REVIEWS

HISTORICAL FRAGMENTS


My instructions were to write a review for historians. This is a bit difficult as the volume under review is strictly a final archaeological report (sober, cautious, dense and probably over-edited) for this major site of which, as stressed by the author (p. 21), only one per cent of the total has been exposed. It is the second and last of two such reports by Welsby, who also directed the campaign of four excavation seasons (1989–92) here presented. Nor is my task aided by his statement that 'the historical summary to be found in the report of the first campaign remains valid today and the reader is referred to that volume' (p. 21). The detailed, exemplary excavation and publication of the Soba site, capital of the Alwa kingdom, unfortunately does little to elucidate its history.

An historical summary therefore has not been included in this second volume, and one would need to search through its text in full to ascertain what few related titbits are found there, and generally do so with specific questions in mind. The historian is, however, directed towards pp. 20–3, where the vast majority of immediately useful historical conclusions can be found.

These, perhaps inevitably, centre on questions of dating the origins of the metropolis of Soba itself, its antecedents and its successors, and more particularly the various excavation areas and their features. These range between the sixth and thirteenth centuries A.D., based on ceramics, imported glass and radiocarbon dates. The glass is virtually the only artefact type imported here, apart from a few ceramics. Some areas have several more circumscribed stratified phases of use. This is no surprise since textual records providing this range have long been known and the magnificence of the later city has been described by several Arab writers (e.g. Al-Yaqoubi, Al-Aswani, Abu Salih and the Funj Chronicle). However, the sheer scale of the early city can now be seen in the roughly contemporary date ranges of excavated red-brick structures, mostly churches, up to 2 km distant (e.g., mounds M12 and Z), and further unexcavated mounds covering over some 275 km². Perhaps more important are two conclusions having major implications. Both, essentially, are negative.

Firstly, unlike its counterparts of Faras and Old Dongola, capitals of the other two Nubian Christian kingdoms farther north, Soba itself was apparently not provided with defences. No evidence for fortification can be cited, providing a telling statement of its own sense of security against outside attack (although eventually it was overrun by the Funj sometime before 1504 A.D., according to their Chronicle), as well as the internal stability of the Alwa kingdom throughout its existence.

Secondly, evidence for occupation prior to the sixth century was not recovered and indeed is negated by Welsby, strengthening consideration of the view that

1 The first final report was published as B.I.E.A. Memoir 12: D. A. Welsby and C. M. Daniels. Soba: Archaeological Research at a Medical Capital on the Blue Nile, 1991. It covers the first campaign in 1981–6, but at an entirely different area of the site. The reader is encouraged to consult both volumes.
Soba was founded no earlier than the late post-Meroitic/Transitional period. This continues to leave somewhat of an historical vacuum for the development of the regional political power centre, raising further questions on the transfer of its capital city from Meroë to Soba, and the underlying reasons for it. The sequence of events between the eclipse of the Meroitic state and the rise of the Christian kingdom of Alwa, during which Christianity was first introduced into the region but for which no documentation survives, continues to remain obscure. Soba itself seems to have been pagan at its outset, but Alwa was already at least partially Christian before about 580, when Longinus arrived. The presence of a group of burials at Mound Z, both non-Christian and non-Muslim, interred at an unknown date but not earlier than the Christian period, adds to this sense of obscurity; the origin of these people raises further questions regarding possible relationship dynamics that may (given the radiocarbon dates provided on p. 21) eventually throw more light on Soba’s early existence. Nor was any evidence found for its large tenth-century Muslim quarter mentioned by Al-Aswani, an omission that emphasizes what remains hidden here.

For the cultural historian, however, there is plenty to find, often unconsidered and even unrecovered before. Detailed reports on the skeletal, botanical and zoological remains, pottery and other ceramics, textiles and footwear, metals and their debris, stone, glass, organic objects and other small finds, painted plaster and graffiti each include a thorough discussion of their implications, both positive and negative, for Alwan cultural development. This is the best we are going to get on Alwa for a considerable time. Non-Alwa scholars will find it very useful for comparanda with their own material.

Finally, two rather important omissions should be noted here. Unlike the first volume, no index is provided. This feature generally would be useful for overall historical questions and always is for cross-referencing scattered mention of specific topics outside their main individual discussion. More regrettable, however, is the lack in the bibliography to all references cited in the section on skeletal remains.

