

REVIEWS

RECENT TRENDS

African History From Earliest Times to Independence. By PHILIP CURTIN, STEVEN FEIERMAN, LEONARD THOMPSON and JAN VANSINA. Second edition. London and New York: Longman Group, 1995. Pp. xvi + 546. £25 (ISBN 0-582-050707).

A revised version of this well-known university textbook provides an opportunity to review some of the tendencies in African historiography since the publication of the original version in 1978 which marked ‘the coming of age of African history’ after 25 years of research. This new version is intended to reflect ‘a new level of maturity’ in African historiography with the publication of all the 16 volumes of the *Cambridge History of Africa* and the *Unesco General History of Africa*, of which only a few had appeared by 1978. The text has been ‘reworked, updated and expanded’; the book has been redesigned and reset, and the maps have been redrawn and new ones added.

From the beginning, the authors intended to produce not an outline, brief introduction or summary chronicle but a substantial and authoritative interpretation of the history of the whole continent, with an emphasis on social, economic, cultural and intellectual developments within a clear political framework. Two of the authors are historians who have done original research on social, economic and intellectual issues. The other two are anthropologists who hold chairs in departments of History. It was this blending, manifest in such themes and chapter headings as ‘Political culture and political economy’; ‘Economy, society and language’; ‘Religion, art and thought’ which made the work so innovative in 1978. Since then the trend in African historiography has followed this trail, blurring the dichotomy between history and the social sciences. In the updating, the issue of gender has been brought into some prominence. The revised work has remained on the cutting edge of scholarship, thus retaining its high quality and authoritativeness.

It is perhaps in the perspective that a subtle but fundamental change has taken place. In 1978, the four American authors producing a textbook on African history were almost apologetic about it. ‘We are also consciously seeking to look at African history from an African point of view... But an African point of view is not easy to come by... [because] there are many different African points of view toward African history... We hope that our perspective of distance may help our perspective in understanding, and that our respect for and sympathy with Africans from many parts of the continent may help to overcome the fact that none of us is African in birth or education.’ The new Preface has no room for such sensitivity: ‘Our implicit question [is partly] “How did the Societies in the African continent come to be as they are today?”, and partly “How do human societies change through time?” This implies a conscious effort on our parts to avoid all ethnocentricity – African or Western.’

What is involved, but not made explicit, is that since the mid-1970s the volume and significance of scholarly African input into African historiography at the international level has diminished considerably. With the near collapse of universities in Africa, a significant proportion of African scholars still producing new knowledge are doing so from America and – where their voice is more African than American – they are not yet being noticed. In this revised work, some of the chapters have had to drop African authors of the 1960s and early 1970s from the

list of suggestions for further reading and replace them with more recent work by Americans or Europeans. The result is not the avoidance of 'all ethnocentricity', but loss of some of the 1978 'respect and sympathy' for African scholarly views, and consequent indifference to some of the unique aspects of the African experience.

Two examples will suffice. When the authors refuse to listen specifically for 'the African voice or voices', they can hardly be up to date in summing-up the impact of the slave trade in African history. They state on p. 208 that 'Oyo collapsed so completely in the early nineteenth century that the slave trade drew more heavily on Yoruba than on any other nationality, though Yoruba slaves had been practically unheard of in the Americas before 1750'; and yet conclude on p. 210 that the Yoruba experienced 'a few decades of political instability' but were 'otherwise untouched by the slave trade' and that the Bini 'were very lightly involved for centuries on end, but too lightly for the trade to have made a really serious impact' on them. Secondly, when they ignore the view that independence failed to bring with it decolonization in Africa, it is not surprising that they conclude that 'As things went elsewhere in the world, the colonial period in Africa came to a fairly peaceful end', and focus attention only on such black-on-black violence as in Idi Amin's Uganda, Tutsi and Hutu vengeance in Rwanda and Burundi, and Northern Sudanese aggression in Southern Sudan, to explain the distressing state of 'post-colonial' Africa.

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INTRODUCING AFRICA

Africa. Edited by PHYLLIS M. MARTIN and PATRICK O'MEARA. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, and London, James Currey, 3rd edn., 1995. Pp. xx + 448; £14.95, paperback (ISBN 0-85255-230-0).

The first edition of Phyllis Martin's and Patrick O'Meara's collection under the simple title *Africa* appeared twenty years ago to meet the need which its editors, who teach in the African Studies Program at Indiana University, had felt for a multi-disciplinary introduction to the subject for undergraduates embarking for the first time on work relating to the continent. It has twenty-one chapters, each of which is written by an author – sometimes a pair of authors – who has lived and worked in Africa, some of whom have international reputations in their particular disciplines. These are arranged in four sections.

The 'Introduction' contains a brief review of major African problems and perspectives, and is followed by a substantial and valuable chapter 'The contemporary map of Africa' by Michael McNulty, in which a series of clear and useful maps are supplemented by tables and text and by appropriate photographs to provide an up-to-date summary of the many physical and human aspects of the continent. Good maps and illustrations are a feature of the book.

The second section, 'The African past', has six chapters. Four of these take the reader from 'Prehistoric Africa' right through to 'Decolonization, independence, and the failure of politics'. Dealing with not far short of the whole history of the continent in no more than about eighty pages necessarily requires generalisation, and some of the generalisations that are made may not be as acceptable as some of the others. It might have been better to sketch the history of Africa at somewhat greater length, or instead perhaps simply to have directed readers to some of the standard published histories of the continent. The other two chapters, however, take the form of discursive essays on two particular and important subjects, one 'Aspects of early African history' by John Lamphear and Toyin Falola, is on the

characteristics of what Raymond Mauny would have called medieval African society, and the other on 'Islam and African societies' by John Hanson; both are excellent value.

The third and longest section contains nine comparable essays under the title 'Society and culture'. Some of these take standard forms, such as the one on African literature (which struggles very hard to be something more than a catalogue of published works) and the well illustrated one on African art. Other have more original or enterprising themes, for example Ruth Stone's essay on 'African music performed' or Dele Jegede's on 'Popular culture in urban Africa'. A process of sampling by a reviewer who is no more than a historian suggests that there is much in this section to stimulate a lively interest from students coming afresh to the study of Africa.

The final section, with the title 'Economics and politics', is concerned entirely with contemporary issues. This reviewer's impression of Brian Winchester's chapter on 'African politics since independence' is that it is rather old fashioned; it does not, for instance, take account of the extent to which post-independence politics have been increasingly pressured by rapid population growth, droughts and the spectre of famine. A similar criticism might be made of Sara Berry's 'Economic change in contemporary Africa' were it not that her subject overlaps with that of the third essay, 'The African development crisis' by Richard Stryker and Stephen Ndegwa, where population growth, droughts, and agricultural problems are touched upon. The history of South Africa from the rise of *apartheid* to its demise sensibly gets a chapter of its own at the end of this section.

The book is rounded off by a useful 20 page bibliographic essay on 'African resources', by Nancy Schmidt, which will be of considerable value for the undergraduates from whom it is intended. No doubt a more detailed bibliographic survey would have been provided had the book been intended for the use of more senior scholars. Nevertheless, there may be more than a few of these who will welcome at least parts of Martin and O'Meara's *Africa* as handy, stimulating, and up-to-date quick reference sources for matters beyond the bounds of their own particular disciplines.

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WHO PEOPLED AFRICA?

The Peopling of Africa: A Geographical Interpretation. By JAMES L. NEWMAN. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995. Pp. xiv + 235. £17.95 (ISBN 0-300-06003-3).

James Newman has given us an ambitious book. He explores three interlocking themes: a dialectic between the demography of human communities and the productive character of their environments; the roles of trade and politics in generating growth in political scale; and the development of cultural identities. The first three chapters review the emergence of hominids, the Stone Ages, and the transition to agriculture. Here we meet his sources: physical geography, archaeology, historical linguistics, the occasional human genetic datum and some documentary historical material (including mention of dynastic oral traditions). Newman handles most, though not all, of the best of the secondary literature in these fields. The second part of the book amplifies his central themes for each of the continent's conventional regions. At a total of 201 pages, the brevity of the text alone will appeal to undergraduate teachers.

There is much to praise in *The Peopling of Africa* besides the author's thorough

regional coverage. Beautiful maps populate each chapter. They represent clearly Newman's narrative devices of migration, trade, and the growth of political scale. He uses historical linguistic evidence to tell a story of the spread of language communities during the first millennium A.D. This may stand as the book's most important achievement because too many of the other master narrators of early Africa avoid these ten centuries. Yet Newman finds in them the environmental, economic and demographic processes which lay at the heart of Africa's great range of pre-colonial states and inter-regional trading systems. The clarity of his arguments will render the book agreeable to undergraduates.

Still, factual errors accumulate and students will need to have them corrected. Hima do not hold political power in Rwanda (p. 164); no evidence connects Ntusi or Bigo earthworks to Cwezi personages (pp. 164–5); Hinda and Hima have nothing to do with the origins of the Tuutsi (p. 165); the king in Shambaai is Kilindi not 'Kilindini' (pp. 176, 181); Teso-Turkana and Lotuko-Maasaian are not 'Southern Cushites' (p. 171) but are speech communities descended from Proto-Eastern Nilotic; Lozi farmers did not 'gain control of the slightly elevated mounds that dot the floodplains' (p. 148) of the Upper Zambezi, they built the mounds; and 'Bantu' is not a language spoken today as is implied in Table 7.1, p. 107).

But this historical geography repeatedly avoids any meditations on how the communities of actors it maps invented identities which made their Africa a human Africa. Africans peopled their continent intellectually and socially, they created ideas and forms of social life which emerged from and helped to direct, agricultural adaptations and the development of economic forces. The absence of this part of the story leaves the reader hungry for an historical geography of African cultures. The hunger pangs set in most intensely around Newman's mechanical understanding of ethnicity and identity. He uses Africans' search for land and their development of distinctive foodways to propose a familiar dialectic: the mutual influences of community and environment on 'notions of regions, spaces, and places' (p. 6). Environment, epidemiology, agricultural systems and the geographical extent of a given set of related languages define the identities and the spaces he writes about. He does not tell us, though he suggests he understands (pp. 173–4) how people used these boundaries to craft multiple identities. A statement like 'A Dorobo can become a Maasai by obtaining cattle and adopting Maasai customs' (p. 174) fails to account for the historical development of these boundaries. This shortcoming keeps Newman from writing an African historical geography rather than an historical geography of Africa.

Newman evokes the diverse environments and foodways in the Kenya Rift valley (pp. 166–8) after 500 B.C., and he tells how hunters, mixed farmers and herders came to live there. With respect to hunters, he writes: 'Higher up in the montane forests are Eburran sites, indicating that gatherer-hunters held sway. These people may have been Southern Cushites, but whoever they were, their niche was taken over by Southern Nilotes, represented by the surviving Okiek' (p. 167). There are two problems with this statement. First, we know nothing about what it might have meant to have been 'Southern Cushite'. Second, he implies that a popular shift occurred. But we do not learn how, over time, people who got their food by hunting, gathering, herding, farming (or by some combination of these methods) exploited the environmental diversity of the Kenya Rift to fashion social identities, to construct distinct (though permeable) ethnicities in order to reinforce their mutual economic interdependence. For example, we know that some Okiek hunters own cattle (and we know that some of the hunters who made the Later Stone Age tool kit called Eburran 5 also had cattle), and we know that Okiek-speakers play important roles in Maasai life-cycle rituals. They can speak both Okiek and Maasai languages (and we wonder if those who wielded Eburran 5 tools

also enjoyed a bi- or multilingual facility in Cushitic, Southern Nilotic, and Khoisan languages?). But Newman's conception of ethnicity is too rigidly tied to language and material culture to recognize the pot pourri of possible identities available to an Okiek person: hunter, herder, hunter-herder, Southern Nilotic-, Cushitic- or (after the seventeenth century) Eastern Nilotic-speaker.

Newman acknowledges an inspirational debt to George Peter Murdock's *Africa: Its Peoples and Their Culture History* (p. xii). Because of all the linguistic and archaeological work completed since Murdock wrote, these methods may now produce evidence for intellectual history, for changes in units of social life and organization, for historical relations between health, wealth, gender and age. Because Newman does not set himself these tasks, some of the criticisms levelled against the book may seem unfair. But, the burning issue for Murdock, the matter of there being African histories without Europe, has long since been settled. Africanists and undergraduates not burdened by that absence will want to learn about the cultural definitions Africans gave to the object of the verb 'to people'. Africans not only peopled their continent by settling it, an impressive achievement to be sure, but they peopled each other, they named themselves and other communities in spatially and temporally overlapping identities. These two sorts of peopling go hand in hand. Those who agree will be disappointed by this book.

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'DOING' ARCHAEOLOGY

Digging Through Darkness: Chronicles of an Archaeologist. By CARMEL SCHRIRE. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995. Pp. x + 276. \$29.95 (ISBN 0-8139-1558+9).

It is hard to put a single categorical label on Carmel Schrire's *Digging Through Darkness*. It is at once a chronicle of her personal development as an archaeologist and a critique of the colonial dialectic through which indigenous peoples and European invaders have come to be intertwined. Schrire, as a white South African woman, is a product of this process, adding texture to a skilfully written book interlaced with the kind of earthy irony often intrinsic to multi-cultural dialogue in southern Africa. The book ranges from panoramic discussions of European expansion and colonization to introspective essays on the contradictions of growing up Jewish in South Africa, 'a minority within the larger white group...[that] endure[d] the persistent effort of certain factions to ally with the Nazis', while at the same time taking advantage of an entrenched, colour-coded caste system under which 'the Jewish population cashed in the chips of their appearance' (p. 30).

After permitting us refreshing glimpses behind the impersonal lab-coat of the scientist, and into the personal factors that lead archaeologists to emphasize some bits of information while ignoring others, she gives us her own predilection – a desire

to taste dispossession in the material elements of invasion, the clay pipes, stone flasks, and bottles. I wanted to stumble through ruined outposts, where north European bombast once boomed over the sharp, soft clicks of aboriginal opinion... I wanted to run my fingers through the very same beads, pipes, and coins that once lubricated the loss of land, and to pore over the documents announcing the hegemony of the European enterprise (p. 46).

Her ability to capture depths of meaning with a simple turn of phrase means that there is not a dull page in this book. At the same time, however, the interleaving of her personal development with a broad historical narrative of colonial hegemony

– as both unfold across three continents – becomes toward the end occasionally disjointed and repetitive.

A brief summary of the spread of European mercantile capitalism during the Age of Exploration sets the stage for following chapters on the use of archaeological materials to write in between the lines of Eurocentric historical documents. Combining traditional historical and archaeological data with imaginative ‘mini-essays’, Schrire tries to ‘redress the injustice that, while the words of a petty clerk on board ship still echo after three hundred years, not a single thought of the native cattlemen watching from the beach remains for us today’ (p. 5).

The central portion of the book takes us through the excavation of two small European outposts at Saldanha Bay – Oudepost I and II. This is a very readable account of the everyday hermeneutic process through which archaeologists both discover and construct meaning from the artifacts they uncover. In a major move away from dry ‘site reports’, Schrire interpolates into her discussions of artifacts and stratigraphy the conversations, conflicts and debates of the ‘white’ and ‘coloured’ excavators. By doing so, she is able to capture in nuanced ways how present and past, scientist and humanist, colonist and colonized, become merged during the process of excavation and interpretation. The section ends by concluding that the very artefacts used to link early Khoi and Europeans also reinforced European hegemony because they did not constitute a two-way currency: ‘the pretty baubles lying in the Oudepost sand encode how the Dutch barred the Khoikhoi from entering the trade network as equal partners by keeping natives on the bead standard while colonists grew rich on land and stock bought for beads and sold for hard cash, gold, and silver guaranteed in banks worldwide’ (p. 112).

The next chapter uses imaginative narrative essays as vehicles to put voice to ‘the feelings of the silent and illiterate natives’ (p. 117). This section is less satisfactory than the previous ones, however, perhaps because few documents refer directly to Saldanha Bay. In addition, over-stereotyped roles of European as teacher and adviser creep in while a subtle passivity is attributed to the Khoikhoi. When new tactics are needed, for instance, these come from outside, introduced to King Gonnema by ‘Jan Sweed [who] ... explained tactics of diversion, of harassing the flanks of the enemy to keep them off balance’ (p. 137). Such entrenched roles do not spring directly from the historical documents, but are perhaps an unintended by-product of Schrire’s own up-bringing in a gated, apartheid world. As she laments, ‘lacking records of the Khoikhoi, I flounder in their world.’

Subsequent chapters anecdotally examine the contradictions of apartheid and how they were obeyed, compromised and overcome by practical farming and fishing folk living remote from the polished halls of Cape Town in Saldanha Bay. Following the Population Registration Act of the 1950s, for instance, a woman named Nannie was declared to be white, ‘whilst her absentee brother who was whaling in Antarctic during the Inquisition, returned home to find himself “black”. “Can you believe it?” asked Nannie, pouring tea for her guests, “Can you believe that they say that Kobie there is black?...Neither...had been white before he left for sea”’ (p. 164).

Throughout the book, Schrire foregrounds the multiple planes of meaning that develop between archaeologists, their crews and the public consumers of their work in colonial and neo-colonial contexts. Schrire uses radiometric dating methods and other techniques to compartmentalize and talk about the past. Gurrowoy, her aboriginal straw boss, comes to his own understanding of time. His hands, mere stubs due to the crippling effects of leprosy, brush away the dirt from a human phalange: ‘He clutched it tight, this perfect finger, from the time before men’s hands lost their feeling’ (p. 205). Schrire comes full circle in her last chapter when she describes a project to resettle Kalahari Bushmen in the Kaggga Kamma

mountains where weekend tours of 'Stone Age Life' are conducted. 'Make your next conference a rewarding experience,' reads one brochure (p. 218).

In true post-modern fashion, *Digging Through Darkness* is a book that can be read on many levels. While it presents no new historical insights or startling archaeological data, it is as lively and human a presentation of what it is like to actually *do* archaeology outside Euro-america as I have come across.

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ZIMBABWEAN ROCK ART

The Hunter's Vision: The Prehistoric Art of Zimbabwe. By PETER GARLAKE. London: British Museum Press, 1995. Pp. 176. £16.99 (ISBN 0-7141-2518-0).

Peter Garlake's book is an admirable attempt to explicate the complexities and subtleties of Zimbabwean rock art. The development of his argument is well illustrated by 36 colour plates, some of startling clarity and beauty, and 185 black-and-white tracings that march well with the text, conveniently illustrating points as they are made. Although the book is a 'digest' (p. 9) of his Ph.D. thesis, the trajectory of his argument is well sustained.

In brief, he explicitly employs 'methods similar to those of many other art historians' (p. 48); he does not, however, say with which school of art history he associates himself. His method is to seek 'a range of details... that seem to have served to signify or define particular qualities' (p. 44). He concludes that 'the art was primarily concerned with establishing archetypes as economically as possible' (p. 61). These archetypes include 'man the hunter, woman the gatherer, the parent, family, band and community' (p. 58) and 'archetypes of trancers' (p. 73); the images are therefore not 'primarily or even predominantly' concerned with shamanism (p. 166). Taking a functionalist stance, he claims that the art was 'designed to explore, celebrate and instill' what he calls 'specific ideas, beliefs and perceptions' (p. 150). It is when he leaves these generalities and gets down to specifics that the book is at its most absorbing.

But in explaining specific images, Garlake faces a number of problems, and he frankly sets these before readers right at the beginning. For one, the art is more ancient than has often been allowed. Such dates as are available suggest that it is probably over 2,000 years old (p. 18). Not surprisingly, then, there is no contemporary ethnography to which he can turn, as he himself points out. Despite this caveat, he draws extensively on nineteenth- and twentieth-century San ethnography from South Africa, Botswana and Namibia, as writers dealing with the art farther to the south have done since the 1970s. Yet he feels a need to distance himself, again and again, from the research that has been carried out on the rock art of South Africa and Lesotho. This work has shown that much (not necessarily all) of the southern art was associated in one way or another with San shamanism.

