrate a number of the reliefs and explicate the events they depict, provide a description of the permanent installation of the museum and survey related contemporary arts. The text is weakest in its history of the kingdom; the authors include a time-line that includes undocumented or erroneous dates for all of the kings up to Tegbesu, and they describe the colonial *indigénat* as an 'indigent system'.

The book is richly, indeed lavishly, illustrated with 155 well-reproduced photos and drawings, of which 142 are in colour. Many show the palace buildings, including before and after photos of the rebuilt *ajalala* of Glélé. Among the most impressive are the historical photos, several of which dating from the end of the nineteenth century are previously unpublished. The latter include rare photos of the last kings and contingents of women soldiers.

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*Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone.* By ANNA MARIA FALCONBRIDGE, with ALEXANDER FALCONBRIDGE, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa.* Edited by CHRISTOPHER FYFE. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000. Pp. viii + 236. £14.95, paperback (ISBN 0-85323-643-7).

*Maiden Voyages and Infant Colonies: Two Women's Travel Narratives of the 1790s.* Edited by DEIRDRE COLEMAN. London: Leicester University Press, 1999. Pp. xviii + 247. £49.95 (ISBN 0-7185-0149-7); £17.99, paperback (ISBN 0-7185-0150-0).

KEY WORDS: Sierra Leone, exploration/travel.

It is surprising that, apart from a Frank Cass facsimile of 1967, there has been no modern edition of Anna Maria Falconbridge's *Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone*. Now, like London buses, two arrive at once. Each editor provides substantial context and commentary, together with some 130 notes. Deirdre Coleman faithfully reproduces the text of the 1794 edition, while Christopher Fyfe has corrected manifest printers' errors. Each includes contemporary illustrations, and each completes the volume by reprinting other works, of which more later.

Anna Maria was the first European woman to publish an account of life in West Africa, and her narrative, published under the form of letters, has been an indispensable source for every account of the early history of the Sierra Leone Colony, directly or through Christopher Fyfe's *History* of 1962. Not surprisingly, Fyfe's historical annotations and commentaries are somewhat fuller and more informative, providing, for example, updated details about the history of Bance Island and the much-maligned white women who accompanied the 'Black Poor' in 1787.

Deirdre Coleman, while displaying sound knowledge of the Sierra Leone settlement, is primarily interested in cultural history. Well versed in the literature and iconography of the period, she seems a little less indulgent to Anna Maria than Christopher Fyfe. She couples the *Two Voyages* with a reprint of *A Voyage Round the World...* published in 1795 by Mary Ann Parker, wife of a naval officer taking support to the penal colony of Botany Bay. Linking these two voyages leads Coleman (as it did some contemporaries) into ironic reflections on the theme of liberty and servitude. Mary Ann's brief, straightforward narrative (written to sustain herself in widowhood) includes a brief account of visiting Cape Town in the company of Colonel R. J. Gordon and Captain William Patterson, both observers of that region.

Fyfe's supplementary material has more bearing on African history. One item is the passionate pamphlet against the slave trade that Anna Maria's first husband published in 1788, which provided essential material for the abolitionist campaign then being mounted by Thomas Clarkson. Alexander Falconbridge made four voyages to west Africa between 1780 and 1787; besides horrifying stories of human brutality and speculation about the sources of slaves, his book contains interesting details on the conduct of trade at Bonny and New Calabar. The other is a journal, with some letters, that Anna Maria's second husband, Isaac DuBois, prepared for the absent governor, John Clarkson, during the first half of 1793. It adds additional detail, and additional venom, to his wife's account of petty quarrels among white office-holders in Freetown, and of more serious conflicts with the settlers over the allocation of their promised land-grants.

Each of these volumes represents sound scholarship, inspired by admiration for Anna Maria Falconbridge. Her book, as Fyfe demonstrates, was neglected on publication, by reviewers as well as by the authorities from whom she sought compensation for her grievances and justice for the settlers. It is to be hoped that these new editions will encourage historians, and many others, to take more account of the observations of this spirited, spontaneous, shrewd and courageous young woman.

*Banchouy*

JOHN HARGREAVES