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CAPITAL OF ANCIENT GHANA


The 44-hectare tell of Koumbi Saleh is one of the great urban sites of Africa. Located in the eastern Hodh, several kilometres from Mauritania’s border with Mali, the site comprises over sixty mounds, delimited by large streets, consisting of debris from collapsed buildings constructed with plaques of locally available schist. A main attraction of the site since its discovery in 1914 by Bonnel de Mezières, a French civil servant, has been its putative identification as the capital of the Empire of Ghana described by al-Bakri in 1068. Prior to Sophie Berthier’s excavations at Koumbi Saleh beginning in 1975, virtually all archaeological work at the site, by Mezières, Raymond Mauny and others, was undertaken primarily to evaluate this identification. The archaeological material encountered in the course of these early, quite extensive, excavations was given only summary treatment.

Berthier’s approach, by contrast, considered the site in archaeological rather than historical terms and had as its objectives the study of architectural evolution at the site, the investigation of chronology and the characterization of material
culture through time. Originally a 3ème-cycle thesis defended in 1983 at the Université de Lyon II, the book’s publication has long been anticipated by researchers anxious for substantial archaeological insights into the site’s history. Why the book was never published in France is a mystery. But we can now be grateful to John Alexander, editor of the Cambridge Monographs in African Archaeology series of British Archaeological Reports, for undertaking to edit the thesis and make it available in a very concise format with good quality illustrations. It is a welcome addition to the growing literature on urban sites in West Africa.

The book reports on the results of excavations conducted during four field seasons in a single building. Berthier mentions a planned fifth season that was thwarted, leaving part of the house unexcavated. The work was undertaken as part of more extensive excavations at and around the Koumbi Saleh mosque, directed by Serge Robert. To date, Berthier’s work is the only publication to have emerged from that extensive project.

The first half of the book primarily concerns the excavation of the house, the interpretation of the chronology of the architecture and associated deposits and the interpretation of change through time in architectural style and technology, as well as spatial dynamics. Based on the nature, orientation and reworking of the stone walls, Berthier recognizes five archaeological levels (‘niveaux’), beginning with a pre-architectural Level 0, situated on dune sands at c. 600 cm. depth and continuing up through various episodes of stone wall construction, leveling, reworking and rebuilding. After stone and brick architecture first appeared in Level I at c. 560 cm. depth, the walls were soon razed and served as the foundation for a new, one-storey stone building with central pillars (Level II), the plan and orientation of which was maintained in Levels III and IV (420–310 cm.), although modifications to the interior wall plan were made to subdivide existing walls to create more, but smaller, discrete interior spaces. Levels III and IV mark the period of most intensive occupation at the site, as attested not only by architectural activity, but also the numbers of copper and iron objects and other artifacts such as beads (described in the second half of the text).

Berthier suggests that the distinctive Koumbi Saleh architectonic style in Levels III and IV commonly included use of rectangular and triangular wall niches, the use of paving stones on floor, step and terrace surfaces, and the use of painted schist wall plaques. She notes that specific elements of the house configuration, such as its 2:1 length/width ratio, plus the lack of a central courtyard, are characteristic of the Koumbi Saleh region. Houses 300 km. away in Tegdaoust did not share these elements.

Berthier interprets Levels II, III and IV as constituting a single, extended period of successive occupations at the house during the phase of ‘grande urbanisation’ at the site, dated by twelve radiocarbon determinations on charcoal to the eleventh to fourteenth centuries. After a period of destruction or neglect marked by roof collapse at the end of Level IV, the house fell into decline and was ultimately abandoned. The ruined, roofless house was subsequently reoccupied very briefly (Level V) in the later fourteenth or fifteenth century. The top 150 cm. of deposits consists entirely of schist plaques from collapsed walls.

Berthier’s treatment of this confusing maze of walls is admirably clear, assisted by helpful summary illustrations and charts. However, the discussion and analysis of stratigraphy is so highly summarized (compressed into only four pages) that it is nearly impossible to understand how the occupation deposits inside the walls were linked to the changes in wall construction that are the focus of Berthier’s stratigraphic interpretation. Without stratigraphic excavation sensitive to the recognition of individual floor configurations and of later intrusions such as pits, the likelihood rises that material deposited at very different times will be recorded as part of a single level and erroneously considered contemporaneous.
Some of the details one normally hopes for, such as a picture of the subsistence economy and possible trade in foodstuffs are also missing because faunal and botanical material was not collected or analyzed, an oversight that is hard to understand. This is particularly so since this material would also provide insights into the local environment at the time, a subject in which Berthier expresses interest. No epigraphic or unambiguously dated historical artefacts were recovered that could aid in chronological resolution. The finds described in the second half of the volume range from utilitarian (grindstones, iron knives and sickles, a horse bridle, intact domestic ceramics) to artisanal (crucibles and moulds) to decorative and prestige items (glass beads, copper-based rings and ‘clochettes’) and even putative monetary items (166 loop-ended wires of leaded copper with arsenic). An analysis of how the numbers and types of artefact in different rooms changed through time would have enhanced Berthier’s interpretation significantly, but could only have been meaningful with appropriate chronological control during excavation.