Garlake rightly argues that it would be 'a mistake to transpose interpretations developed from the Drakensberg paintings simply and directly to Zimbabwe' (p. 43). Nevertheless, he concedes, 'indubitably both belong to the same tradition. Both can be assumed to reflect the same San "cognitive system", the same ways of seeing, of interpreting what is seen, of concepts and basic beliefs and practices' (*ibid.*). Elsewhere, he writes, 'There are sufficient... images in the Zimbabwe paintings to suggest that much the same verbal, visual and metaphoric vocabulary was recognised by the artists of Zimbabwe'. But he then adds, somewhat contradictorily: '[T]he examples that exist cannot be considered more than a very minor aspect of the art' (p. 76). Are the examples of shared beliefs 'sufficient' or

are they only 'a very minor aspect'? Inspection of his own illustrations confirms that the rock art of Zimbabwe has much in common with that to the south.

Not surprisingly, many of Garlake's interpretations derive from the southern research. For instance, he argues that small flecks that appear in various contexts represent the supernatural potency that resides to varying degrees in diverse things. He does not cite Dowson's 1989 (*South African Archaeological Society, Goodwin Series*, 6) paper that argues just that. Developing the notion of potency, he says '[S]ymbols of potency... pervade the art' (p. 46; emphasis added), and 'If many paintings were concerned with depicting potency, it is probable that there is, for us, a difficult, imperfectly understood "sub-text" to all the paintings that is concerned with describing various aspects of it [potency]' (pp. 148-9; emphasis added). Yet, in what appears to be another about-face, he writes elsewhere that the paintings are *not* 'concerned exclusively or even predominantly with potency' (p. 166).

Despite a related avowal that the art was not 'primarily or even predominantly concerned with trancing, trancers or shamanism' (p. 166), Garlake repeatedly (and convincingly) points to metaphors, symbols and depictions of trance experience, many of which have long been known to characterize the art of South Africa and Lesotho. I give a few examples.

He argues that certain recumbent figures are, 'archetypes of trancers', even though they are comparatively rare (p. 73). Animals, too, are said to be implicated in shamanic activities - as they are to the south. Hunting large animals is 'a key metaphor for trancing' (p. 80). For instance, 'The death of the elephant was perceived as a metaphor for the death of trance... [T]he elephant is the trancer... The elephant hunt is the trance dance' (p. 126; cf. very similar southern research on the death of eland in Lewis-Williams, *Believing and Seeing* [London, 1981]). Moreover, some animals are 'metaphors for different aspects or degrees of trance'; upside-down animals 'substitute' for recumbent trancers and 'some dead animals also correspond to humans in trace' (p. 131). Therianthropic figures may 'depict trancers in the process of transformation or... pure spirits' (p. 133). Birds 'illustrate a process of transformation from human to bird... [T]rancers... take on the forms of birds' (p. 157).

Finally, oval motifs (the 'formlings' of yesteryear) are, he says, 'the test against which all interpretations of the [Zimbabwean] art ultimately rest' (p. 91). He then argues, innovatively, that they originated 'in attempts to represent the seat of potency, the *gebese*' (p. 154; the pit of the stomach where shamans feel the 'boiling' of their potency most intensely). Developing this intriguing idea, he argues that 'clusters of ovals' may 'represent the community of trancers' (p. 97). He does, however, allow that the oval forms may depict honeycombs (a powerful shamanic symbol), as has been argued for paintings in South Africa and Lesotho.

So, whilst proportions may be difficult to estimate (San rock art images are, in any event, polysemic), much of the art, and, moreover, what Garlake himself considers key features, is indeed concerned with one or other aspect of San shamanism and so more like the southern art than he allows. Indeed, virtually all the interpretations to which I have referred derive directly or obliquely from the southern research. Contrary, then, to his assertion that the Zimbabwean art is not primarily concerned with shamanism, much of it evidently is. Certainly, he does not develop any other theme to anything like the same degree.

Such contradictions and unreferenced borrowings are unfortunate. Nevertheless, *The Hunter's Vision* remains an invaluable contribution to southern African rock art research. The respect that Garlake accords the art is evident on every page and ensures that the debate that this book will generate will be profitable. He correctly points out that no thorough comparison of the Zimbabwean art with that to the south has ever been undertaken. Indeed, his book shows that

this is a task that needs to be tackled. The differences may not be as numerous or as great as Garlake claims.

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J. D. LEWIS-WILLIAMS

TECHNOLOGY AND AGRARIAN CHANGE

People of the Plow: An Agricultural History of Ethiopia, 1800–1990. By JAMES C. McCANN. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995. Pp. xviii + 298. £48.50 (ISBN 0-299-14610-3); £22.50, paperback (ISBN 0-299-14614-6).

This book is a history of Ethiopian plough agriculture set within the larger context of environmental history. The subject is further examined through such key themes as demography, urbanization, crop varieties and farm resources. The book is in two parts: Part I is a broad narrative of what the authors calls the 'ox-plough revolution' and its social and economic consequences. Part II consists of three well-chosen case studies, namely Ankober in northern Ethiopia, a district which in the nineteenth century served as the royal granary of the Shoan kingdom; Gera, an area located in the forest zone in south-western Ethiopia; and Ada, the agricultural backyard of the capital city, Addis Ababa.

The book's main focus is ox-plough cultivation, i.e. the ensemble of ox-based traction technology and the regime of annual, seed-crop farming. The latter consists of a large repertoire of cereals and pulses which have remained largely unchanged over the centuries. Of the New World crops, McCann is concerned only with maize, and horticultural and tree crops are not given any treatment, except for coffee in Gera. The book's central argument is that Ethiopian ox-plough cultivation, which has been in place for nearly two millennia, has shaped the country's agricultural and environmental history, and has brought about an 'ecological revolution' as well as a 'profound social transformation'. The *maresha*, the simple Ethiopian plough, is cheap, universally accessible and 'brilliantly adaptable'. The ox-plough revolution, the author points out, has determined the division of labour and gender roles, property ownership, patterns of land use, cropping strategies and household relations. Plough culture has subordinated perennial and root crop farming systems in favour of annual, seed-based cultivation. Because of the central role of oxen in this system, there is a greater integration of livestock breeding with land husbandry. Rights to oxen more than rights to land define farmer's resource management strategies.

Ox-plough cultivation has a much longer history in its historic home in the northern provinces than in the rest of the country. McCann argues strongly, however, that the spread of the technology and the agricultural system based on it to the southern and south-western highlands goes back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Gera, for example, plough agriculture was probably introduced in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, prior to the Oromo invasion of the area. He maintains that the Ethiopian highlands were integrated into a unitary agricultural system through the agency of the ox-plough revolution several centuries before their political integration through the agency of the imperial state. Moreover, the expansion of 'ox-plow agriculture across the highland landscape... was not, in the final analysis, part of the baggage of political expansion from the center' (p. 70).

An important theme running through the book is demographic change and its impact on agricultural development, labour allocation and environmental management. There is an element of neo-Malthusianism here, with the difference that McCann is more flexible and more nuanced. He argues that population growth across the highlands was stable in the nineteenth century and rising over the course

of the twentieth. This has meant fewer farm assets (especially oxen), smaller farm plots and reduced pasturage. The response of farmers in different ecologies has varied not only with their natural setting but also with their socio-political experience.

In each of the three case studies there is a careful discussion of land management practices, farming techniques and human interaction with the natural environment. In the nineteenth century, the small town of Ankober served as the capital of the Shoan kingdom and the district around it as the granary of the royal state. Large areas of the district were designated as royal farms and pasturage. Ankober agriculture made extensive use of terracing and irrigation. In the closing years of the nineteenth century, the royal capital shifted south, settling finally in what is today Addis Ababa. This, together with the rising population ushered in a long period of decline culminating in the second half of this century in periodic famines and food crises. The extensive network of terracing and irrigation were abandoned, and farmers were forced to migrate to lower altitudes to farm marginal land.

In Gera, on the other hand, the experience was different. The arrival of the plough gradually led to the clearing of the forest for seed crop farming, and a concentration of the population. The author maintains that the clearing of the forest for ox-plough cultivation, which took place on a large scale in the central and western part of the region, would not have been possible without a sufficiently large population base. The Oromo invasion of the area in the eighteenth century enlarged the crop repertoire of the area and redefined property relations. Following the conquest of the region by Menelik's forces in the nineteenth century, Gera was depopulated as a result of slave trading and out-migration. In the wake of this, the farm lands and the towns were reclaimed by the encroaching forest. At the time of the Italian occupation in the 1930s, there was no trace of the farms and towns that had once been thriving entities. Gera recovered in the 1940s when coffee, which grew in the wild in the forest, became an important source of income.

The shift of the country's capital to Addis Ababa, just a stone's throw from Ada, was the strongest stimulant to the latter's economy and a determinant of its agricultural history. Just as Ankober before it, Ada became the granary of the imperial capital. The impact of rising population pressure brought on by increased fertility and in-migration beginning in the early part of this century is viewed against a background of growing demands for food for the capital, in particular for Ada's high value food crop, *teff*. The result, in short, was greater intensification of agriculture and specialization in *teff* production. At the time of the revolution in 1974, agricultural mechanization had made considerable progress in the area.

This brief summary does not do full justice to the book, but I wish to conclude by raising a few questions. First, given the immense natural diversity of the country, can we confidently make broad and overarching conclusions on the basis of a few selected case studies? Granted that the study sites represent regions which differ in terms of altitude, soil, climate and culture, all three are nonetheless part of what is known as the 'seed farming complex' and therefore share a good many things in common. The author might have reconsidered some of his arguments if he had included a study site in the root-crop based '*enset* complex', the other significant agro-ecological division of the country. For example, far from the ox-plough revolution subordinating root-crop based cultivation, as McCann insists, the spread of plough technology in the *enset* zone invigorated *enset* farming systems, making them more resilient (Gera was not part of the *enset* zone).

Secondly, the thesis that the highland areas of the country were integrated into a single plough- and seed-based agricultural system much before their political incorporation is bold and intriguing, but I am not sure if the evidence offered fully supports the argument. The spread of the plough does not fit a single pattern, and large areas of the country adopted it at the close of the nineteenth century or the

first quarter of this century. The plough is certainly adaptable and effective, but to call it 'brilliantly adaptable' is to exaggerate. To the questions, Why have oxen been the preferred traction power and why has the plough failed to be used with other animals?, the author cannot give satisfactory answers. I believe the limitations of the plough are that it is designed solely for humped oxen.

Thirdly, the gender division of labour and gender issues in general have not received adequate treatment in the three case studies. The ox-plough revolution, the book argues, has not only transformed systems of labour but also assigned rigid gender roles to farm operations. But gender roles across the highlands differ quite significantly. In the *enset* zone, women have hardly any role in agriculture, except that it is their duty to carry the manure from the house to the field. In some areas in the seed farming complex, women are active in all phases of cultivation except ploughing. In others, ploughing, seeding, and on occasions harvesting are not women's jobs. This suggests that in those areas where the technology was adopted in the last two hundred years, gender roles in agriculture were probably already well-defined and remained largely unchanged despite the shift to ox-plough cultivation.

Finally, in discussing Ankober's agricultural decline in the twentieth century, McCann identifies the departure of the royal court from the area and rising population as the main factors responsible. From a thriving agricultural economy in the nineteenth century, Ankober became a famine area in the twentieth. The terracing and irrigation schemes which once supported an expanding population and state fell into disuse. In contrast, in some other areas of historic Shoa, traditional irrigation networks, which are at least as old as Ankober's, are still functioning today. One would assume, also, that the shift of the capital to the south and the easing of the burden on the rural economy on account of this, would have stimulated agricultural improvement; we are not quite sure why Ankober's irrigation system went into decline. In short, I am not really convinced that the arguments offered fully explain the crisis of Ankober's agriculture today.

Despite these criticisms, I welcome this well-crafted and scholarly book. *People of the Plow* breaks new ground in Ethiopian studies, and thus comes as a breath of fresh air. All future students of Ethiopian agricultural and environmental history will be arguing with it, and drawing upon it, for a long time to come.

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A GREAT DEBATE REVISITED

From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: the Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa. Edited by ROBIN LAW. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. xii + 279. £35 (ISBN 0-521-48127-9).

One of the great debates running through the first decades of academic research on West African history concerned the degree to which the unilateral ending of the Atlantic slave trade constituted a crisis for local societies and what link there was between this change and the imposition of formal European rule in the late 1800s. In its original form this debate has been over for some time. Most historians now agree that there was no long-term 'crisis of transition' on the West African coast in the early nineteenth century. Robin Law justifies the present volume by shifting attention to two secondary issues associated with the end of the slave trade: first, the transformations around inland production rather than coastal-dominated bulking and transport of vegetable exports; and second, the relationship of all these changes to the advent of colonialism. All the authors in this volume do discuss the

connection between the end of the slave trade and internal systems of African production in the nineteenth century (including issues of indigenous slavery and gender relationships). Only a few concern themselves with colonial partition, although this becomes the main theme of Hopkins' concluding essay.

For historians of an earlier generation, African development was defined by the impact of the slave trade and local capacities to emulate the model of individualist enterprise represented by European capitalism. Critics of this approach argued for a more autonomous, culturally distinct and therefore less easily disrupted African process of adaptation to external economic opportunities. But, as Hopkins insightfully notes here, they also sought in Africa replicas of the robustly capitalist slavery systems which had recently been discovered in revisionist histories of New World plantation economies. Few such historians, moreover, gave any attention to gender issues in the division and control of commercialized African labour.

Only one of the present essays, a study of West African slave prices and export volumes in the nineteenth century by Paul Lovejoy and David Richardson, seriously considers a 'crisis of adaptation' resulting from abolition. The conclusion is that such a crisis did occur but 'was localized and relatively brief' (p. 33). Of the two other contributions which focus on Atlantic trade, Martin Lynn argues that a serious crisis did occur, but only in the later nineteenth century as a result of increased competition and falling world prices in the palm oil markets 'and not the transition from the slave trade' (p. 72). Elisée Soumonni demonstrates the difficulties experienced by African rulers and European merchants in Dahomey, but also concludes that the 'crisis' was 'successfully overcome' (p. 90).

The most innovative work in this collection focuses on internal West African economies, all of which did undergo significant change in order to generate the new levels of market activity required to maintain (and in most cases surpass) the commercial wealth previously provided by slave exports. The argument for continuity assumes that much of this wealth was still produced by slaves, although now employed in domestic production and transport rather than exported as human commodities. Several authors in the present collection (especially Gareth Austin on Asante and Anne McDougall on the Sahara-Sahel) demonstrate that alternative demand for slaves (including Saharan exports) did sustain the market in human beings throughout the nineteenth century. Ray Kea, discussing abortive Danish attempts at large-scale agricultural enterprise on the then Gold Coast, reveals the limitations of at least European-run slave plantations systems in Africa.

Perhaps the most interesting chapters in this book focus on the relationship between slaves and other kinds of commercialized labour in both coastal and interior African societies. For Lagos Kristin Mann shows that slavery, while still legal, did in principle compete with free labour. In practical terms, however, even non-slaves could only survive through submission to patron-client hierarchies which were not always easy to distinguish from slavery. Susan Martin, writing on the inland Ngwa-Igbo, does see a challenge to male slaveholders in the expansion of palm-product exports. However the female household labour which produced these 'legitimate' goods remained under the control of wealthy male lineage heads, thus undercutting any movement towards individualist/capitalist 'modernization'. Law, in his own contribution on Dahomey and Yorubaland, shows independent female labour and commercial enterprise growing at the expense of slavery but notes how this situation created anxiety among males and (in interesting parallel to concerns about the slave trade) efforts at control through the medium of witchcraft accusations.

Collectively, the historians represented here demonstrate that almost all West African societies were undergoing some sort of stress, if not 'crisis', in the commercial transitions of the nineteenth century. However, none except for Lynn (whose focus is really outside Africa) link these problems closely to the advent of

colonialism. Hopkins in his concluding essay generally follows Lynn in shifting his argument to the problem of reduced profitability in the late nineteenth century, which is vaguely connected to 'regions [all over Africa] that were experiencing the greatest strains of transition' (p. 242). His real argument, consistent with his most recent general work on imperialism, is that Africa as a whole did not fit into Britain's 'new world order' for reasons which 'lay less in the presence of the slave trade than in the absence of the state structures needed to underwrite this innovative vision of cooperative international development' (p. 248). Hopkins thus avoids the fixation on slavery and abolition by shifting his lens to a wider focus in which the entire African continent (except for Egypt and South Africa) becomes both problematic and peripheral, eventually to be dragged into modernity more by external *force majeure* than by any internal dynamic.

But from Hopkins' present global perspective, the subtle understandings of nineteenth-century transition in the rest of this volume become, at best, examples of resistance to the imperative of 'modernize or die'. For those of us still labouring in African history, there is no obvious path back to the vision of autonomy which inspired an earlier phase of our collective work. What the present authors have demonstrated is that while accepting an asymmetrical interdependency as one of the conditions of modern African development, we can still identify spaces where Africans shape their own livelihoods and visions of the world.

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SANUSIYYA BROTHERHOOD

Sufi and Scholar on the Desert Edge. By KNUT S. VIKØR. London: Hurst, 1995. Pp. 310. £37.50 (ISBN 1-85065-218-X).

Knut S. Vikør's *Sufi and Scholar on the Desert Edge* is first and foremost a study of the founder of the Sanusiyya religious brotherhood, Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Sanusi. It is a welcome addition to the existing literature on the Sanusiyya. Vikør's stated purpose is to locate al-Sanusi in his own religious and intellectual environment in order to separate the history of al-Sanusi and the order he founded from the Sanusiyya's later reputation as a highly politicised and anti-colonial institution. Like another recent work on the Sanusiyya, Jean-Louis Triaud's *La légende noire de la Sanusiya*, *Sufi and Scholar* seeks to explode certain myths about the early Sanusiyya, in this case the common belief that al-Sanusi was highly politicised and came into conflict with the political authorities in Fes, Mecca, Cairo and eventually Libya. In the intellectual sphere, Vikør also re-evaluates assumptions that al-Sanusi was dedicated to the *jihād*, and can be described as a neo-sufi and Islamic revivalist. The main source for the book is al-Sanusi's own writings, a rather neglected source which obviously provide crucial information on the book's main topic, al-Sanusi's personal religious and political outlook, a few surviving letters and then a wide range of contemporary and later European and Arabic sources.

Drawing on these sources, Vikør traces al-Sanusi's *talab al-'ilm* (search for knowledge) from West Algeria to Fes in Morocco, east to Cairo and Mecca, and then between the Hijaz, Cairo and Cyrenaica, investigating at every stage his relationships with other scholars and the political authorities. He then adopts a thematic approach and looks in more detail at the formation of the Sanusiyya brotherhoods in Cyrenaica, al-Sanusi's writings and the opposition he faced. By this process he demonstrates that al-Sanusi was first and foremost, as the title suggests, a scholar and a sufi, and had very little contact with political authorities. With regard to the religio-intellectual milieu, his main inspiration was of course

Ahmad b. Idris under whom he studied in Mecca. In founding the Sanusiyya, al-Sanusi created a new organisation of his own making to transmit the teachings of Bin Idris. Thus his genius lay in his structural rather than intellectual contribution, his unique emphasis on labour and piety, and his choice of the desert fringe as the suitable catchment area for his order. With respect to his intellectual life, al-Sanusi remained focused towards Mecca.

Vikør traces al-Sanusi's intellectual development closely and comes up with some important conclusions. Firstly, he suggests that to describe al-Sanusi as a neo-sufi is very misleading, as his sufi beliefs were located within the parameters of traditional sufism and were by no means comparable to the neo-sufism of the Tijaniyya, for example. At the same time he points to al-Sanusi's application of the technique of *ijtihād*, independent scholarly interpretation within the bounds of the law, as the most radical and provocative aspect of his teaching. It is in this milieu that Vikør identifies a certain amount of conflict. Al-Sanusi's writings reveal that he clearly separated the esoteric and exoteric sciences and believed that in the case of the latter, the exercise of *ijtihād* was a 'rational and critical' task which all scholars could perform. In contrast the 'ulamā' of Cairo argued that the early imams of the schools of law had exercised *ijtihād* by virtue of their superior knowledge and possibly divine inspiration. Vikør sees this as part of a wider intellectual debate between the 'ulamā' of the traditional political centres of Cairo and Istanbul and scholars on the periphery who adopted a reformist position with regard to *ijtihād*. However, analysis of al-Sanusi's works is a little brief, considering that the author initially points to it as central to the work. One is left with a sense of not quite knowing enough about al-Sanusi's intellectual position.

Through writing al-Sanusi's biography, Vikør tackles several wider issues concerning the religio-political history of pre-colonial North Africa, which are perhaps the book's main strength. The title of the book suggests some of these issues: the relationship between sufism and scholarly knowledge and the role played by the periphery, 'the desert edge', in the emergence of new brotherhoods in eighteenth and nineteenth century North Africa. Another key issue is the role played by North African scholars in Islamic reformism, which Vikør hints at in his description of al-Sanusi's early intellectual development in Fes. It is noteworthy that Ahmad b. Idris, al-Tijani and al-Sanusi himself were all products of the Moroccan religio-intellectual milieu, formed by the reformist sultan Sidi Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah in the mid-eighteenth century. The role of Sidi Muhammad certainly needs to be more fully investigated.

To sum up, *Sufi and Scholar* presents several new perspectives on the life and times of Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Sanusi, and does succeed in moving away from later nationalist and colonialist perspectives which obscure al-Sanusi's real contribution to Islamic thought. In addition, it points to the significance of North Africa in Islamic reformism and the importance of further research into the religio-political position of the brotherhoods in nineteenth-century North Africa.

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HUNGER IN NORTHERN CHAD

Hunger und Herrschaft: Vorkoloniale und frühe koloniale Hungerkrisen im Nordtschad. By ASTRID MEIER. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1995. Pp. 304. No price given (ISBN 3-515-06729-9).

This book, a doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Zürich in 1994, takes as its starting point the modern idea that hunger and famine are not fatalities

determined by nature. Basing herself on the example of Northern Chad during the final pre-colonial decades and the first decades of French colonial rule, the author argues rather that famines, although partly caused by natural factors, reflect the political, economic and social conditions of the societies in which they take place. Famines, she claims, reflect power relations and the violence that sometimes flows from them.

In her first chapter Astrid Meier surveys the available literature on hunger and famine generally in order to come to a definition of the concept she calls 'hunger crisis' (not famine!). She argues first of all that famine is not only a question of food production, but also of the availability of food to different categories within a given population. People may sometimes die of hunger although sufficient food is available overall. In other words, patterns of distribution and consumption are as important as patterns of production, and one has to study models of 'food systems' as a whole rather than isolated aspects of food supply. In conclusion, 'hunger-crises...are characterized by an insufficient food consumption of parts of the population and should be understood "as a destabilization in different phases" of regional food systems. Hunger crises take different forms and their intensity varies... A higher mortality cannot be considered any more as the central criterion for the definition of hunger crises. *Famines that kill* are a special category, within which one should differentiate according to the causes of mortality (hunger, epidemics, violence, etc.)' (p. 21).

Meier then turns to a new case study, analyzing the socio-political organization of the Kingdom of Wadaï that dominated the major part of Northern Chad during the nineteenth century. This part of the book concentrates more particularly on the prevailing food system of the region – production, distribution, consumption – and finally discusses the crises of the pre-colonial food system of Wadaï that have been documented for the late nineteenth century. What were the factors that caused these crises? What factors made the food system vulnerable and how were food crises dealt with? A comparison between different regions demonstrates that political factors had a great influence on the consequences of drought and other climatological irregularities. Meier concludes that pre-colonial food systems showed themselves relatively resistant to drought but were rather more vulnerable to the effects of war and other forms of violence. As a result, pre-colonial crises were often of a local character.

As for the early colonial period, Meier first establishes that the famines of 1902–3 and 1905–6 still belong to the category of the pre-colonial type of hunger crises. They were limited mainly to one region, and were the result of war and violence more than drought, even if the rains did fail sometimes during those years. However, the great famine of 1913–14 represented a crisis of a new type. It took a supra-regional dimension, a development that was a direct consequence of the activities of the French colonial administration. Following the concept of *divide et impera*, the new rulers destabilized the prevailing political structures with negative consequences for inter-regional trade between different ecological areas. Moreover, during the crisis of 1913–14 the French remained obsessed by two main goals: order and security, and the food supply of their own troops (standing armies were a novelty in northern Chad). In order to attain these goals they took measures that aggravated an already very difficult situation.

Generally speaking, Astrid Meier's argument seems convincing. Her book is well written and based on a wide variety of sources that are carefully handled. Many archives and other written sources have been consulted, and with the exception of Reyna's work on Baguirmi (*Wars Without End*), I do not think the author has missed any publications of importance. The only criticism one might make on Meier's argument concerns the scarcity and paucity of sources for the food crises of the late pre-colonial period. The author herself hints at this problem

but this does not prevent her from drawing general conclusions. Admittedly, these conclusions are the most likely given the present state of documentation; but how sure can we be?

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TSWANA CHRISTIANS

The Realm of the Word: Language, Gender and Christianity in a Southern African Kingdom. By PAUL LANDAU. London: James Currey, 1995. Pp. xxix + 249. £35 (ISBN 0-85255-670-5); £14.95 paperback (ISBN 0-85255-620-9).

'Writing history', claims Paul Landau in a revealing comment in his epilogue, 'is an attempt to pin and mount lives on the page of a book, like butterflies or rose petals' (p. 219). The generalization is sweeping, but the tropes aptly symbolize the type of history written in this book. This is a subtle, nuanced account of the intertwining of Christianity and politics in central Botswana from the 1850s to the 1940s. It is deeply informed by Foucauldian notions of power. Landau, moreover, is troubled by the implications of exercising power, through the very act of 'pinning' down lives.

His central arguments can be starkly stated. In the course of expanding their kingdom, the Ngwato political élite harnessed elements of Christianity propounded by the London Missionary Society. Complicated alliances were formed between royalty, the evangelists and teachers dispatched to remote corners of the kingdom, and Tswana women. In the process, African Christians reshaped Christianity, political power and gender relations.

Yet if the creation of a new realm of power is a central concern, Landau is also somewhat uneasy about pursuing arguments he himself has constructed: 'I wanted to avoid the artificial clarity of writing about entities I myself had too easily named' (p. 219). The 'artificial clarity' is partly avoided by disrupting the arguments: with questions, with musings, with subtexts. There are detailed examinations of SeTswana idioms and words; the alleged adoption of 'postpartum semiotics' by Christian mothers is discussed; comparative insights are drawn from a wide range of authors, including those writing on dentistry and 'How the mouth came to be separated from the body' (pp. 103, 119). Language is a key concern, as is indicated by its privileged position in both the title and the subtitle of this book.

Rather less prominent are analyses of economic transformations, or, for that matter, of the factors keeping most Ngwato citizens out of full membership of the church. The carefully compiled statistics indicate that even by the 1930s, church members numbered only a couple of thousand people. Landau notes – and contests – Isaac Schapera's 'peculiarly low figure' for the proportion of Christianized Ngwato citizen by the 1940s: a mere 7 per cent (p. 99). Nonetheless, this is clearly a history of an ideology attractive only to a minority. For commoners it remains unclear what, if anything, distinguished those who sought and those who rejected full incorporation into the Ngwato church.

Yet this is perhaps a quibble, as is my regret that the central arguments are sometimes submerged beneath the detail, the thirstlands of Botswana beneath the 'rose petals'. Overall, this is a meticulous, innovative account of Christianity in a Tswana kingdom, paying unusual attention to language, to gender, to African agency within a mission church.

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MORE SOUTH AFRICAN SHENANIGANS

The Origins of the South African War, 1899–1902. By IAIN R. SMITH. London and New York: Longman, 1995. Pp. xix + 455. £15.99 (ISBN 0-582-27777-9).

In some ways, *The Origins of the South African War 1899–1902* is an awfully fat book for what has perhaps become an awfully thin and fatiguing subject. Do we really need yet another stab at J. A. Hobson on the Jameson Raid and the notion of the capitalist conspiracy war? Is there much to be gained from further deliberation over the 1896 Selborne Memorandum dealing with the crisis in South Africa? Despite Dr Smith's suggestion (p. x) that recent historiography of the South African War has been preoccupied more with the experience of that conflict than with its origins, the fact remains that modern English-language scholarship on the causes of the war, starting well over three decades ago with Robinson and Gallagher's *Africa and the Victorians*, continues to outweigh heavily writing on the actual conduct of hostilities between Britain and the Boer republics. We continue to know much more about the pre-war shenanigans between Milner and the Uitlanders than about the relationship between technology and strategy during 1899–1902 or the demographic consequences of an exhausting war. So, the question must be: does Iain Smith breathe new life into the enormously complex, broadly familiar, sometimes tedious, historical arguments over the origins of the South African War?

Smith certainly provides a lengthy exhalation on this knotty topic in ten meaty chapters and an informative introduction and historiographically sharp conclusion. His synthesising assessment is inevitably familiar in its basic outline argument, cast of reprobates, seminal quotations and important citations, but its summation benefits from some new primary research in both British and South African archival records, which the author declares has made this book 'a much better one' (p. xii). The cumulative effect of this great pile of material is to provide a further rounding of the late nineteenth-century picture of conflictual 'high politics' and blustery diplomacy which defined the growing chasm between the imperatives of British imperialism and the interests of the Boer élite of the South African republic.

As a weighty textbook for understanding the war's causes, *The Origins of the South African War* is characterized by general clarity of expression, a comprehensive synthesis of existing scholarship, helpful notes, an impressive bibliography and a firm overall viewpoint on why in the end the Boers went to war with the British. In this, like Clausewitz, Smith conceives the push to war as ineluctably the expression of political will. Thus, 'the British government did not go to war in 1899 to protect British trade or the profits of cosmopolitan capitalists in the Transvaal' (p. 407). What it desired was the decisive consolidation of 'British supremacy in the Transvaal and in South Africa' through collaborative political transfer, to be attained 'by a peaceful internal take-over if possible, by war if necessary'. Britain's imperial gleam was a Canadianisation of South Africa, through which 'British supremacy and British interests would prevail... It was because Kruger was hostile and determined to oppose these initiatives that Britain went to war' (p. 422). The author's dismissive engagement with earlier historiography informed by other factors, such as underlying economic causality, takes a robust and vigorous form in which pointed judgments abound. Such sparring makes good reading, although some readers may find Smith's tone here a little glib or condescending.

The path to a political origins explanation consists of well-chosen and well-organized chapters which confidently integrate a devil of a lot of trees through which to spot and add up the wood: here, the author is a careful guide. Core

sections deal, in turn, with the emerging nineteenth-century roots of conflict between Britain and Boer republicanism; with the pressures triggered by gold discoveries and the mineral revolution; with the Jameson Raid and its sulphurous consequences; with the Byzantine complexity of late-1890s diplomacy and the deepening crisis between the parties; and, finally, with the breakdown of tense parleying and preparation (or non-preparation) for resolution of colonial conflict through war.

While of necessity brief given the book's focus, there is a neat and informed summary of the unfolding of the South African War itself, touching on such themes as its definition as a 'colonial war' and the impact of social divisions within Boer society upon the conduct of hostilities. Smith's depiction of the republican guerrilla campaign as an 'anti-colonial war' (p. 3) may make contemporary black inhabitants of the region smile wryly in their graves.

If this book is probably significantly longer than it really needs to be, its treatment of a complicated and often elusive issue in South African history is dense, comprehensive, impeccably documented and not without lines of argument which are worth pondering. The outbreak of war in South Africa was surely a complex and many-layered business. Iain Smith's achievement is perhaps less a new genesis than the bringing together of the voices, motivations and actions of the individual actors, Briton and Boer, who also could not quite manage peace in their time.

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BILL NASSON

THE RULE OF HAMMAN YAJI

The Diary of Hamman Yaji: Chronicle of a West African Muslim Ruler. Edited and introduced by JAMES H. VAUGHAN and ANTHONY H. M. KIRK-GREENE. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. Pp. xv + 162. No price given (ISBN 0-253-36206-7).

The publication of Hamman Yaji's diary through the combined effort of J. H. Vaughan and A. H. M. Kirk-Greene is a rare and remarkable contribution that deserves commendation from all those interested in West African studies. An important merit of the publication is that the diary, which sheds light on various aspects of West African history, is now at the fingertips of a wider readership. The diary is a catalogue of events which Hamman Yaji (District Head of Madagali, northeastern Adamawa, 1902-27) regarded as important for the period 1912-27. Apart from numerous slave raids on the neighbouring non-Muslim communities, trade, religious observances, reciprocity, obligations and Hamman Yaji's relations with his Muslim neighbours and Europeans are recorded in detail.

Despite the great efforts of the editors, there are still a few inconsistencies, improper application of terms and notable gaps in this edition. For instance, while the editors clearly associate the actual reason for the removal of Hamman Yaji with his Mahdist affiliation, either consciously or unconsciously, Paul Lovejoy's foreword instead stresses Hamman Yaji's tyranny as the cause of his deposition (p. ix). In the preface (n. 1), the term 'pagans' is rendered as *arna* in Hausa (or what, on the same page, is referred to as *kirdi* in Fulfulde). But in the glossary *arne*, which is actually the singular form of the Hausa term *arna*, is described as the Fulfulde word for 'pagans'. In reality, *kirdi* is a Kanuri and not Fulfulde term for 'pagan', the nearest Fulfulde word being *kao*. Unless there is a typographical error, the definition of *talakawa* as commoner in the glossary is also incorrect. In Hausa, *talakawa* means commoners, while *talaka* is the correct singular form,

commoner. The glossary is itself somewhat confusing in that the editors have not been consistent in giving the non-English languages from which words listed in the glossary are derived. While they indicate the languages with regard to some words (such as *jangali* = Fulfulde), they are silent on others, such as *fadanci*. The editors refer to the emir of Adamawa as 'Lamido Lawal of Adamawa' (p. 7), but the same official becomes 'Lamido Lawal of Yola' on p. 8; a similar problem is encountered on p. 15, where 'English' and 'British' are used interchangeably. On p. 16, reference is made to an entry in the diary for 15 March 1915, when 15 May 1915 is intended. Furthermore, neither Captain Reed in his translation of the original diary nor the current editors inform readers about the inconsistency involved in rendering some months in Fulfulde and others in Arabic (for instance, see pp. 54–6).

Considering the time the editing and publication of the diary has taken (eight years), it is surprising that neither in the introduction nor in the references has any German colonial archival material been cited. Even Hans Dominik's *Vom Atlantik zum Tschadsee. Kriegs- und Forschungsfahrten in Kamerun* (Berlin, 1908) appears to have escaped the editors' attention. Being a key figure in the conquest of northern Cameroon, especially in the installation of Hamman Yaji following his father's execution in 1902, Dominik obviously deserves more attention than the casual (and apparently uncertain) mention of him by the editors (p. 9). Even more surprising is the fact that the Dominik adventure in northern Cameroon has recently been recounted by E. Mohammadou, in *Paideuma*, 40 (1994), and that one of the co-editors of this special volume is none other than Paul Lovejoy, author of the foreword to this edition of the Hamman Yaji diary. Another notable bibliographic omission is Monika Midel's *Fulbe und Deutsche in Adamaua (Nord Kamerun), 1809–1916: Auswirkungen afrikanischer und Kolonialer Eroberung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1990).

The Hamman Yaji story might also have been reflected in the wider context of the history of the area. For instance, Muslim or Fulbe opposition in northern Cameroon largely accounted for the slow pace of the extension of German rule in that area. The sub-emirs that emerged after the German conquest were vested with great powers. Madagali in particular, which was a small, marginal sub-emirate in the pre-colonial period, emerged as an important unit under the Germans. Besides acquiring firearms through European sources, Hamman Yaji was able to acquire trained soldiers following the elimination of Rabih Fadl Allah. To a certain degree, Hamman Yaji was a creation of German colonialism. His attitude toward the non-Muslim population in the Madagali area was partly influenced by the nature of German – or more appropriately Dominik's – rule in northern Cameroon.

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YAKUBU MUKHTAR

AN AGRARIAN ECONOMY

An Economic History of Ethiopia, Vol. I: *The Imperial Era, 1941–74*. Edited by SHIFERAW BEKELE. CODESRIA, 1995. Distributed by African Books Collective Ltd. Pp. viii + 334. £14.95 (ISBN 2-86978-042-7).

Addis Ababa University has established a notable record for scholarly production in a constantly changing, but never sympathetic, political environment. The imperial regime of Haile Sellassie discouraged liberal and critical thinking, and succeeding Derg tried to bring the university under its ideological and institutional control. The guerrilla movement which overthrew the Derg has proven no more tolerant of intellectual or institutional independence. Ethiopian

scholars have had to define the meaning of scholarship and then to carry it out in daunting, shifting, and, at times, hazardous, conditions. This makes their achievements even more worthy of respect.

The collection put together by Shiferaw Bekele is a case in point. It draws on thirty years of scholarly tradition to discuss the economic history of Ethiopia during the period of Haile Sellassie's restoration, bringing together a reasonable cross-section of disciplinary work in the social sciences at Addis Ababa University. Shiferaw himself is a historian but his collaborators include economists, a political scientist and a geographer. Several of the contributors have participated in formative national debates and earned themselves reputations which transcend the ideological and political fissures which mark contemporary Ethiopia. Shiferaw Jammo, the one contributor not on the AAU faculty, offers an elegant, sophisticated overview of the economy, 1941–74. The editor discusses the changing nature of land tenure. Dessalegn Rahmato contributes a typically informed discussion of peasant agriculture. Eshetu Chole reviews the country's record of industrialization. Befekadu Degefe provides an account of money, and of monetary institutions and policy. And Alula Abate concludes the collection with a discussion of demography, migration and urbanization. All the chapters are meaty and combine a firm grasp of the empirical data with a nuanced understanding of relevant theory. The collection offers the reader a wealth of information and a variety of viewpoints on a subject which is as important as it is in this case dismal. It is clear that we cannot attribute Ethiopia's economic failures to lack of competence, not to mention brilliance, on the part of its economists, or to any lack of information.

Not that this collection, for all its merits, is beyond criticism. The editor notes the absence of chapters dealing with such important issues as the environment, fiscal history, international trade, and transport and communications. Fiscal issues and international trade are touched on, but the environment seems a particularly serious absence. Several chapters are marred by lapses in proof-reading, a few serious enough to render brief passages incomprehensible to an unformed reader. And editing has been carried out with a light hand. As a result, the voices in this collection are not always as complementary as they might be, sometimes falling into redundancy, sometimes clashing. The most serious omission is in the field of agricultural history. As several contributors note, agriculture directly and indirectly continues to employ over 80 per cent of the work force, contributes over 50 per cent to the country's GDP, and virtually 100 per cent by value of the country's exports.

Agricultural history is directly addressed by Dessalegn Rahmato and indirectly by Shiferaw Bekele; their collaborators view the agricultural sector as 'stagnant'. Shiferaw's chapter is conceptual in approach, arguing that most previous studies of land tenure have failed adequately to take into account the conceptual underpinnings of two Ethiopian contributions to the subject, those by Mahteme Sellassie Wolde Meskel and Gebre-Wold Ingida Worq.¹ Your unrepentant reviewer agrees that the work of these scholars is, indeed, seminal: he feels that a critical study of their lives and work will tell us a great deal about the nascent intelligentsia and its relations with state power, but finds the case put forward by

¹ Mahteme Sellassie's work is the monumental documentary collection, *Zekrä Nägär* (2nd ed., Addis Ababa, 1962 Eth. Cal.). Its materials on land tenure are more readily accessible to the English-language reader in Mahteme Sellassie Wolde Maskal, 'The land system of Ethiopia', *Ethiopia Observer*, I, no. 9 (Oct. 1957), 283–301. Gebre-Wold's work was published as *YäItyoṗṗya Märetenna Geber Sem* (Addis Ababa, 1948 Eth. Cal.) but is more readily accessible to the English-language reader in Gebre-Wold Ingida-Worq, 'Ethiopia's traditional system of land tenure and taxation', *Ethiopia Observer*, V, 4 (1962), 302–9.