Furthermore, it is disappointing to find no specialist analyses of the glass beads and weights, copper (beyond two or three of the copper fils monnaie) or stone (grindstones and beads) for information on composition and provenance. The excavations provide almost no significant new data on trade. This issue of understanding the material culture at Kumbi Saleh in the wider context of trade and interaction is hampered at all junctures by Berthier’s reluctance to discuss it in relation to any other sites in the western Sudan. Monographs on several relevant sites (Jenne-jeno, Sincu Bara) were published prior to the defence of the thesis in 1983, but are not even cited in the bibliography. Since then, a substantial corpus of published work has appeared on Gao, the Lakes region of the middle Niger, the Mena, Jenne-jeno, Tegdaoust and middle Senegal valley, among others. Of this corpus, only the Tegdaoust monographs seem to have found their way into the bibliography in the course of revision. One understands that Berthier now works in another part of the world, and was unable to update the text significantly, but this does limit the interest and effectiveness of her text, particularly for non-archaeologists.

Despite its limitations, the monograph stands as the most detailed description we have of any of the material recovered from the many thousands of cubic metres of deposits that were dug up at Kumbi Saleh between 1914 and 1981. For that alone, it is a significant contribution to the West African archaeological literature.

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SUSAN KEECH MCINTOSH

POLITICAL ITINERARIES


This volume is an ambitious attempt to address the absence of African source material in the recent generation of general theories of political organisation. Specifically, the volume sets out to use the vast diversity of political experience in pre-colonial Africa to disprove the neo-evolutionary notion that state formation was in some way an inevitable and unrelenting process. To this end McIntosh has assembled a formidable band of Africanist heavyweights, drawing knowledge from archaeology, anthropology, history and comparative linguistics. Given its orientation and the cast of writers, it is likely that most Africanists will welcome the
volume. Being part of Cambridge University Press’s influential New Directions in Archaeology series, the real test will lie in whether it makes any impression on non-Africanist scholars.

Inevitably, readers look more critically at work conducted in their own spheres of experience. Denbow’s chapter on society and interaction on the margins of the Kalahari highlights several problems. This volume was put together from a core set of papers originally presented at the Association of American Anthropologists’ meeting in 1992, and Denbow’s and other chapters have suffered from the seven-year delay in publication. In 1992, Denbow’s paper would have made an important contribution to the Kalahari debate; in 1999, most scholars have moved on. More critically, Denbow has not recognised recent work, including important contributions by African scholars, nor has he addressed the important deficiencies in his own constructs, not least of which is the continued non-publication of excavated data. Whilst these shortcomings do not in the end negate the essence of Denbow’s contribution, they do tarnish the impression of the volume as a whole.

Such a bold attempt to break into the broader field of general theory building requires a strong introduction to set the scene for the subsequent chapters. After a huge but ultimately disorienting introduction, the reader is confronted by the three weakest chapters of the volume (Southall, Stahl and R. McIntosh), which fail to make a coherent contribution to the key issues. The non-Africanist, starting the volume from the beginning, may by now be considering abandoning it. Fortunately, Susan McIntosh then steps in with a useful review paper of the McIntosh’s excellent work in the inland Niger delta. Archaeologists, in particular, will be reassured by the presentation of good, solid, archaeological data, in this and in subsequent chapters by Denbow, Robertshaw and de Maret. However, the effectiveness of these chapters is largely surpassed by chapters utilizing historical anthropology (Assombang, Kopytoff, David and Sterner) and history from comparative linguistics (Schoenbrun, Vansina), all of which illuminate the variety of African political systems. Pick of the bunch is the paper by David and Sterner which succeeds in being sophisticated, stimulating and entertaining in managing to sustain a tenuous link between Cambrian fossils and Mandara polities. States were only one of a wide range of outcomes that could result from ‘intermediate’ societies (formerly chiefdoms). These examples also detail the vast array of factors encouraging people to recognize common authority. As Vansina points out (p. 171), where general theory formerly favoured two principles of social aggregation, kinship or territory, the peoples of the Central African rainforests can be shown to have included principles such as residence, kinship, age, association, ritual centre subjection and territory, which led to polities as diverse as dispersed mobile hamlets and the kingdom of Kongo. The premise of the volume, that evolutionary constructs are inappropriate when discussing African political organization, is therefore clearly upheld.