Shiferaw unpersuasive. Shiferaw has, moreover, passed up the opportunity significantly to advance our understanding of the concrete ways in which land tenure was manipulated for private economic advantage during the 1950s and 1960s.

Even Dessalegn Rahmato, whose contribution I most enjoyed, seems insensitive to this possibility. His chapter is marked by lucidity, elegance of organization and a willingness to take on the big questions. Once again, to explain its increasing proneness to famine, he deploys his notion of the 'involution' of Ethiopian agriculture. For him, as for the other contributors, 'the agrarian class structure of Ethiopia has remained unchanged for perhaps a century. No intermediate class or social strata appeared between the lord and the peasant, both of whom were "frozen" within the existing system; they were content, in other words, to maintain the existing social and economic relations' (p. 181). Other contributors speak of how the inflexibility of 'feudal' land tenure relations prevented agricultural change. I believe the premise of the book is not simply unsatisfying, but no longer tenable. James McCann's *People of the Plow* (Madison, 1995) has provided some of the framework necessary for an agricultural and agrarian history of modern Ethiopia. Young Ethiopian historians are now fleshing this out in pathbreaking dissertations which illuminate how, from early in the century, indigenous land tenure arrangements set the framework for a series of continuous class struggles revolving around the production of commodities for indigenous and international markets.

Volume I of *An Economic History of Ethiopia* arose from a workshop at Addis Ababa University early in 1992. The newer work on agricultural history was then in gestation, but it is a pity that some of it could not somehow have been reflected in Shiferaw's collection. This qualification aside, Volume I provides a substantial, informed and useful review of its subject. It is a further tribute to the quality of education provided at Addis Ababa University that its students challenge their teachers and expand their work. Those students are helping us to see how farmers, the majority of contributors to Ethiopia's economy, are actors in their own right. The insight is vital both for an understanding of the country's economic past and for planning for its future.

University of Illinois

DONALD CRUMMEY

CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA

Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion. by KWAME BEDIKO. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press and Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995. Pp. xii + 276. £16.95 (ISBN 0-7486-0625-4).

Kwame Bediako is one of a new generation of West African Christian scholars, who confidently assert the essential 'Africanness' of African Christianity against all inclined to emphasize its foreignness. While deeply indebted to the first generation of African theologians of the 1960s, Bediako feels that they accepted too readily that Christianity was a foreign religion which needed to be 'Africanized' by incorporating elements from the traditional African religious heritage. It was the posing of this stark dichotomy – Christian or African? – which in Bediako's view led the Ghanaian Catholic priest Osofo Damuah to renounce Christianity and to found his own neo-traditional African, explicitly non-Christian, religious movement, 'Afrikania'.

The African Christian theologians were right to seek to overcome the denigration of African religion but were insufficiently aware that, however much it has suffered

from a western captivity in its organization and theology and liturgy, Christianity has always been apprehended and articulated by African believers from within the African spiritual milieu. Bediako illustrates this from his own inheritance – the Basel mission in nineteenth-century Gold Coast. He shows the crucial importance of Scripture translation into the Twi and Ga languages, which from the outset necessitated an engagement with basic African religious concepts and idioms. His discussion of Carl Reindorf (a Ga) and the 'Akropong school of Christian historiography' has echoes for this reviewer in the work of the Baganda historians like Apollo Kagawa, equally concerned to view the pre-Christian history of their country in the perspective of the providence of God, the God of Jesus Christ, who was present long before he was openly proclaimed.

Bediako uses the term 'primal religion' (a term in currency since the 1960s but one which is not entirely satisfactory) to describe a universal religious apprehension of life, of which African spirituality is one example. For Bediako 'the African apprehension of the Christian faith has substantial roots in the continent's primal traditions at the specific level of religious experience' (p. 192). Unlike some of the earlier missionaries, who advocated a displacement of this substratum in order that Christianity may advance, Bediako wants to show that it is precisely in this milieu that Christianity can truly find its place and make its appeal, thereby affirming local culture while not sacrificing its ability to transcend and judge that culture.

It is when Christianity recognizes the deep African heritage at its core that it can begin to address adequately the important social, cultural and political issues facing modern Africa. For example, in politics Bediako identifies the problem of a tendency to 'sacralize' political regimes as a traditional means of seeking legitimization, but without the traditional checks and balances. Christianity has a strong decentralizing thrust – that it, it stands for religious pluralism and the validity of dissent without wanting to 'despiritualize' politics in the way that western cultures have done. In the context of the west, Bediako feels that African Christianity is still thought of as marginal despite its increasing numerical importance. On the contrary, the west needs to understand that African Christianity is not peripheral but 'a new centre of Christianity universality' with insights about the importance of a religious perception of life which the west of the Enlightenment needs to recover.

Bediako's programme for a new African theology is discussed with great flair, erudition and confidence. Like Lamin Sanneh (expanding insights first made by Andrew Walls of Edinburgh) he makes much of the inherent 'translatability' and hence universality of Christianity. The cruciality of the biblical text is very appropriate for the Protestant Christianity which indeed set the pace in West Africa, as in many other parts of the continent, until well into the twentieth century. But, as Bediako acknowledges, the 'even profounder doctrine of the Incarnation' lies behind this. It is at this level that Catholics and African independent forms of Christianity can also be fully incorporated into the analysis. Bediako includes a chapter on the great nineteenth-century West African thinker E. W. Blyden. In view of Blyden's admiration for Islam's ability to accept the 'primal substratum' more easily than Christianity, it would have been useful to have some discussion of the place of Islam in the religious kaleidoscope of modern Africa, since even in sub-Saharan Africa, Islam is a force which Christianity must reckon with in one way or another.

The overall tenor of Bediako's work is optimistic and affirmative, and I persistently had the feeling that the optimism needed to be tempered by a greater attention to the darker side of African history and religious history (including Christian history). There is a lot about integrating the life-affirming celebratory side of African religion – but little about issues of sorcery, divination, witchcraft, and the whole field of coping with evil and attempting to give some account of its

existence and meaning. (Though there is a chapter on the Gospel to the poor.) In an Africa where these are still matters of daily concern and perplexity, and in societies continually threatened by political, social and economic disintegration, I'm sure Bediako would agree that they are issues which Christian faith must be centrally involved in, and which need theological reflection. True, there are many examples of Christian Churches opposing tyranny and affirming democratic values; but there is also a persistent authoritarian streak in most ecclesiastical institutions and the problems which this gives rise to also need to be addressed theologically. These are some of the questions which readers of this journal who are primarily historians might want to pose to Bediako; equally, historians need to take seriously the central importance of religion for the understanding of modern African society.

University of Leeds

KEVIN WARD

AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF TESTIMONY

Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania. By LIISA H. MALKKI. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Pp. xiv + 352. £17.25 (ISBN 0-226-50272-4).

An estimated seven million people live as refugees in Africa today. While reports on refugee services abound, there are few studies of internal cultural dynamics among the displaced. This book is pre-eminent among these, with its insights the more urgent given the horrific recent increase in refugees in East Central Africa.

Purity and Exile compares two communities of refugees from the Burundi genocide of 1972, an atrocity all but neglected in the west. Malkki spent a year in two quite different refugee locales in Tanzania: one in Kigoma, an urban area on Lake Tanganyika, just south of Burundi; the other in Mishamo, a sprawling rural settlement in Rukwa district, distant and difficult of access from other refugee centres. While the latter was carefully planned and closely administered, in the former, Rundi immigrants sought to blend quickly into the heterogeneous population along the lakeshore. These contextual differences serve as important factors in Malkki's analysis, for in Mishamo she found the population continually engaged in an impassioned construction and reconstruction of their history – and thus their identity – as a people; in Kigoma, by contrast, individuals moved easily through a wide range of situationally-defined identities. It is an elegant argument, clearly conceived and well-written.

The analysis operates on two axes. One reconstructs the hegemonic world view within which Hutu in the settlement community account for their present circumstances. They see themselves as refugees because they are Hutu, so their world view is not simply a 'mythico-history' (in Malkki's terms) but a particular Hutu cosmology, a Hutu charter, which reconstructs the early history of Burundi through a particular ethnic lens. Malkki's analysis effectively illustrates how the elaboration of a strong national identity and the consolidation of a particular kind of corporate history reinforced each other among Rundi refugees in Mishamo.

The second axis intersects with this, but contrasts two opposing segments of the Rundi refugee community in Tanzania. While those in Mishamo seek to reconstruct and reinforce their corporate 'Hutu' identity, those living in Kigoma township seek to ignore – or deny – their corporate identity. So this study effectively serves as a metaphor for two approaches to looking at social structure: either as an isolated, homogeneous unit in opposition to other similarly coherent

units, or as a dynamic component of a larger social field where assimilation and integration were desirable objectives – a group of individuals with multiple identities. To those in the camp, however, mobility, commerce and intermarriage – and the multiple identities to result – were dangerous for they compromised the purity of the group. Remaining pure Rundi, pure Hutu, pure refugee, was important for this kept alive the image of a homeland elsewhere. For the people in Mishamo, cultivation not commerce, refugee status not immigrant status, and purity not integration were the paths to this homeland. Those in Kigoma chose a different route through life.

The central message is important for it focuses our attention on the refugees as cultural beings, not as individuals stripped of culture; it respects them as people with a history and for whom that history was critical. But rather than focusing on ‘the history’ of the refugee community, this study examines the processes which influence its formation and the contexts which structure the emergence of a strong sense of corporate history: ‘The camp might repress, control, govern, and exploit those it encased, but it ... [also] taught Hutu how to be refugees’ (p. 222). *Purity and Exile* traces how in this case an awareness of shared refugee status served to consolidate ethnic consciousness.

Despite the skill and insight contained in this important book, however, there are some problems. Our only contact with these people is through verbal ‘panels’, anonymous assemblages reformulated and presented as a single statement, often including the testimonies of several different speakers (or single speakers in several interview contexts). There is little recognition of differences, conflict or the construction of authority within the refugee community; we seldom meet individual actors and we come to understand very little about life in the camp – the very conditions within which this history was constructed. Moreover, though the synopsis of Rundi history is skilfully done, there is little reference to individual experiences in Burundi before the genocide that shaped the historical imagination of this community. In short, this is a commentary on texts, an ethnography of testimony, but of lived experience.

But the importance of this book stands on other grounds. This is thoughtful, insightful, informed analysis. Its originality is that it charts the way to a new kind of ethnography, one tied not to territoriality or observed practice but to the emergence of changing cultural constructs, the development (or consolidation) of collective identities and the elaboration of a shared sense of destiny as a product of particular contexts. *Purity and Exile* tells us much of the Burundi refugees, but it tells us much, too, about other peoples in other places – and of the relationship between feeling as a common people and experiencing a shared context.

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DAVID NEWBURY

IN CELEBRATION OF ELOQUENCE

Speaking for the Chief: Okyeame and the Politics of Akan Royal Oratory. By KWESI YANKAH. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. Pp. 194. £32.50 (ISBN 0-253-36801-4); £14.99, paperback (ISBN 0-253-20946-3).

Anyone lucky enough to attend an Akan royal ritual is struck by the central role played by one or more, usually old, men who carry long staves with elaborate, often golden, finials. They, rather than the ruler, seem to do all the talking. The king’s voice is often virtually a whisper (*bokoo*) and even when audible is intentionally rushed and even hesitant. People address the king through an individual *okyeame* just as the king speaks indirectly through an *okyeame*. They do not simply pass on

messages; and this is very much more than oration through intermediaries. They speak eloquently; and the most revered *akyeame* use a striking poetic, allusive language of proverb and metaphor in which routine and contemporary discussion becomes universal and timeless.

The role of the *akyeame* has defied decent translation; the usual limp English terms 'linguist' and 'spokesman' do nothing to convey the complex roles they play in Akan politics and court life. Professor Kwesi Yankah, himself a linguist, in the western academic sense of the word, has undertaken to explain just who they are and what they do. He has done so in a very accessibly written, warm and extremely welcome book which is a major contribution to our understanding of Akan culture.

Akyeame in all their roles appear to be unique to the Akan although Professor Yankah helpfully suggests some comparisons in Africa and elsewhere. Akan distaste for reticence (wet speech) and celebration of eloquence (dry speech) must bear some of the explanatory burden for this particularity. The immense power of the spoken word, however, needs moderation; the refined use of metaphor, innuendo and proverbs, the subject of Professor Yankah's earlier work *The Proverb in the Context of Akan Rhetoric: A Theory of Proverb Praxis* (New York, 1989), lies at the heart of a good *okyeame's* art. This is, however, only part of the job description. The *okyeame* distances the population from the king whose public utterances are those of his stool – his office and the ancestors – rather than those of an individual; an intermediary creates useful, safe space. He protects the stool and its incumbent from verbal and visual aggression just as custom prevents all but the *bantamaahene* from physical contact with a king sitting in state. This insulating role is not limited to the material world. *Akyeame* are, in the words of the greatest living practitioner, 'spiritually potent' (p. 101). In Baafour Akoto's words, they 'dispel all contamination and evil attacks...we absorb any incidental contamination that could affect the chief, for that has no effect on us' (p. 101).

Akyeame are diplomats and mediators. The semiology of the varied finials on their staves suggests not only the ruler's paramountcy but also reconciliation and a preference for 'jaw, jaw' rather than 'war, war'. They moderate the extremes of the utterances of both the king and his subjects. Their authority to do this hangs on their command of precedent and the perception of their political wisdom and sensitivity. Most of them are thought to be more knowledgeable than the man – or woman – they serve. The best of them can accordingly often convert mountains into molehills.

Their relationship with their rulers is intriguingly initiated by a set of rites which are very similar to those used in royal weddings. *Akyeame* can be called *ohene yere*, the king's wife, even if the ruler is female. This is, Yankah argues, about intimacy, unlimited access and confidence. But, unlike royal wives, *akyeame* are surrogates, royal proxies 'exposed to ritual and interactional hazards' (p. 95). As his descriptive account unfolds, it is not merely a role demanding exquisite skills but also one that is loaded with risk.

This book appears in the *African Systems of Thought* series edited by Charles Bird and Ivan Karp. It is a rich read not merely because Professor Yankah is a good guide but also because it is full of transcriptions of what *akyeame* actually say. It is possible to read these transcriptions and begin to understand the nature of Akan political discourse. It is however a pity that history is set on the margins. This is not, of course, the author's field. But it would have been very useful to have been able to share his ideas on how these roles have been changed by widespread literacy and by the growth of a bureaucratic state from the end of the nineteenth century. In the course of this period, each of the Akan royal domains has shrunk from being the totality, as it were, to being a sub-set, in some cases a very small sub-set, of a modern nation state. The roles of *akyeame* have been changed by these developments; some analysis of how these statesmen coped with the advent of

concession-hunters, politicians, District Commissioners and lawyers would have been helpful. Despite this Professor Yankah has given us an immensely valuable book which deserves a wide and appreciative readership.

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RICHARD RATHBONE

SAHARAN CLIMATES

Climats anciens du Nord de l'Afrique. By ROBERT VERNET. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995. Pp. 180. No price given (ISBN 2-7384-3332-4).

During the last two decades, our knowledge of the Saharan palaeoclimates has improved enormously. Several long-term regional projects published their results, new methods of dating and of climate or vegetation reconstruction came on line, and (especially) causal models of global climatic mechanisms became much more sophisticated. Until now, however, there has been no synthesis of these advances in the vast Sahara. Robert Vernet has produced an admirable overview for the specialist and for members of ancillary disciplines such as history and archaeology. No comparable Saharan climate synthesis exists anywhere in the anglophone literature.

Climats Anciens demonstrates the very great strengths – and some of the weaknesses – of the French scientific publishing style. Research on climates and past ecologies, carried out by the *Grands Centres*, are generally published quickly and copiously. This book takes in the whole of that literature and much of its anglophone counterpart. Vernet has expertly harvested a vast amount of local-scale and regional-scale research. The large number of charts, tables, and maps reproduced, unedited (and uncommented-upon), from others' work will make this an extremely useful reference for specialists. But this very same virtue will make the book a bit chaotic for the non-specialist.

Much of the book covers periods somewhat before the interest of many readers of this journal. Then again, the essential lesson of the recent revolution in palaeoclimatological resolution around the world is that historically-known processes are only recent manifestations of a recurrent and venerable story. The threads of that story binding together today's weather and the palaeoclimate of a very distant past are the effects of overlapping oscillations (recognizable at different chronological scales), dramatic mode shifts (moments of radical realignment of global climate forcing mechanisms) and the subtle but inescapable interaction of natural and anthropic agencies.

I particularly applaud Vernet's selection of two themes that later prehistorians and historians would do well to assimilate. The first is the now overwhelming evidence from the vast Sahara of non-synchronicity (rolling or migratory) change on the regional or sub-continental scale. Events in one wadi system may show significant delays compared to another, not-too-distant wadi; the floral and faunal and human responses to systemic climate change may be immediate – or may be unaccountably delayed for many centuries. Secondly (and related), no one now can think of the Sahara as monolithic (as one tended to before). Regions within the great desert are what Vernet calls 'ensembles confus', mosaics of local-scale micro-environments. This has very great implications for our ways of reconstructing the general processes of adaptation in the past. (Perhaps climate change has been underplayed in most histories, and even prehistories, of the Sahara because our geographical and ecological resolution was just too gross). Indeed, I only wish that Vernet's voluminous *archaeological* writings on these adaptations (beginnings of

landscape specialization and food production, migration, shifts back-and-forth along the continuum of seasonal round – transhumance – sedentarism) in Mauritania and (now) in Niger had carried over to this climatological volume. For example (pp. 99–103), the author describes the new rainfall regime produced by the (global?) climate mode shift of *c.* 7500–7000 B.P., but only airily implicates these changes with the rapid spread of cattle pastoralism – one of the truly seminal events of African prehistory.

Indeed, no synthesis undertaken at so ambitious a scale can be all things to all audiences. Largely ignored is the superb, minutely-documented, and industrious BOS (*Besiedlungsgeschichte der Ost-Sahara*) project of Breuning, Kuper and Neumann. So, too, there is no attempt in this volume to integrate the quality Saharan data and chronologies with the consensus models of forcing mechanisms, patterns of periodicity and global teleconnections (processes linked around the globe) that are the meat and potatoes of the last decade's revolution in palaeoclimate research.

Still, *Climats Anciens* is an intelligent, intelligible, and nicely written overview. We need, all of us, to write more such syntheses in order to unshutter a window for colleagues in other disciplines onto the personal delights of our own research. This will be a standard reference with a secure place on this reviewer's shelf of critical, often-used research classics.

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RODERICK MCINTOSH

PORTUGUESE CENTURY IN GUINEA

São Jorge da Mina 1482–1637. La vie d'un comptoir portugais en Afrique occidentale.

Par J. BATO'ORA BALLONG-WEN-MEWUDA. Lisbon and Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, collection du Centre d'Études Portugaises: Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian/Commission Nationale pour les Commémorations des Découvertes Portugaises, 1993. 2 vols. Pp. 642. No price given (ISBN 972-95871-3-2).

The foundations of Afro-European relations were laid in the first one hundred or so years of contact, the period from the 1440s to at least the 1550s during which Portuguese activities in Guinea proceeded without grossly damaging interference from other European powers. From 1482 up to the final disaster of capture by the Dutch in 1637, the fort of São Jorge da Mina was the principal base for official Portuguese activities, 'Mina' being the conduit for the most extensive sea-export of gold. Despite its economic value to the crown, and its international status as the symbol of the Portuguese claim to sovereignty over Guinea and monopoly of the sea-export trade of western Africa, the fort had probably less lasting influence on early Afro-European relations than had the less heralded, and even more poorly recorded, activities of private Portuguese traders in western Guinea. Nevertheless, the history of the fort, when Portuguese, deserves close attention, and these two volumes by Joseph Bato'ora Ballong-wen-Mewuda represent a brave attempt to provide an analytical account.

As M. Ballong immediately admits, the sources are limited. Most of the Portuguese documentation specifically relating to Mina is lost, and it is significant that although Ballong has worked in the Lisbon archives he appears to have uncovered very few new documents. His work turns essentially – and inevitably – on a mere dozen important documents. Printed in full in an appendix (pp. 496–633), most of these documents had previously appeared in print, although it is useful to have them here, together, and at certain points with corrected readings.

They are not translated into French. To fill out the picture, M. Ballong turns to oral traditions, and in the early chapters relies very heavily on a collection made in the 1970s. The value of latterday traditions in an area exposed to five centuries of literacy, including three centuries of European writings on Guinea, and over a century of locally written and printed histories of the specific area, must surely be doubted. However, M. Ballong accepts these 1970s 'traditions' as gospel, whereas it is possible to investigate, at least to some extent, their recent re-shaping, if not invention. In general, he advances into historical analysis without pausing to provide a critique of his sources, written or oral.

This study was presented as a University of Paris thesis in 1984. Not having been revised for publication more than marginally, it fails to take account of recent relevant publications, including those produced in both Lisbon and Paris. (The present reviewer's study of the foundation of the Mina fort appeared too late for M. Ballong to notice, while the reviewer has shamefully to confess that he was unaware of the Paris thesis until his own research was completed.) Ballong tends to ignore earlier writings in English: for instance, his bibliography omits mention of Blake's 1942 documents and Vogt's 1979 history of the fort. But he does correctly criticize articles by Vogt (pp. 158, 367). The study begins with several chapters on the founding of the fort in 1482 and on the African background, political, economic and cultural. These chapters are very far from definitive, the hurried treatment of the foundation being particularly disappointing. Passing over the dependence on twentieth-century traditions, M. Ballong relies more excusably on the earliest detailed account of the 'Gold Coast' region, that by the Dutchman, Pieter de Marees, written around 1600. A wide-ranging and up to a point trustworthy account in itself, de Marees needs a cautious critique before its statements can be applied to events and background a century and more earlier. But the oddest feature of these chapters is not the over-confident use of certain sources but the failure to tap one category of printed records, those in Spanish. The 1475-9 Castilian-Portuguese war extended to naval operations on the coast of Mina, and it is arguable that the threat from Castile was the major reason for the founding of the Portuguese fort. M. Ballong refers to the Castilians only slightly, citing a secondary and outdated Spanish source (pp. 51-5), and makes no use of the Castilian chronicles. It must be added that, as regards the foundation, he does not dig deeply enough into the primary sources, the Portuguese chronicles of Pina and Barros.

The later two-thirds of the study tread more secure ground. M. Ballong analyses, in close and valuable detail, three long documents: an elaborate inquiry into the personal economic rewards of the principal officers of the fort in 1495-9, a 1529 *regimento* or instructions for the regulation of activities at the fort, and 1532 regulations for the trade between Mina and São Tomé. None of these documents has been examined as closely before. Chapters therefore discuss the prescribed duties of the various officers, their financial rewards at the end of the fifteenth century and the economic activity of the fort in the early sixteenth century, not least in its dealings with local Africans and in its support from São Tomé. It is argued that, for several decades after the foundation, the officers made very large gains by personal trading and the crown subsequently reduced the opportunities for gain. Given the risks of service in West Africa to European life and limb, the early tolerance on the part of the crown is perhaps less surprising than Ballong supposes. The analysis of economic activity improves on that by Vogt but would have benefited from perusal of an unpublished thesis (Ivana Elbl, 'The Portuguese Trade with West Africa, 1440-1521', Toronto, 1986). Such information as can be tabulated is presented in a series of extremely helpful tables. The discussion of Afro-Portuguese trade is thoughtful and stimulating, yet is to some extent hamstrung by the chronological and prescriptive limits of the documentation and

the lack of secure knowledge about the local African partners. A few dozen minor documents (some of them available elsewhere in English translation, which is not noted) serve to back up the major ones. One document throws some light on a curious episode. In 1510, a local African notable, known significantly as Dom João Serrão, quarrelled with both the Portuguese authorities and a neighbouring polity, and for a time was exiled by the former to São Tomé.

With strong sponsorship, the work is handsomely presented: boxed, with pull-out tables and colour photographs. Ironically, the map chosen to decorate the box is one showing Spanish as well as Portuguese emblems over Guinea, pointing up the text's major lacuna. Disgracefully, the luxury of presentation does not extend to the inclusion of an index. This study will have to be consulted by all future students of the 'Portuguese century' in Guinea, and if – as is the way of theses – it promises rather more than it delivers, it nevertheless contains scholarly and novel analysis.

University of Liverpool

P. E. H. HAIR

NJAAJAN NJAAY GOES TO BERKELEY

The Oral History and Literature of the Wolof People of Waalo, Northern Senegal: The Master of the Word (Griot in the Wolof Tradition). By SAMBA DIOP. Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995. Pp. 389. \$109.95 (ISBN 0-7734-9031-0).

The Waalo Kingdom's tradition of origin, also identified by the name of its principal hero Njaajan Njaay (N'Diadiane N'Diaye), is not one of the better-known narrative texts of the Western Sudan, simply because there is not much of it and few variants have circulated in print; among the latter is one collected by Brasseur in 1778 and published in Jean Boulégue, *Le Grand Jolof (XIII–XVI siècle)*, in 1987 (absent from this volume's bibliography) and another by Bérenger-Féraud in *Recueil de Contes Populaires de la Sénégambie*, 1885. The 975-line variant presented here is therefore a welcome addition to that modest but interesting body of oral literature. This one includes the original Wolof-language text and an annotated English translation by the author. Appendices include two genealogies of Njaajan Njaay, one translated from the Arabic, and another from Wolof.

The usefulness of the main translated text would be much enhanced were the annotations organized, focused, drastically abridged and better informed. In one instance Diop hears his griot informant say what he hears as 'Sordan'. Since the letter 'J' does not exist in Wolof he assumes the bard meant 'Jordan', so the line (in reference to the Biblical Noah's children) reads 'Some of them created Jordan' (p. 99, line 150), and is accompanied by a two-page note on that country's significance (pp. 142–3, n. 150–51), with other notes on Jordan to follow (p. 154). However, Diop translates the very next line as 'Jordan means the country of the Black people', so it seems clear that the griot was saying 'Sudan' (Ar. *sudan* = 'black people' as in *bilad al-sudan*, 'land of the blacks') and that line 150 displays an interest and expresses a view often heard, for example, from bards of Upper Guinea to the effect that 'Some of them [i.e., Biblical/Quranic patriarchs] created the black people'.

Opportunities to contribute useful information are repeatedly missed, as with line 174, 'Mbaarik Bô was originally from Masaasi' (p. 99). Diop says 'The identification of Masaasi is problematic' (p. 155, n. 174), but anyone publishing a study of Western Sudanic oral tradition for the era in question ought to recognize a possible reference to the well-known Massasi' dynasty of the Bamana of Kaarta,

the founder of which (Massa, son of Sonsan, son of Nya) evidently occupied a niche in the late seventeenth century at roughly the same period that Waalo was beginning to prosper from the slave trade. At the very least, this could identify Mbaarik Bô as coming from somewhere in the Upper Niger region of Mande territory. Instead, because Mbaarik Bô is somebody's companion, we get a discussion of 'doubling' in epic tales exemplified by paired characters in *The Song of Roland*, *The Iliad* and *Gilgamesh* (p. 155, nn. 171–82), and reference to the 'third category' of 'Propp's analysis of the dramatis personae of the Russian fairy tale' (p. 182, n. 293).

The annotations are symptomatic of the entire volume, which is so strangely organized that one gets disorganized trying to describe it. For example, sandwiched between the main translation and its notes (presented as 'Chapter Three') are sections headed 'Personal Observations on the Recording...' combined with 'The Genealogy of the Rulers of Waalo...' (which is not here at all, but back in the appendix), followed by 'Note on Orthography and Terminology' (pp. 121–5). Some of this could have usefully replaced superfluous material in the Introduction which, consistent with the rest of the volume, comprises a rambling series of loosely related, ill-supported and sometimes outdated or downright erroneous observations.

Aspiring to 'reconstruct' things (pp. 1; 61, n. 1), the author allows that his reconstruction is both literary and historical, with a 'specific methodology tailored for this project' that will reconstruct not just the Wolof past, but also the present (!) 'by including sociological, anthropological, literary, economic, ethnographic, medical, linguistic, religious and philosophical elements.' (He says Lansiné Kaba 'uses a similar approach' in his study of Baté, Guinea [p. 62, n. 1], an allegation of which the distinguished Professor Kaba is entirely innocent.) In Diop's literary arena we suffer rehashings of tired questions about things like 'fixed text', citing Petrarch's translation of Boccaccio and Dryden's remarks on Chaucer (pp. 16–19). Unfortunately, Diop never adequately locates his Wolof text within the greater corpus of Western Sudanic narrative, so instead of expanding outward and establishing Njaajan Njaay within the broader ranks of world literature, these references to classics of the western heritage come off more as a sadly misguided Eurocentric exercise endeavoring to 'legitimize' African oral tradition. The author's dismal literary labors are not enhanced by his efforts to supplement them with historical perspectives which range from questionable trivia, like claiming that the Wolof of Waalo started the practice of tea-drinking in Senegal (p. 64, n. 7), to the preposterous statement that 'all slaves captured along the Atlantic coast (from Senegal to Angola) were brought to the island of Gorée...' (p. 25).

The level of anthropological insight is similarly lamentable. Here we have an author who is a native son of the Wolof society which is meant to be the focus of this study. He certainly grew up understanding the relationship between his own *gèer* social group and the *gewel* about whom he writes. Therefore, one cannot help wondering what it is about his American educational experience that prompts him to quote somebody called Emil Magel to explain the difference between a *gèer* and a *gewel*, which anybody familiar with West African social systems already knows in any case (pp. 21–2). Could Samba Diop's mentors not have outlined some reasonable and appropriate boundaries within which their student could have functioned as an authority on his own culture rather than obliging him to jump through a rigidly structured series of hoops as if he were beginning at their own (evidently) uninformed level in the field of African studies?

At the outset, the author says this is a 'thoroughly revised and updated version' of his Ph.D. dissertation from the University of California at Berkeley (his adviser was Joseph Duggan of the French and Comparative Literature Department). But one wonders if this can really have been altered to any significant degree, and if so,

what condition it was in before revision. Even at the dissertation level this is a project gone sadly awry for someone who displays levels of curiosity, energy and motivation that ought to have produced a work far more useful than this. It is astonishing that this could have been accepted for an advanced degree at any university, let alone perceived as suitable for publication as a monograph.

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WANDALÁ SOURCES

Politik zwischen den Zeilen: Arabische Handschriften der Wandalá in Nordkamerun.

By HERMANN FORKL, with the co-operation of REINHARD WEIPERT. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1995. Pp. 559. No price given (ISBN 3-87997-245-1).

The Wandalá community of northern Cameroon and adjoining portions of north-eastern Nigeria have a long tradition of state forms of government. In recent centuries, following conversion to Islam, they have composed an historiography in Arabic, an effort entailing the adaptation of alien characters to the names and titles of a language whose sound system differs considerably from the one for which the symbols were originally intended. Some individual examples of this literature have already been published, at least in translation, but with widely varying degrees of formality and precision. The volume reviewed here offers a critical edition and an accurate, persuasively annotated translation of all seventeen known Wandalá historical manuscripts in Arabic. Nine of the manuscripts are state chronicles that convey greater or lesser amounts of historical information arranged according to the remembered sequence of Wandalá monarchs. One composition is a dramatic patriotic epic, probably attributable to the days of the intrusive eastern warlord Rābiḥ Faḍl Allāh at the dawn of the present century but couched in the form of a narrative of the defense of the Wandalá kingdom against an eighteenth-century invasion from Borno. Four documents are lists of local authorities at the south-eastern town of Mime. Two manuscripts list title officials of the central court together with some of their duties, while a third describes some of the tax obligations incumbent upon various groups of subjects.

The author analyzes these materials in terms of two contrasting literary tendencies, each rooted in one historically attested aspect of the Wandalá experience. Where a Wandalá ruler is described merely in terms of space and time the author sees a centralizing tendency that sought to justify royal prerogative. In contrast, where genealogical linkages (or the lack of them) are mentioned, the author discerns an aristocratic tendency, an interpretation of history which held not only that a king himself was constrained by constitutional concepts of legitimacy, but that he must also respect the rightful claims to power and status of a surrounding hereditary élite. On the whole, the aristocrats wrote much more satisfying history.

The Wandalá chronicles in their present form are manifestly creations of the twentieth century and the author offers a plausible interpretation of the series of regnal contexts within which each may have been composed. Some Wandalá kings prospered under colonial or national overlordship, but others did not; in general, the author argues, the weak kings of recent years have tended to stimulate a nostalgic historiography highly sympathetic toward monarchy while stronger kings of the century's earlier decades provoked various measures of aristocratic reaction: 'to the extent that royal power and authority were being eroded through actions of a superimposed administration together with those of court officials, the chronicles became correspondingly centralizing in tendency, and vice-versa' (p. 319). The patriotic but far from uncritical aristocratic commentaries on the

contemporary reigns of the strong kings who confronted Rābiḥ at the turn of the century include dramatic passages of historical narrative both perceptive and eloquent; these portions of the book certainly deserve a wide non-specialist readership.

The author believes that the Wandalá historical documents, despite their recent origin, nevertheless also convey an accurate record of very much older material transmitted over long centuries orally or preserved from distant times in ancestral writings no longer extant. He has thus reconstructed for the Wandalá kingdom a dynastic chronology that is accurate to the day for the twentieth century, to the month for the nineteenth and to the year for the eighteenth; before that, postulating an average reign of thirty-four years, he has built a more speculative sequence of regnal dates back to the dawn of the twelfth century (pp. 375-403). The present reviewer, while admiring the author's analytical ingenuity and acknowledging the need to accommodate into Wandalá historiography an apparent external reference to the community as early as the sixteenth century, must nevertheless remain skeptical concerning much of the chronological reconstruction. Lists of ancestors or predecessors are written for many reasons and are not always to be taken literally; for example, if the forefather of all Wandalá monarchs on his way from Makka to Cameroon indeed passed through the eastern Sudanese colonial capital of Khartoum, he must have done so no earlier than about 1830 and his children could not have lived in the twelfth century. But while interpretive preferences may differ, all students of the Wandalá and their neighbours will be grateful for this valuable collection of sources.

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JAY SPAULDING

DICTIONARIES AND KONGO HISTORY

Langues, culture et histoire Koongo aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, à travers les documents linguistiques. Par JEAN DE DIEU NSONDÉ. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995. Pp. 249. FF 140, paperback (ISBN 2-7384-3953-5).

The core of this interesting book is an attempt to discern outlines of Kongo culture from the dictionaries left behind by the French mission to Kakongo between 1768 and 1776. These dictionaries, which are found in London, Paris, Rome, Besançon and Genoa, are both French to Kikongo and Kikongo to French and sometimes run to more than 700 pages, often containing examples of usage as well as the words themselves. Indeed, when one considers the seventeenth-century linguistic materials, such as the dictionary (utilized by Nsondé) and the catechism (not used) and the excellent modern dictionaries of Laman and Bentley, Kikongo is one of the rare African languages that can be effectively documented over a three-century period.

Nsondé proposes to use some of this wealth of material to explore Kongo culture and its relationship with European culture. He examines kinship terminology to determine how well the French missionaries understood the dynamics of matrilineal kinship and clans (as well as tracing these concepts in Kongo) and looks at both religious terminology and food production. A final section deals with borrowings and special terms that arose from linguistic contact with Portuguese and French over a long period.

In this approach, Nsondé follows a project proposed over two decades ago by Jan Vansina to explore Kongo through its language. *Langues, cultures et histoire* was originally (1991) a doctoral thesis and has only been lightly revised, most notably in an updated bibliography that contains several titles which were not used in the argument itself. As such, within the French system, it should be considered as a

preliminary study in what might become a longer and more comprehensive work. At present its preliminary status is evident: the bibliography has substantial gaps (no works by Wyatt MacGaffey, for example, and my own work is in the bibliography but not considered in the text) and the contemporary record, outside of that found from the French mission itself, is also sketchy. Nsondé often backs up his linguistic discussion with contemporary documents, sometimes from the kingdom of Kongo and sometimes from Kakongo, but he is still far from using a comprehensive list of these materials.

Moreover, a number of issues are broached but not yet dealt with decisively. The linguistic history of Kikongo, both the development of its dialects and its phonology, are approached but questions remained unanswered. What is the evolution across time and dialect of *l*, *d*, and *r*? When was *ku-* lost as an infinitive prefix (present in the seventeenth century, lost by the end of the nineteenth)? The study of the way in which Europeans of the seventeenth century conceived of language study or the relationship between informants and missionaries is begun but not yet ended. The similarities of the Kikongo of Kakongo and that of the kingdom of Kongo is discussed in the context of determining that they are the same language, but not yet to examine the subtle differences of Kikongophones in the powerful, proudly Christian and European-influenced kingdom south of the Zaire river and those of the less extensive, less Europeanized and centralized, state north of the river.

This is a valuable book beyond these criticisms. It is an excellent introduction to the dictionaries of the eighteenth century and the French mission, and also offers some interesting points of departure in the linguistic study of the Kongo people.

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PRECOLONIAL AKAN TOWNS

Building Technology and Settlement Planning in a West African Civilization: Precolonial Akan Cities and Towns. By TARIKHU FARRAR. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996. Pp. xi + 217. No price given (ISBN 0-7734-2262-5).

Judging from the recent conference on *Africa's Urban Past* held at London's School of Oriental and African Studies, historians are increasingly – if somewhat belatedly – joining their colleagues in the social sciences in recognizing the continent's towns and cities as fruitful fields of research. While urban historians of North America and Europe have long regarded the built environment as a valuable source, the form of towns is only beginning to emerge as a topic of serious consideration in the African context. It is gratifying to note, therefore, that a number of contributors to the SOAS conference chose to focus on the ways in which both indigenous concepts of settlement and the physical organization of space have shaped Africa's urban centres as arenas of social, political and economic conflict. It is with these issues in mind that the reviewer approached this study of the architectural history of a people with a long tradition of urbanism and a highly nuanced terminology of settlement, the Akan of southern Ghana.

A wide range of sources are employed in this attempt to reconstruct pre-colonial Akan architecture, settlement morphology and building technology. Archaeological evidence falls into two main groupings, both derived from excavations in the intermediate ecological zone between forest and savanna in the present-day Brong-Ahafo region. The building tradition out of which Akan architecture grew, it is argued, can be dated back some 3,500 years to the neolithic Kintamp culture. A second set of data are drawn from the Middle–Later Iron Age sites of Begho and Bono Manso, urban centres of the Akan state of Bono (or Brong), occupied from

the thirteenth century A.D. Reference is made to a selection of European written sources, which contain useful descriptions of indigenous architecture in the Akan coastal polities and the forest kingdom of Asante. Extensive use is also made of contemporary observation and oral traditions; here the focus shifts back to Nkoransa in the Brong-Ahafo region.

An introductory chapter provides an outline of Akan civilization, beginning with the 'problem' of Akan origins, then taking us briefly and competently through political organization, clanship, economy, religion and the domestic household. The question of origins is further considered in Chapter 2, where the author mounts a vigorous critique of existing theories concerning the origins of the Akan architectural tradition. Both archaeologists and architectural historians – whose work has focused on the Bono state and Asante respectively – are criticized for emphasizing the impact of external influences emanating from the Sudanic region to the north and the Gold Coast to the south. Implicit in these interpretations, it is argued, is the belief 'that the indigenous "forest" architectural/building tradition was less sophisticated (more "primitive") technologically and stylistically than the intrusive one' (p. 57).

The remainder of the book attempts to redress this imbalance. Brong oral traditions of material culture together with the author's own observations are marshalled to support a case for the essentially indigenous origins of Akan architecture. A section on the hierarchy of settlement is well enough laid out, although it adds little to the standard ethnographic sources. Less convincing is the argument that the haphazard spatial development of what is labelled the 'Akan Coastal Settlement Plan' arose from the exigencies of defensive warfare. The weight of the argument, however, is borne by a lengthy discussion of building technology. In a radical break with established interpretations, the author suggests that the coursed-clay method of house building – that is, free-standing clay walls constructed in layers – may be of the same antiquity as that using both timber and clay, dating to the neolithic Kintampo culture. However, the evidence used to support this tentative thesis is unconvincing. Oral traditions too are often employed in an uncritical fashion, as is the extrapolation of archaeological evidence from the coastal Accra plains to the Brong area. Moreover, the detailed observations of house-building in present-day Nkoransa, while of some ethnographic interest, remain largely otiose to a consideration of the pre-colonial period.

A more fundamental problem, however, lies in the work's underlying premise. The anxiety with which the author seeks to demonstrate the autochthonous nature of the Akan building tradition leads to an engagement with issues which have now receded from Ghanaian history. A concluding comparison of Akan civilization with that of classical Greece, for example, seeks to challenge the dominance of 'stereotypes and prejudices rooted in a colonialist and racist world view' (p. 197).

This clearly written and carefully researched book adds to an emerging literature on African material culture and technology. It is difficult to recognize, however, its own rather stereotypical view of the increasingly sophisticated historiography of Akan culture.

THE KINGS OF BUGANDA

Kingship and State: The Buganda Dynasty. By CHRISTOPHER WRIGLEY. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pp. xv + 293. £40.00; \$64.95 (ISBN 0-521-47370-5).

Apolo Kagwa was *katikiro* or chief minister of Buganda from 1889 to 1926. His career well exemplifies the thesis that, in the context of colonial intrusion, collaboration could be the most effective form of resistance. His co-operation with the British probably saved the Ganda monarchy, while earning him a knighthood. Not least among the achievements of this remarkable man was the publication, in 1901, of his *Bakabaka b'e Buganda*, 'The Kings of Buganda'. Over half the book is a compilation of oral history, based on what Wrigley calls 'the five generations of primary and secondary reminiscence' (p. 12): that is, the span of memory from ego's grandfather/grandmother to ego's grandson/granddaughter. It reaches back to about the middle of the eighteenth century. The remainder of the book is Kagwa's recension of oral tradition having to do with the more distant Ganda past. Wrigley tells us that *Kingship and State* is 'an extended commentary' on Kagwa's work, but warns us that it is 'at least as much about tradition as it is about Buganda' (p. 7). It is, and unfortunately so, for Wrigley locks his inquiry into the unprofitable debates of the 1970s about the nature of African tradition.

Wrigley restates the paradox of Buganda's existence, that a political system conforming remarkably closely to 'the post-Renaissance European model of a state' arose in 'one of the most secluded regions of Africa, last to experience the influence of distant cultures and economies' (pp. 1-2). How, he asks, may the stories recorded by Kagwa be used in investigating this? Wrigley acknowledges the influence of such diverse figures as Sir James Frazer, Joseph Campbell, Lord Raglan and Claude Lévi-Strauss. Once we pass the limits of reminiscence, he argues, we are in the domain not of history but of myth. What, then, is myth?

Wrigley will have no truck with the functionalism of the 1930s and 1940s. A myth is not a charter legitimating an existing and determinate social and political order. It is, rather, 'a fundamental mode of discourse... vital to psychic and social well-being'. It is 'the characteristic discourse of intellectuals'. In the past 'African societies were controlled not by fighting men but by intellectuals, wielders of symbols rather than of spears' (p. 13). A society is linked by its mythology to distant times and places. The neolithic Middle East was the cradle of 'a great complex of myth and ritual', elements of which travelled along with food-production technologies to become the basis of both 'Western' and African culture (p. 50). African traditions are thus related – and not only as 'interesting analogies' but as 'historically grounded homologies' (p. 15) – to those of the Near East, the Greeks and the Celts (and occasionally 'to yet more distant mythologies').

There is much entertainment value in all of this. Who could fail to be titillated by comparisons between Ganda tales of Kintu and the medieval Welsh romance of Culhwch and Olwen (p. 95)? But there are dangers as well. Wrigley, for example, is surely correct in arguing that large parts of the Ganda regnal lists were at some time constructed from a variety of sources in the interests of a 'national' history. 'But,' he adds, 'until Europeans started asking for lists, the precise sequence of names and stories was not important, and different arrangements of the material were possible' (p. 41). This comes perilously close to suggesting that it required European intervention to teach the Ganda that if one believes that '[Kabaka] Suna succeeded Jemba' (the 'Muteesa' list), then one cannot also believe that '[Kabaka] Jemba succeeded Suna' (the 'Mugwanya' list).

Wrigley assures his readers that although *Kingship and State* will spend a long time on myth, it will eventually return to history. 'African traditions do have value

as historical evidence', he claims, 'but this cannot be rightly assessed until they have been studied in their own right, as social artefacts, and some of them as products of poetic and religious imagination' (p. 16). In eleven chapters he ranges freely – very freely indeed – over the Ganda past. There is much erudition and much good sense, and there is a pleasing modesty that disarms the critic confronting Wrigley's more alarming flights of fancy. There are some things, however, that he should not get away with. He informs his readers, for example, that 'practically without exception, politically dominant groups in Africa affirm that their ancestors came from somewhere else and established control over an indigenous population, usually displacing former rulers...' From this sweeping generalization Wrigley proceeds to an even more sweeping one. 'There is no doubt', he comments, 'that African populations were in fact very mobile or that political structures were fluid and often ephemeral' (p. 145). Those familiar with the ancient political landscapes of West Africa, of say the Mande and Hausa, are unlikely to concur.

Kingship and State strikes an oddly unhappy note from time to time. In the Preamble, Wrigley refers to the admiration for Buganda expressed in his writings of the late 1950s, but comments 'in retrospect I find it strange that a peace-loving democrat should have responded even half-favourably to the aggressive despotism that nineteenth-century Buganda unquestionably was' (p. 5). He echoes the point in the last paragraph of the book: 'it is difficult to forgo altogether my early conviction that there was something special about Buganda' (p. 252). Wrigley seeks a way out of the dilemma. *Kingship and State*, he writes, 'is about three decades overdue' (p. xi). Well, yes; it would have been good to have had it thirty years ago but – with apologies for the cliché – better late than never. Not a little of the interest of this book lies, in fact, in its (re)presentation of issues that have not been much debated in recent years.

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IVOR WILKS

SALT AND THE STATE

Kibiro. The Salt of Bunyoro Past and Present. By GRAHAM CONNAH. London: Memoirs of the British Institute in Eastern Africa 13, 1996. Pp. xv + 224. £37.50 (ISBN 0-500-872566-08-1).

The latest monograph produced by the British Institute in Eastern Africa is essentially the report of Connah's archaeological work at the Later Iron Age site of Kibiro, which lies on the Ugandan shores of Lake Albert. The relatively rapid publication of this fieldwork (undertaken in 1989 and 1990) and the high production values evident in the volume (if one excuses the spelling mistakes on the back of the dust jacket) are to be congratulated. The volume is an attractive one, well illustrated throughout with a combination of photographs, figures and tables.

The importance of the production and trade in salt throughout Africa's past has been long recognized, and thus this discussion of a particular industry will surely be of interest to a relatively wide readership. From the earliest documentary accounts it is evident that the village of Kibiro was only one of a number of similar settlements along Lake Albert which supplied the nineteenth-century Bunyoro kingdom with salt. The 'salt gardens' of Kibiro are still in use today, and Connah is thus fortunate in being able to use a rich combination of both ethnographic and historical information in his study of salt production in the area. The apparently

sustainable nature of the process employed at Kibiro, with the continual re-use of the same soil as a leaching medium, is of particular interest. From this substantial base Connah has attempted, through excavation, to examine the antiquity of the salt industry at Kibiro and, through archaeological survey, to place the site within its regional context. However, his primary expressed interest lies in learning more of the nature of the Bunyoro state: from the concentration upon a single, economically important site it is hoped to gain this wider understanding.

The volume certainly presents a thorough and informative report of Connah's work. His detailing of the historical references to Kibiro and discussion of the recent salt industry (in Chapters 3 and 4), the account of his limited excavations at Kibiro (Chapters 6 and 7) and the presentation of the results of his rather un-systematic survey (Chapter 8) will surely prove of great value to those interested in the Later Iron Age of the Interlacustrine region. The analysis of the large assemblage of pot sherds recovered and the beginnings of a potential pottery sequence will be particularly welcomed. Pamela Grace's timely ethnographic study of pottery-making in the Kigorobya area should also be given particular mention (pp. 175–83). Indeed, the value of this publication lies above all in its concise and rapid presentation of field data.

Connah does not, as he intended, move from this particular discussion of the archaeology of Kibiro to a discussion of the character and functioning of the Bunyoro state. Though the contents page distinguishes 'The origins and growth of Bunyoro' with a slightly larger and bolder number (p. 216) than any other section, we are to be disappointed with a very short and general conclusion. This is not a serious fault of a volume which provides such good, solid and recent field data, yet why continually stress these wider research aims if they are to be largely ignored? Indeed, perhaps Connah should have acknowledged the limits of a study presented in such glorious archaeological isolation; for it will surely prove impossible to move from particular to general discussion until greater interest is shown in the work of archaeological colleagues than is apparent in this study.

These are only minor grumbles, resulting more from Connah's over-ambitious intentions than the actual content of the volume. Indeed, it is to be hoped that the valuable data contained in this report will be fully utilised by those interested in the Later Iron Age of the Interlacustrine region, and that Connah's work will thus lead, as he hoped, to a greater understanding of the nature and functioning of the Bunyoro state.

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RACHEL MACLEAN

MADAGASCAR REVISITED

A History of Madagascar. By MERVYN BROWN. Ipswich: Damien Tunnacliffe, 1995. Pp. viii + 408. £12.95, paperback (ISBN 0950-62845-x).

This work is a fascinating hybrid. The first half (pp. 1–240) comprises an updated version of *Madagascar Rediscovered*, published by the same author in 1978, covering the history of Madagascar from a British perspective up to the French conquest of 1895. The justification for the 1978 work was twofold: the sparsity of modern literature in English on the history of Madagascar and the considerable, yet underrated, British influence there prior to 1895. The title of the book currently under review indicates a much more ambitious aim – that of presenting a general history of Madagascar. In this light, the revision only partially rectifies the bias of *Madagascar Rediscovered*.

The first part of the book covers extensively the British contribution to pre-

colonial Madagascar. Thus the story of Robert Drury the 'Shipwrecked Sailor' is related in detail, as is the tale of the British pirates who congregated in Madagascar from 1680 to 1720. It retains the 'popular' anecdotal style of *Madagascar Rediscovered* and substantial sections are based on original archival research, but there exist some highly speculative passages, such as that attempting to establish the English pirate Thomas White as having been the father of Ratsimilaho, founder of the eighteenth-century Betsimisaraka federation. Also, references to source material are frustratingly scant for those with more than a passing interest in the history of Madagascar. Similarly frustrating is the author's attempt to argue both sides in a debate; thus he states that the pre-colonial Merina regime so advanced civilisation in Madagascar as to remove 'the usual justification for the imposition of European rule – "la mission civilisatrice"' (p. 218), while simultaneously observing that the civilized face of the Merina government was literally a facade, hiding a highly exploitative regime, and that attempts by the French to rule indirectly through the existing Merina administration provoked revolt in non-Merina regions of the island.

Such a stance may reflect the only partial attempt to keep abreast of research on critical issues in Malagasy history much of which has appeared in English. For example, the section dealing with the debate about the origins of the Malagasy excludes the glottochronological research of Vérin, Conrad and Gorlin (*Oceanic Linguistics* 8 (1970), pp. 26–83), and the work of Dewar and Wright (e.g. Dewar's chapter in Paul S. Martin and R. G. Klein, *Quaternary Extinctions* (1984)), while that analyzing the nature of the pre-colonial Merina regime misses much of the debate engaged in by the current reviewer and others, e.g. Campbell in *Omalasy Anio* (1994) 33–6, pp. 331–79 and *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 32, 127 (1992), pp. 409–53.

The second part of the book, dealing with the colonial and post-colonial eras, shares with the first part a preoccupation with the 'Big Men' of history, and is similarly economical with references. There the resemblance ends. Starved of 'British' influence in post-1895 Madagascar, the author alters both his style and approach, essaying to sketch the main course of political, economic and social events. Although the analysis of the French colonial era is disappointingly thin, consisting of rather banal chronology of political events, the section dealing with post-independence Madagascar is both more rounded, linking politics to the economy, and insightful, offering a clear, critical analysis of the Tsiranana and Ratsiraka regimes and the reasons for their collapse. The author apologizes for his reliance on secondary works for this section, but its perspicacity demonstrates uncommon knowledge of the era, presumably deriving from the author's first-hand experience and contacts as a former British diplomatic representative in Madagascar.

In sum, this is a curious work comprising two distinct parts that contrast in both critical approach and style. But the insights offered, in the first section from original archival research and in the second from first-hand experience, combined with the contrasting styles, make it both readable and, despite the sparsity of references in the text, a worthwhile purchase for the professional historian.

GLOBAL SWEEP

Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860. By RICHARD H. GROVE. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. xiv + 540. £45 (ISBN 0-521-40385-5).

Finding that very little of Richard Grove's history of European environmental thought deals with continental Africa, historians of Africa may decide against immersing themselves in its complex global sweep and intricate detail. They can absorb Grove's crucial lessons, however, by turning to his final one hundred pages, where he surveys colonial environmental thought and policy in India during the first half of the nineteenth century, and presents his conclusions about environmentalism and empire. In these pages, Grove draws together the numerous threads of his earlier chapters, which discuss European thinking about environmental change in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the islands of St Helena, Mauritius and the Caribbean. Having followed his discussion of island environmentalism by tracing the evolution of British environmental thought in India during the period of East India Company rule, Grove concludes by arguing that 'modern environmentalism ... emerged as a direct response to the destructive social and ecological conditions of colonial rule' (p. 486).

Grove bases his arguments upon an immense variety of documentary and literary sources, and a concrete understanding of the processes by which scientific knowledge evolves and influences public policy. While maintaining sensitivity for the specific character of several European cultures, Grove describes the varying intellectual milieus which shaped environmental thought over a 250-year period, identifies telling biographical details which help explain the development and spread of ideas, explains the emergence of networks and organizations among scientists, and follows environmentalists as they seek to win influence among their rulers. In addition to demonstrating that European environmentalist thought (including concern about the impact of human activity on climate) has evolved over several centuries, Grove also shows that its development was given crucial impetus by imperialism, for Europeans became increasingly aware of environmental change and degradation as they became more active in unfamiliar regions of the non-Western world, particularly small island environments where deforestation, soil erosion and desiccation rapidly threatened settler economies. Thus, while demonstrating that environmentalist thought derives from a complex interplay of influences, including fears of species extinction, forms of social reformism such as Utopianism and physiocracy, and medical thought (a crucial shift occurred as forests gradually ceased to be regarded as sources of dangerous miasmas, and instead became associated with abundant precipitation, soil fertility and the capacity of vegetation to purge the atmosphere of unhealthy vapors), Grove contributes to the wide body of recent scholarship which is shifting colonialism from the periphery to the center of European cultural and intellectual experience.

In part, Grove tries to move empire to the center by contending that non-European thought about climate, health and environment had a critical influence on European environmentalism. Yet, despite his success in demonstrating, for example, that as crucial a figure as Alexander von Humboldt was interested in Hindu conceptions of nature and the environment, Grove's sources give him less opportunity to describe the diffusion of non-Western knowledge to Europeans than to demonstrate the percolation of ideas among European scientists.

Africanists will be interested by the treatment of nineteenth-century India, where comparisons with Africa abound. For here, rather than considering tiny island environments, Grove discusses environmental and political changes on a vast scale. Moreover, rather than describing a previously unsettled Eden, he now

confronts cultures whose long histories of conservation and environmental degradation, and deeply-embedded political structures, influenced colonial environmentalism. Other aspects of his chapter on India also evoke comparisons with modern Africa. For example, he shows that civil servants became more inclined to seek statist solutions to deforestation and famine as the institutional memory of the colonial bureaucracy improved, and as the emerging international institutions of modern science became more effective in providing them with expert advice. Because they frequently shared romantic distaste for industrial capitalism, moreover, they sometimes found themselves willing to choose long-term economic and environmental sustainability over short-term capital accumulation and revenue collection.

Grove's archives-based discussion of India shows that, like African colonial states in the twentieth century, the bureaucracy of the East India Company was pushed and pulled by a variety of contradictory political and ideological tendencies, including some which led colonialists to exploit nature, and others which predisposed Europeans to become conservationists. Yet, to understand why, from the standpoint of colonial subjects, ideological and political differences among colonialists seemed less impressive than European solidarity in defense of colonial privilege, or, to be more specific, why colonial environmentalism appeared to them less a matter of sharing their environmental knowledge than a source of capricious and onerous impositions, the micro-level studies which the use of oral sources encourages among historians of Africa would seem to remain the indispensable counterpoint to the immensely valuable global perspective taken by Grove.

University of Iowa

JAMES L. GIBLIN

CREDIT SYSTEMS

Local Suppliers of Credit in the Third World, 1750–1960. Edited by GARETH AUSTIN and KAORU SUGIHARA. London: Macmillan Press, 1993. Pp. vii + 318. £40 (ISBN 0-333-52320-2).

In an era when innovation in money and its various market dynamics is advancing at unprecedented speed, Western heroic optimism about the potentials that are unleashed by the logics of the world monetary system is distinctly tinged with fear: of massive outstanding deficits, whirlwind destruction of smaller economies, a roller-coaster rise on Wall Street, and sheer inappositeness to large numbers of development challenges. Old financial institutions have to create new forms of credit to address, for example, the transformation of the former socialist economies or the restoration of war-torn societies and polities. The enormous power of formal finance and its equally enormous limitations, and the contentious set of regulatory frameworks that surround both, should stimulate a new round of scholarship about what used to be termed 'finance capital' in modern social history.

This collection is a contribution to that scholarship, focusing not on the formal sector at the centers of financial power but on transactions and institutions that developed in the Third World. The time period covered by the book starts at the point at which British finance capital is already voraciously searching for new investments abroad and developing the banking and government bond systems at home. And it closes in 1960, at the point where the large international financial institutions take over the monitoring of world monetary affairs from the former colonial powers. So there is no claim that the local and regional credit management systems described in the chapters are authentically 'home grown' in any ultimate

sense, but rather that these Indian, Japanese, African, South American and South-East Asian systems built their 'efficiency' on a confidence that was 'grounded in indigenous institutions which were often quite different from the legal and administrative systems that Europe had adopted and was elaborating' (p. 7). The editors' claim actually goes beyond an argument that credit existed, was socially endorsed and 'worked' in according to some economic standard, but also that the credit thus organized contributed significantly to economic growth. So there are three different contributions here: to the descriptive endeavor of documenting local forms of credit, the historical endeavour of tracing their varied and changing relationships to metropolitan finance capital, and the theoretical endeavor of accounting for economic growth.

It is really on the last point that this book is most ambitious, suggestive and in the end least conclusive, as I discuss in more detail later. It is argued that local credit was not just a residuum of coping strategies for consumption, shady deals in the marginal or criminal sector, and other high-risk/low-return investments that the formal banking sector avoided for strictly profit-driven reasons. Local credit preceded, and remained to some degree independent of, formal credit in many parts of the world. It was devoted to quite large scale production and contributed to public finance; in at least one place – rural Japan in the nineteenth century – there developed a private regional inter-bank lending system; and there are further, less dramatic, examples of '(a)dvances in credit institutions' that 'may constitute an important ingredient' in general economic change (p. 9). The editors advocate 'an alternative framework that recognizes the importance of non-European modernizing forces in the development of the capitalist world economy', one that shifts 'from a Eurocentric to a multicentric perspective' (p. 19).

The papers in the volume all offer detailed and challenging new material along these lines. And with very large proportions of humanity having no direct access to the formal banking system, even now, the descriptive detail that these papers bring is invaluable. Robb elaborates Sharm's work on pre-colonial Gujarat, outlining how tax farming and state loans were integrated with merchant banking on a wide scale to create regional financial markets with their own technologies and accounting practices. Toby argues that studies of proto-industrialization in nineteenth-century Japan have overlooked the importance of an increasingly commercialized credit system in the rural areas. Austin contributes what must be the most comprehensive survey of West African credit institutions, in particular arguing persuasively that 'human pawning can be seen as facilitating the enlargement of the market sector within precolonial economies' (p. 138) when forms of material collateral were impracticable. Tominaga examines the contribution of Indian trader-moneylenders to agriculture in Zanzibar between 1880 and 1963. The other contributions are concerned not with informal institutions in any narrow sense, but rather with the struggle of non-metropolitan finance to compete by creating institutions in sectors of the market that were ripe for investment. Such institutions included formally constituted banks such as were developed by the Chinese in Singapore in the early twentieth century (Huff), those operating in the agricultural sector in Argentina at the turn of the century (Adelman), and those serving the settler population in Natal in the nineteenth century (Morell, Padayachee and Vawda). In a study of an institution that crossed all the definitional boundaries, Brown analyzes the Chettiar money-lending caste of South India, who preceded, then mediated and also circumvented Western commercial interests in South and East Asia.

Because of their rich detail, however, the papers contain issues that could do with further comparative and theoretical treatment. An anthropologist is left with the question of how the dynamics of these institutions contribute to an understanding of economic growth along 'multicentric' lines. If the 'indigenous

institutions' that inspired confidence differed from the Western system, it implies that long-term patterns of institutional and productive growth were either not capitalist at all or were some other version of capitalism. There is considerable evidence in several of the papers that the historical dynamics of these credit systems were far from 'classic'. The main example is the fate of land put up as collateral. Several of the papers make the point very clearly that these money-lenders accepted land as collateral but did not want to foreclose and end up as landowners, probably because the land market was weak. This was true of the rural Japanese case (p. 72), the banks in Argentina *vis-à-vis* the smaller farmers (p. 216), the Indians in Zanzibar (p. 243), and the Chettiars (p. 264). The spiral dynamic of investment and growth is unclear without a parallel analysis of assets. If both assets and institutions differed from western capitalism, and there was positive economic growth, it means that there may need to be analytical distinctions made amongst different 'efficient' and 'successful' market systems. This would make the aspiration towards 'multicentricity' much more than a statement about geographical variation and institutional multiplicity; it would imply different trajectories of growth. I think these studies are certainly onto something here but the synthesis remains a little too cautiously historical to seize on it.

Northwestern University

JANE I. GUYER

SHORTER NOTICES

The Frontier States of Western Yorubaland, 1600-1889. By BIODUN ADEDIRAN. Ibadan: Institut Français de Recherche en Afrique, 1994. Pp. x + 248. No price given (ISBN 978-2015-25-3).

The identification of the various sub-groups of the Yoruba offers a challenge to historians, particularly since large numbers of Yoruba-speaking people were deported into the African diaspora. In this contribution to Yoruba historiography, Adediran analyses the history of the western Yoruba sub-groups, especially those resident in République du Bénin and also in Togo. This study expands upon Adediran's Ph. D. thesis (Awolowo University, 1980) and is based on oral traditions and archival materials, as well as an excellent grasp of the published literature.

The book examines the formation of three western Yoruba states (Ketu, Sabe and Idaisa), which arose during the troubles that struck the region of Oyo in the sixteenth century. Adediran identifies three phases in the development of these small kingdoms: an initial phase in which political authority was vested in lineage officials; the emergence of city-states that based political authority on the fusion of the founding lineages; and finally the consolidation of dynasties that traced their legitimacy to refugees from the Nupe and Borgu incursions of the sixteenth century. These western Yoruba became involved in Oyo's struggle for political ascendancy in the eighteenth century, particularly the conflicts with Dahomey in the second quarter of the century. With the decline of Oyo after *c.* 1789, western Yorubaland became a battle ground and the state system that had emerged was exposed to repeated and continuing military incursions. By the end of the nineteenth century, this earlier system had virtually collapsed.

The consideration of how ethnicity develops in historical circumstances is fashionable. It is not always recognized, however, that this theme has been a dominant one in Nigerian historiography. Countless B.A. papers, M.A. theses and Ph.D. theses examine aspects of ethnic identity and change. Adediran's contribution is among the best in this field. His conception of ethnicity involves a

dynamic process of interaction among specific historical events and tradition. He develops an overview of the process of ethnic identification among the Yoruba. His approach remains to be tested through examination of ethnicity in the Yoruba diaspora and the relationship among the different parts of the diaspora and the various homelands of the Yoruba. In the meantime, this is a valuable contribution in the deconstruction of the concept of the Yoruba.

York University, Ontario

PAUL E. LOVEJOY

Ali-Ogba: A History of Ogba People. By FRANCIS J. ELLAH. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co., 1995. Pp. xiv + 226. \$18.00; £9.95 (ISBN 978-156-400-8). (Distributed by African Books Collective, The Jam Factory, 27 Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HU).

The Ogba are an Igbo-speaking group, situated in the extreme south-west of the Igbo area, in the modern Rivers State of Nigeria (though the maps in this book, which depict only the Ogba country itself, do not convey a very clear sense of its location). This history of the community, written by its current *Eze* (king), sets out to cover the entire sweep of its history, from 'the origin of the Ogbas' (attributed to the fourteenth century) to the colonial period (post-independence history being treated only cursorily). It is based mainly on local oral traditions, taken partly from colonial Intelligence Reports, but also including extensive new material collected by the author; some use is also made, for the colonial period, of contemporary documents from British and Nigerian archives, and for prehistory, of archaeological evidence.

Although the author (a university graduate, but seemingly not a trained historian) provides an apparatus of footnoted references, the sources are generally treated somewhat uncritically, and the book's main value is in making available new primary material, especially extensive summaries of local traditions. For the pre-colonial period, this evidence hardly permits the reconstruction of a 'history' in the conventional sense: the author surveys Ogba traditions of origin, by migration from Benin (interpreted literalistically), but beyond that offers an essentially synchronic reconstruction of 'traditional' political, social and economic organization. A narrative of detailed events and a clear sense of social and institutional change emerge only with the colonial period. Even for more recent times, documentation for the Ogba specifically is evidently exiguous, and the author tends to flesh out the story with material relating to neighbouring areas or to south-eastern Nigeria more generally. Despite its local focus, the explicit political agenda of the book is to assert, through emphasis on interactions with other groups (both in the purported origin migrations and in subsequent commercial and political links and cultural influences), a historical basis for the unity of modern Nigeria; the curiosity that one of the colonial 'warrant chiefs' in the Ogba country was an immigrant Hausa, Mallam Agu, thus serves as a charter for the post-Civil War reintegration of the peoples of Nigeria (p. 208).

University of Stirling

ROBIN LAW

The San and the Colonization of the Cape, 1770-1879. By MIKLÓS SZALAY. (Quellen zur Khoisan-Forschung, Vol. 11.) Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 1995. Pp. 151. No price given (ISBN 3-927620-58-0).

Language death, a widespread phenomenon in modern Africa does not entail that the speakers of a given language have no descendants only that those descendants cannot speak their parents' language. The same is true of the death of

a culture, although this is often less clearly recognized. Thus within the boundaries of modern South Africa, there is virtually no-one who can speak the San, or Bushman, languages, which until two hundred years or less ago were flourishing, if only in pockets. Equally, there is now no-one who lives according to the hunter-gatherer lifestyle from which the San take their name.

It is tempting to think that this disappearance was a consequence of colonial genocide. After all, the Dutch government of the eighteenth-century Cape authorised the 'extirpation' of the San as though they were vermin. Successive mounted expeditions by the colonial militias killed many thousands of what was a small population anyway. Equally, anthropological investigations of still (or recently) extant San communities in Botswana and Namibia have tended to stress that San did not easily accept at least some of the innovations from outside, notably Christianity. If San cannot adapt, and if they were the victims of genocidal warfare, then the conclusion would have to be that the disappearance of South Africa's San was genetic as well as cultural.

It is against these arguments that Szalay is arguing, generally convincingly, in this slim book – really no more than a fat chapter as it was in the original German version. In a useful corrective, he sets out the evidence of the processes whereby people of San origin and descent were absorbed into the coloured population of the Cape, particularly as farm labourers but also through the colony's nineteenth-century mission communities. The written evidence on which he bases his claims is generally well known, rather sketchy and, as Szalay would admit, by no means comprehensive. This book does not offer an exhaustive treatment of the subject, but this does not invalidate the arguments. It is not a pleasant story, though perhaps less unpleasant than the vision of total extermination held by those who believed the 'Bushmen' to be incapable of change assimilation. Szalay's arguments need to be incorporated fully into the current reassessments of Khoisan history. The photographs published in this book show how stunning, if depressing, the visual record of that history can be. It is good to note that Szalay's current work is in continuation of this visual theme.

Rijksuniversiteit, Leiden

ROBERT ROSS

Historical Settlement of Liberia and Its Environmental Impact. By SYRULWA L. SOMAH. Lanham, MD, New York, and London: University Press of America, 1995. Pp. i–xvii [unpaginated] + 153. \$42.00 (ISBN 0-8191-9653-3); \$29.50, paperback (ISBN 0-8191-9654-1).

This book will disappoint readers who expect an historical study of the environmental impact of Americo-Liberian settlement. It is, rather, a polemical survey of the environmental problems which have beset Liberia and a normative prescription for Liberia's environmental and political future.

The book is divided into three chapters. The first is concerned with Liberia's history. Here, the author criticizes the ethnocentric perspectives in a few, now dated, histories by Americo-Liberian authors, and draws upon a patchwork of other sources (including Cheikh Anta Diop, Leonard Jeffries and a spokesperson for the Nation of Islam) to produce a poorly focused and unconvincing account of the conspiratorial founding of Liberia. The second chapter is concerned with environmental devastation. Here the author is on more solid terrain, drawing upon a scant environmental literature to sketch out the broad lines of the environmental impact of the settlement at Monrovia, deforestation, and pollution from industrial mining. The third chapter advances a proposal for a new environmental policy for Liberia.

The author's general thesis is that 'liberated Americans of African descent' developed a national policy that damaged the environmental, political and social health of the entire country. The Americo-Liberians wrought environmental havoc because they forgot their African roots and embraced a racist, capitalist, western consciousness. They were the agents of United States' imperialism who systematically devalued and degraded the culture of the indigenous population. They were unable to appreciate the culture of the African populations, and this resulted in 'cultural non-fusion', that is, the maintenance of a distinct settler society. In environmental terms, this meant that the new urban settlements disrupted the local ecology (according to the author, they intensified the malarial environment). As a result, the environmental consciousness represented by the Poro societies of the Liberian peoples was cast aside with disastrous effect. During the twentieth century, the Americo-Liberian elite sold out the interests of the indigenous populations to western mining and agricultural interests.

Because of its polemical nature and its absence of documentary evidence, the book will be of only limited interest to historians.

Colby College, Maine

JAMES L. A. WEBB

Tributors, Supporters and Merchant Capital: Mining and Underdevelopment in Sierra Leone. By ALFRED ZACK-WILLIAMS. Aldershot: Avebury, 1995. Pp. vii + 239. £40 (ISBN 1-85628-466-2).

Diamonds were discovered in Sierra Leone in 1930, and in 1934 sole mining rights were granted to the Sierra Leone Selection Trust (SLST), a subsidiary of the London-based Consolidated African Selection Trust, part of De Beers empire. In 1956, partly to restrict the increasingly prevalent illicit mining, and partly for political reasons, SLST opened part of its lease to mining by licensed miners under the Alluvial Diamond Mining Scheme (ADMS). The Sierra Leone government took over 51 per cent of the SLST shares in 1970, and a new company, the National Diamond Mining Company (NDMC), was formed. In 1980 SLST sold out to British Petroleum and left Sierra Leone.

Alfred Zack-Williams has based this study on fieldwork done in the 1970s in the diamond-producing areas, putting it in the wider context of a survey of the political economy of Sierra Leone in the twentieth century. He describes how a system under which the miners who worked the ground ('tributors') organized in gangs and shared their findings with their employers ('supporters') was regularised by the ADMS. Licensed 'native firms' (in fact overwhelmingly Lebanese and foreign) entered into a contractual relationship with their tributors, who received a percentage of the profits instead of wages, a patron/client relationship which Zack-Williams compares with the former *metayage* system of share-cropping in the southern USA. He also compares it with the similar relationship in the local fishing industry. Estimating the respective contributions made by SLST and ADMS to the national income of Sierra Leone, he finds ADMS the superior, confirming Tony Killick's assessment. But in general, looking at the social and environmental damage diamond mining has caused, he concludes 'that for the majority of people in the diamond mining areas, the discovery of diamonds has probably caused more harm than good'.

His theoretical opening chapter refers to no publications later than 1979, and his main concern is to demonstrate that the social formation of Sierra Leone 'constitutes an articulation of modes of production'. Those who have moved on from an era when identifying modes of production was a matter of deep concern may therefore find his presentation wearisome. The book is published by Avebury in a new series intended to disseminate work by African scholars. It is hard to

believe that their works will be very widely disseminated, certainly not in Africa, if they are priced so high.

London

CHRISTOPHER FYFE

Uganda: A Century of Existence. By P. G. OKOTH. Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1995. Pp. 278. £14.95, paperback (ISBN 9970-02-0226).

This book is a collection of essays presented by Makerere University academicians at a Faculty of Arts conference held in April 1994 to commemorate the centenary of Uganda's foundation as a state. The papers are grouped broadly by discipline, separate sections covering history, philosophy, linguistics, literature and social and cultural studies.

The two opening sections will be of greatest interest to historians. Among the chapters dealing with historical themes, the volume editor P. G. Okoth contributes an essay which underlines the historical importance of Uganda in world geopolitics, surveying the saga of the Cold War, the Israeli-Arab conflict, Muslim fundamentalism and intra-imperialist rivalries in the region. Next, Deo. Katono emphasises the importance of the study of history in Uganda's intellectual development. Mwambustya Ndebese, in Chapter 3, examines the changing status of the monarchy in colonial and post-colonial Uganda. Developing the theme of political change, Edward Wamala offers a critique of the impact of the imposition of a colonial political system. He argues that it was impossible to bring about democratic and harmonious governance after independence in so heterogeneous a country. J. Kigongo focuses upon the issue of ethics, advancing the view that wider participation in politics will bring about greater stability even within so diverse a country as Uganda. In Chapter 6, G. Ezatirale examines attitudes to the environment, and finally Sango Mwanahewa discusses the extent to which foreign cultural values have stifled the development of national culture in Uganda.

The remaining chapters cover a wide range of topics: M. Muranga looks at the cultural complexity of modern Uganda and Okello Okwang argues that the popular culture that came with colonialism was itself an instrument of domination; Kasalina Matovu shows that environmental values and notions of conservation are intrinsic to African traditions; Okot Benge argues for the promotion of indigenous literature; Susan Kiguli uses proverbs to examine cultural conflicts; and Shirley Byakutaga questions the appropriateness of the present legal system in terms of technical and linguistic issues. In the final section, J. Nyakana and A. Kwitonda look at education and training, and D. Dipio, Byaruhanga Akiiki and Oswald Ndoleriire write about aspects of contemporary religion.

This is a book that provides an invaluable insight into current research by staff at Makerere University, and it can be recommended without reservation to all scholars interested in Uganda, past and present.

Makerere University, Kampala

ASIIMWE B. GODFREY

The Egalitarian Moment: Asia and Africa, 1950-80. By D. A. Low. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pp. xiv + 131. £10.95, paperback (ISBN 0-521-56765-3).

These four essays by the distinguished historian Anthony Low, best-known to Africanists for his writings on Uganda, constitute the Wiles Lectures given at the Queen's University, Belfast in 1994. Tightly argued, they revolve around a straightforward point. Despite the political impulse which brought about attempts to create an egalitarian society in the Asian and African countryside, the dominant

pattern in the generation after the Second World War was one of the strengthening of the class of rich peasants or kulaks. With a few exceptions, Low points to the effacement of landlord regimes and systems based on inequality from above and through status. Attempts to break the back of the rich peasants succeeded only in certain authoritarian states such as China and Viet Nam and even then, the kulaks reasserted themselves. It is the radical experiments such as Mengistu's Ethiopia and Nyerere's Tanzania that Low best likes to juxtapose with displays of power and effective accumulation from below. The implication must be the evisceration of continued attempts to create an egalitarian countryside. Low ranges widely in making this point looking at East Africa, Ethiopia, Egypt, Iran, India, China and the Pacific and his breathtaking sweep makes this suggestive book an enjoyable read.

Great as the range is, the specialist can inevitably quibble with the choice of examples and find counter-trends. The more important limitation is the emphasis on the relationship of peasant societies to politics at the expense of the relationship to regimes of accumulation. The economic contexts of the rich peasant success stories are extremely varied; very broadly, for instance, the difference between African rural societies and those in many parts of Asia is the difference between stagnation or decline and rapid economic growth. In some cases, the 'dominant peasant groups' have been major agents in a growth process; in others they serve to show that internal differentiation is always marked in rural societies. Such groups may even stand in the way of further economic development. Kenya is a well-explored example where this differentiation seemed to go together with an efflorescence of cash crop production and accumulation for a minority; in the past twenty years, however, while patterns of inequality continue, rural accumulation and even peasant cash crop production has been in severe decline in response to deteriorating international trade conditions and lack of state support. The pressures of urbanization and industrialization are largely excluded from this book despite their fundamental contextual importance. Nonetheless the pattern that Low identifies is so fundamental that this graceful interpretation will serve as a stimulus for many scholars.

University of Natal, Durban

BILL FREUND

Three Decades of Production of Historical Knowledge at Dar es Salaam. By I. N. KIMAMBO. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press, 1993 [publ. 1994]. Pp. v + 23. \$6.95; £3.75 (ISBN 9-9766-0180-8). (Distributed by African Books Collective).

This brief but welcome pamphlet is Professor Kimambo's 'Exit lecture' (his term) from the University of Dar es Salaam, where he was a senior lecturer in the Department of History from 1965 to 1969, became a full professor in 1970, spent the next thirteen years as Chief Academic Officer, and returned to History in 1983. It replaces the professorial Inaugural Lecture he never had time to prepare while CAO.

Instead of focusing on his own promising and unfortunately truncated scholarship, Kimambo reflects on post-colonial historical work and thought in Tanzania, and on the History Department's role. He begins in the late 1960's when several historians and anthropologists, including himself, wrote Vansina-inspired regional political histories utilizing oral tradition. In 1968, however, Kimambo was already advocating economic history. A year later the first publications of the Department of History appeared, spurring the now familiar critique of the 'Dar es Salaam school'. While acknowledging the validity of the criticism, Kimambo points out that the Tanzanian nationalism informing the 'school' was more radical than

elsewhere in Africa, and that the department was then committed to producing school histories and curricula while offering weekend schools and teacher seminars – all in conjunction with a vitally active Historical Association of Tanzania.

Kimambo summarizes the theoretical and methodological debates of the 1970s and 1980s, tracing the department's movement toward a 'Proletarian Socialist' position. While the debates were important, he believes that their price was a 'lost opportunity to produce historical knowledge for a whole generation' (p. 15). Mirroring this absence, Tanzania's Historical Association collapsed and history disappeared as a required subject at the upper levels of secondary school. The department's lengthy preoccupation with the colonial period came at the expense of pre-colonial work, including the collection of oral traditions and linguistic and archaeological training for students. Returning to the interaction between historiographical shifts and debates and the Tanzanian political environment, Kimambo concludes that the new reality of 'economic and political pluralism' will require opening up debates to more diverse views, and accommodating more than one school of historiography at a time.

As an early product of the 'Dar es Salaam school' I appreciated Kimambo's characteristically even-handed and well-written treatment of his subject. At times, however, I wanted him to escape the confines of Henry Slater's analysis. More might be said on the economic conditions faced by academics and students – conditions that crippled and stunted historical labor and production from *c.* 1976 to the late 1980s.

Finally, this pamphlet, like most things from Dar es Salaam University Press, has been published without editorial correction. More unfortunate still, it lacks a complete bibliography of the publications and unpublished papers produced by the department – the inclusion of which would have added enormously to its value and importance.

University of Minnesota

SUSAN GEIGER

Land Law in Lesotho: The Politics of the 1979 Land Act. By ANITA SHANTA FRANKLIN. Aldershot: Avebury, 1995. Pp. ix + 206. £39.50; \$67.95 (ISBN 1-85628-976-1).

Lesotho's 1979 Land Act was, at least in conception, a major innovative piece of legislation. This book therefore arouses expectations. In some areas the book does indeed fulfill expectations, but in others it will unfortunately leave the reader disappointed or misled.

A large part of the book surveys literature on land tenure (including material on Botswana, Kenya and Swaziland) and provides a history of land administration in Lesotho. In relation to Lesotho, there are a number of factual errors, perhaps the most important (p. 56–7) concerning the nature of the 1938 chieftainship reforms. The placing system, initiated by King Moshoeshe, consisted of each chief 'placing' sons to form a number of new chieftainships. The kingdom in time failed to expand further, and indeed contracted as land was lost through wars. After three or four generations, there was such a proliferation of chiefs that a member of the National Council complained that they had become as numerous as the stars in the heavens. The resulting friction between chiefs, and their exploitation of their subjects, led to colonial administrative reforms. These included for the *first* time the 'gazetting' of chiefs and headmen by publishing their names (by means of High Commissioner's Notice no. 171 of 1939). This action limited the number of recognized chiefs; but no-one was 'degazetted' as the author states. Moreover, the number of chiefs was not reduced as stated by the author from 1340 to 120: the number remained in excess of a thousand, as it does to the present day. It was the

number of chiefs who were permitted to hold courts which was reduced by the 1938 reforms. Their powers were reduced, not their numbers.

In passing, the author provides much incidental Lesotho history up to independence in 1966. Thereafter there is a strange omission, with no mention that constitutional government was suspended in 1970, and that subsequent legislation was by edict and then by a nominated 'Interim National Assembly' lasting more than a decade, its dissolution leading to an unfair election and then the military coup of 1986. These major events only get passing mention in an unreferenced remark about 'the broader issue that the [Land] Act like the government that drafted it was illegal and anti-democratic' (p. 118).

Parliament enacts legislation, but who initiates and drafts it? One might have hoped for research into the origins of Lesotho's Land Act. Although the Act, as it pointed out, consolidates an earlier 1973 Land Act and an unimplemented 1973 Administration of Lands Act, why was this latter act not implemented? It ought to have been possible through interview to have gained insight into what happened in the 1970s, including (as many believe) relevant technical aid being withdrawn and restored conditional on enactment.

The book would have been so much more useful if it had provided as an appendix the actual legislation to which it relates. The publishers are remiss too for allowing the book to see the light of day without an index.

National University of Lesotho

DAVID AMBROSE

Pygmées d'Afrique centrale. Par STEFAN SEITZ. (Langues et cultures africaines 17. Etudes pygmées IX). Paris: Peeters, 1993. Pp. 367. No price given (ISBN 2-87723-048-1).

This is the translation by L. Bouquiaux and Gloria Lex of *Die zentralafrikanischen Wildbeuterkulturen* (Studien zur Kulturkunde, 45: Wiesbaden, 1977). It deals successively with older theories about pygmies, the enumeration and classification of different groups of central African foragers, their ecology and economy, their transition from gathering to food production, their confrontation with farmers and their relations to sacred kingship. A critical evaluation of theories of culture change is also provided. This enumeration alone reveals how much the author is beholden to the points of view of Central European ethnology, even though he rejects the German *Kulturkreislehre* of P. W. Schmidt in which pygmy culture was treated as an, or as the, primordial human culture. This is despite the fact that Seitz stresses culture change, albeit of an orderly sort. But that does not detract from the fact, underlined in the preface to the translation (p. 12) that this is a very carefully documented reference work, an excellent entry into the forest of books about 'pygmies'.

But Seitz finished his research fully twenty years ago. Since then major and minor studies about these foragers have continued to proliferate. Bouquiaux acknowledges this drawback in his short preface but then claims to bring the reader up to date by immodestly citing eight books published by his own institute from 1978 onwards, and nothing else. One would at least have expected a mention of the equally impressive and numerous works linked to the Harvard project in Ituri and of the set of thorough studies carried out by Japanese scholars. Any new edition, in translation or not, should include a thorough additional bibliography and an additional report about major debates since 1976.

So this 'new' book is twenty years out of date: twenty years that have seen a total transformation of forager studies, indeed a deconstruction of the 'pygmy' field. Yet the translation is still useful because it now makes much of the older research accessible to intellectuals in the countries involved (all francophone except for

Zambia), and to scholars who do not read German. Anyone who reads German should use the original, that is the *Wildbeutekulturen* (cultures of foragers), which become *Pygmées* in the very title of the translation. They carry quite different connotations: the German implies a separation between culture and biology (at least) while the French retains the older 'species' approach.

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J. VANSINA

The Colonial Experience in Education: Historical Issues and Perspectives. Edited by ANTONIO NÓVOA, MARC DEPÆPE, ERWIN V. JOHANNINGMEIER. (*Pedagogica Historica*: Supplementary Series, Vol. 1.) Gent: CSHP, 1995. Pp. 382. Belg. Fr. 1200 (ISSN 0030-9230; ISBN 90-800947-3-6).

This special issue of *Pedagogica Historica*, a journal published from the University of Gent, presents a selection of eighteen papers from an international conference on the history of education held in Lisbon in 1993. The texts are in English and French, although there are no contributors from France or Britain. The contributions deal with general themes and European backgrounds as well as colonial experience. Six which relate to Africa will be briefly described here.

Peter Randall briefly reviews some church initiatives in South Africa, including private as well as mission schools; he concludes that in 1953 they bequeathed to 'the protagonists of Bantu education... a curriculum that admirably suited their purposes' (p. 145). Michael Omolewa deals with provision made by the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and London to hold examinations overseas; he fails to deal with Durham, and so mistakenly claims that the admirable Emmanuel Ajayi was in 1927 the first African to obtain a degree without going overseas (p. 187). Ahmed Chabchoub discusses the double face of French educational policy in Tunisia; many ideological innovations denounced by fundamentalists were conditionally welcomed by Tunisian modernizers. Similar themes are echoed in Malika Belkaïd's study of female education in Algeria. Lies Van Rompaey presents original research on Catholic youth organizations in Belgian Congo, and Antoinette Errante reports some interesting oral memories of mission schools in Mozambique. The volume as a whole should introduce British and French scholars to work on colonial education being done in countries of Catholic tradition.

Banchory

JOHN D. HARGREAVES

The African Experience with Higher Education. By J. F. ADE AJAYI, LAMECK K. H. GOMA and G. AMPAH JOHNSON. Accra, London and Athens, OH: Association of African Universities in association with James Currey and Ohio University Press, 1996. Pp. xii + 276. £35 (ISBN 0-85255-734-5); £14.95, paperback (ISBN 0-85255-733-7).

The Association of African Universities was formed at Rabat in 1967. In 1972 it held a workshop in Accra which resulted in *Creating the African University: Emerging Issues of the 1970s* (ed. T. M. Yesufu, Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1973). In 1992, the AAU commissioned the study under review, entrusting it to former vice-chancellors of Lagos and Zambia, and the founding rector of the Université de Bénin. The focus, on universities in tropical Africa, is narrower than the title implies, but of the eleven chapters three consider developments before 1960 and three more survey the next three decades. In part, then, this is a work of history (and certain admirably terse passages of historical summary suggest the hand of the professional historian). It does not, however, claim originality in this respect: inevitably, its earlier sections lean heavily on Ashby, and it has to be said

that in general the study is based on a somewhat unsystematic selection of sources. The list of references is disfigured by errors and the index by omissions: it requires much effort to establish, for example, the substantial role of the U.S.A., not only through USAID but through such bodies as the International Council for Educational Development. Still, this is a judicious overview of a large, if depressing, subject, by eminent scholars who are not afraid to criticize their own colleagues as well as governments and outside agencies. 'The failure of many African academics to fully appreciate the necessity to defend autonomy in the long-term interest of the academy was one of the most enduring legacies of the colonial situation' (p. 95).

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Libraries in Africa: Pioneers, Policies, Problems. By ANTHONY OLDEN. Lanham, MD., and London: Scarecrow Press, 1996 (UK agent: Shelwing Ltd., Folkestone). Pp. xx + 170. £35.65 (ISBN 0-8108-3093-0).

This expensive little book, originally a thesis for the University of Illinois, is an artless but sometimes perceptive account of certain library endeavours in British East and West Africa, based on archival and library research in Britain and the United States. It is not a history of libraries *per se* so much as a study of instances of external aid to the development of libraries beyond the sphere of teaching institutions. In the 1930s, one such source – as in so much of the English-speaking world – was the Carnegie Corporation. Grants to Kenya underpinned a system of circulating libraries, the depot for which was housed in the McMillan Memorial Library, Nairobi; membership was confined to whites until 1958. In Lagos, Alan Burns, as chief secretary, secured a grant to start an unsegregated but fee-charging library: in 1934 just 43 of its 481 members were African. The grant ended in 1935, but the library was still going forty years later.

During the Second World War the British Council interested itself in library development in Africa. The historian W. M. Macmillan, its senior representative in West Africa in 1943–5, took over schemes initiated by Carnegie; these led to libraries in Lagos and Accra which were taken over by town councils in 1950 and 1956 (though that in Lagos still charged a fee in 1963). Meanwhile, in 1943, the Council had received a report on East and Central Africa from a SOAS language teacher, Revd. Malcolm Guthrie, who was impressed by African appetites for reading-matter and briskly dismissed the doubts and fears of missionaries, settlers and officials. His report, however, had no practical result; instead, it was the East African Literature Bureau which from 1948 provided an African library service in the region. In Nigeria, as independence loomed, the British Council made new efforts, among which Olden singles out those in the north. After independence, the Ford Foundation weighed in, setting up the National Library of Nigeria as a 'Lagos Library of Congress'.

Olden's case studies omit both the Eastern Nigeria Regional Library and the Gold Coast Library Board: the latter 'has been widely covered elsewhere', and its director, Evelyn Evans, published her own story. Even so, Olden has usefully contributed to the culture history of later colonial Africa and has helped to rescue several white women from tropical obscurity: not only the racist East Africa Women's League but the admirable Ethel Fegan and Kate Ferguson in West Africa.

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Le développement social en Afrique contemporaine : une perspective de recherche inter- et intra-sociale. By ULRIKE SCHUERKENS. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995. Pp. 174. FF95 (ISBN 2-7384-3590-4).

Ce livre est composé, outre d'une introduction originale qui tente de synthétiser l'approche générale, de sept articles de l'auteur parus entre 1988 et 1993.

L'analyse du changement social s'articule autour de l'influence de la colonisation sur les sociétés autochtones, en mêlant facteurs internes et externes, à partir de recherches de terrain mais également d'analyses de romans. L'approche proposée est centrée sur l'affrontement et la déstructuration/restructuration des systèmes sociaux autochtones et, finalement sur l'articulation de deux cultures différentes.

L'adoption d'une approche quelque peu culturaliste ainsi que la surestimation des capacités des colonisateurs (puis des 'développeurs') à mettre en oeuvre leurs objectifs ou leurs politiques font obstacle à une réelle analyse de la fusion entre deux cultures. La notion de culture utilisée est figée, la dichotomie entre 'tradition' et 'modernité' trop affirmée pour qu'une réelle analyse des changements sociaux puissent être prise en considération. On peut notamment regretter que l'auteur n'utilise pas les travaux récents d'historiens, d'anthropologues ou de politistes (par exemple, F. Cooper, S. Berry, P. Geschiere, J. Lonsdale et B. Berman, A. Sindzingre, J-F. Bayart) qui mettent en avant la capacité d'interprétation, de détournement et de réinvention des acteurs africains, l'importance de l'ambiguïté et des malentendus, opératoires ou non, la complexité et les conflits à l'intérieur de chacune de ces sociétés analysées.

Paris

BÉATRICE HIBOU

Pan-African Chronology: A Comprehensive Reference to the Black Quest for Freedom in Africa, the Americas, Europe and Asia, 1400-1865. By EVERETT JENKINS, JR. North Carolina: McFarland, 1996. Pp. viii + 440. £44.95 (ISBN 0-7864-0139-7).

Everett Jenkins' book is an admirable attempt to present a comparative chronology of events in Africa and throughout the African Diaspora. The volume is divided into five principal chapters, corresponding to the five centuries covered, each preceded by a brief introduction, and includes a short bibliography and guide to sources, as well as an extensive and comprehensive index. In addition to sections on Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas, the author also includes useful sections on 'related historical events'.

It is written from an 'African American perspective', and the main emphasis is on the Americas, especially the United States. From the late eighteenth century, entries for the United States have sub-sections, e.g. the abolition movement, notable births and deaths, publications, scholastic achievement, black enterprise and the black church. The sections on Africa, Europe and Asia, are less successful. Only one book concerned with Africa's history is included in the bibliography and the events in these sections are not given the thorough explanations which appear in the material concerned with the United States. Some may find cause for concern regarding the rather simplistic explanations which appear, such as the reasons given for the Mfecane, or the decline of the Swahili city states, or the overly one-sided view that 'the enslavement and deaths of so many Africans, was in no small measure, caused by their fellow Africans'. The author also provides unconvincing explanations for the British abolition of the slave trade in 1807, and directs too much praise towards Wilberforce and his colleagues.

Events in Asia are given little attention after the seventeenth century, although there is sufficient mention of the career of Malik Ambar and relations between

China and Africa. Events in Europe, and Britain in particular, contain a number of factual errors: Equiano's home was not in what is today Benin; Lord Mansfield's judgement of 1772 did not simply mean that 'the slaves held in England were set free'; and Saartjie Baartman's name was not Venus! In such a monumental undertaking it is inevitable that errors and inaccuracies occur. But one is alarmed to see that a writer who takes such pains to choose acceptable terms to describe 'Indigenous Americans' is unable to dispense with the frequent use of the derogatory term 'mulatto'. Nevertheless this volume has much to recommend it. Most of the material, especially that relating to the United States, is well researched and does not appear in this 'Pan-African' form elsewhere. The writer is to be applauded for the very idea of a Pan-African chronology. It is to be hoped that he might compile a second volume which focuses on the modern period. With some corrections to the present edition, *Pan-African Chronology* should become an indispensable work of reference.

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HAKIM ADI

Slavery and Slaving in World History: A Bibliography, 1900-1991. By JOSEPH C. MILLER. Millwood, NY: Kraus International Publications, 1993. Pp. xvii + 556. \$90 (ISBN 0-527-63660-6).

This mammoth volume is yet another milestone in Joseph Miller's continuing survey of the ever more extensive writings on slavery around the world. From a working bibliography for a university course, this undertaking has expanded and blossomed to become this wonderful research tool for scholars, with 10,344 entries. The pervasiveness of slavery in human history is becoming ever more apparent, bringing out the peculiarity of the twentieth century. The listings include secondary scholarly works directly relevant to slavery and written from the perspective of any discipline. The framework is basically geographical by enslaving nation. The major problems here is the category 'Muslim', which might more fruitfully have been broken up into its constituent geographical entities. Asia, which always accounted for a far larger number of slaves than the Americas, is under-represented, in part reflecting scholarly coyness about this delicate topic. The entries are not annotated, but there are two lengthy indices, for authors and for subjects. The emphasis is on works in English, with a partial representation of writings in major West European languages. Despite these restrictions, the task is reaching the limits of the book format, as the fascination of scholars with this subject shows no sign of abating. Future editions will perhaps need to be available only in electronic format.

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L'histoire africaine en Afrique: recensement analytique des travaux universitaires inédits soutenus dans les universités francophones d'Afrique noire. Comp. CHANTAL CHANSON-JABEUR and CATHERINE COQUERY-VIDROVITCH. Paris: Editions l'Harmattan, 1995. Pp. 245. FF150 (ISBN 2-7384-3622-6).

The sub-title tells all for this extremely useful work. Included are citations to 884 honors papers, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations emanating from Benin (89 titles), Burkina Faso (119 titles), Congo (50 titles), Côte d'Ivoire (81 titles), Guinée (64 titles), Mali (207 titles), and Sénégal (274 titles), produced from the late 1960s to the mid-1990s. (Gabon is covered in similar fashion by Christopher Gray, *History in Africa* 21 (1994), 413-33, who lists 87 items for that

country.) The entries are arranged by author within each country and each includes all the relevant bibliographical details as well as a set of key words. Only the proper names in the latter, however, are included in the work's two indexes (which might better have been combined, especially since some items – e.g. Nzema – are wrongly placed).

As the compilers admit, the work is incomplete – indeed such a work could probably never be said to be otherwise, and the stated purpose (p. 6) is to facilitate 'circulation from one institution to another' within and beyond Africa. In fact, it is difficult to run one's eye over these listings without realizing – and regretting – how seldom they have been put to use. How many of the 25 items on Futa Jalon, for instance, have been used in any of the recent writing on that area? None, I suspect, would be a good guess.

This serves to remind us of the mutually hermetic conditions in which those writing about Africa seem so often to work. Scholars in Africa find it increasingly difficult to gain routine access to materials published outside Africa, while others working on, and sometimes in, Africa seldom see fit to incorporate these kinds of materials into their work. In the former case, at least, it is a case of necessity rather than delinquency. One way to ameliorate the latter condition would be for the Center for Research Libraries and/or counterpart institutions elsewhere to use the present work as a starting point for preserving and disseminating these materials in micro- or digital formats. It would at least make the excuses for not using them ring more hollow.

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DAVID HENIGE

The Congo. By RANDALL FEGLEY. (World Bibliographical Series, Vol. 162.) Oxford, Santa Barbara and Denver: Clio Press, 1993. Pp. 1 + 168. £30 (ISBN 1-85109-199-8).

Randall Fegley's bibliographical compilation is clearly not among the best of the *World Bibliographical Series*. The objective of the collection is to present a solid guide of the country to the non-specialist, and compared to other volumes in the series, Fegley's work lacks polish and perspective. The volume is marked by spelling errors. Accents in French names and titles are most often ignored. Important authors' names are misspelled: Gilles Sautter becomes 'Giles' in the text and 'Sautte' in the index; Jean-Claude Willame becomes 'Willaure'. Ironically, the listing of the latter's book, *Patrimonialism and Change in the Congo*, a political science essay on Zaïre, illustrates the mistake Fegley denounces in his preface (p. xiii): most English-speaking readers confuse Zaïre and Congo. The well-known collection of essays edited by P. Gifford and W. R. Louis is wrongly entitled by Fegley as *Transfers of Power in Africa*, and presented as a single volume (p. 68). Some titles are also poorly categorized, like René Gauze's *The Politics of Congo-Brazzaville*. Gauze's 150-page text is devoted to Congolese politics during the colonial period, with a 50-page supplement on the decade 1962 to 1972 written by Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff. It is nevertheless classified only under 'Post-colonial politics' (p. 71). Jan Vansina's *Paths in the Rainforest*, best classified in pre-colonial history, is listed just once under 'Politics, General'.

Overall, one gets a sense that the book was too rapidly edited. Too many books are cited time and again in different thematic chapters. For example, 27 commented titles followed by 36 cross-referenced entries compose the 'Ethnic Groups' chapter, without mention of Pierre Bonnafé's book on Kukuya people (*Histoire sociale d'un peuple congolais*, Paris, 1987–88), nor Georges Dupré's works on Beembé and Nzabi, nor even Georges Balandier's *Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique noire*, an extensive and classic study of the Bakongo and Fang peoples. This lack

of precision raises questions about the author's familiarity with the literature, and undermines the book's goal of providing a reliable and well-organized reading guide for the non-specialist.

In contrast Fegley's *Introduction* is of very high quality. The economic and geographic features of Congo, as well as its history, are precisely and correctly presented, with only occasional mistakes (Eboué cited as governor of Ubangui instead of Chad, Lingala ignored in the analyses of languages). The other significant contribution of Fegley's work is to present a rich and reliable bibliography on Congolese literature, one of the most brilliant and dynamic of the African continent.

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