Few Africanists, and even fewer historians, would ever have doubted this. Instead what is perhaps most interesting about the volume is the relative inadequacy of archaeological chapters in providing complex discussions on the basis of their data. As an archaeologist, I naturally cannot accept that this is a fundamental flaw of the discipline itself. Rather, what this highlights is both the absence of projects on a sufficient scale to generate the wealth of detail necessary to focus on subtleties and nuances in the archaeological record, and archaeologists failing to focus on appropriate aspects of their data. The latter point is highlighted by the work of Schoenbrun and Vansina. Using the ‘words and things’ approach to comparative linguistics, they both regularly focus on the house as a key unit in the organization of society. None of the archaeological contributions to the volume analyze their societies from the perspective of individual houses, despite the recovery of house remains in at least some of the reported work.
Thus, the volume is of considerable significance in pointing the directions in which future research should be targeted on the African continent, but it suggests that Africanists are some way off making a coherent contribution to general theory. Ultimately, of course, this contribution can only be made if those in the theoretical mainstream wish to make use of African criteria. That they at present do not, and that the African continent in all its rich diversity of political formations is considered of marginal relevance to theorizing about human societies in general, says more about bias in western thought than it does about deficiencies in Africanists’ research strategies.

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SUDANESE ARABIC HISTORY-WRITING


Sudanese Arabic history-writing began during the last quarter of the eighteenth century with the rise of a literate middle class who had a taste for the genre. The most successful works were composed by courtiers who enjoyed some degree of access to the traditions and intrigues of the government of their day; the best manuscripts were copied freely and circulated widely, not only among Sudanese intellectuals but also among the European and Egyptian travellers who began to come to the Sudan in increasing numbers during that age. As diverse writers copied and augmented circulating manuscripts there gradually emerged a large historical work of composite authorship that existed in the form of similar, but not identical, versions scattered across the world from numerous repositories in the Sudan to Cairo, Istanbul, Vienna, Paris, London and Nottingham. In The Sudan of the Three Niles, P. M. Holt has provided a sound English translation of a sensible synthesis of this important source for Sudanese history.

The generation of Sudanese historians whose careers spanned the first half of the nineteenth century experienced the transition from the final decadent years of the Sinnār sultanate to the effective but harsh new colonial regime imposed by the Turkish government of Egypt, and their writings include some discussion of both periods. Because the information they conveyed concerning the pre-colonial age was so unusual the work as a whole, as in Holt’s subtitle, has often been called the Funj Chronicle. Part of it, however, concerns events of the Turco-Egyptian period, and all of it reflects the historiographical interests and assumptions of men who served and collaborated with the colonial regime – a theme that deserves further consideration.

Given the complex textual history of the Funj Chronicle, it is not surprising that variant readings exist for a number of passages. To cite but one illustrative example, in 1219/1804–5 the Hamaj leader Muhammad wad Nāsir led his slave troops eastward out of the capital city. According to one version their destination was the village of Kassāb, on the east bank immediately opposite the capital, from whence a few lines later they emerged to rejoin the narrative of events for the next year. The alternative version translated by Holt, equally authentic but at this point less plausible, would send them hundreds of miles away to Kassala, erstwhile seat of government for the former Funj province of al-Tāka, already lost to the kingdom as long before as 1791. In view of these textual complexities, one may eagerly anticipate Yūsuf Fadl Hasan’s forthcoming Arabic critical edition (p. vii), which should more adequately expose the full array of interpretative choices that inevitably confront each reader.
Readers less than intimately familiar with Sudanese historiography are apt to find the contents of the Funj Chronicle complicated and, in the absence of annotation to supply an explanatory context, potentially misleading. To remedy this difficulty several supplementary genres of sources should be held ready for consultation. Some are Arabic. For example, while neither the chronicler (p. 74) nor the editor (p. xiv) may be able to say whether or not the Funj province of al-Bahr existed before ‘Adlān was named its governor in 1762, the reader need not be left in doubt; the province certainly existed, and the names of its earlier eighteenth-century governors are known through the witness rosters of land charters issued by the sultan’s court.1 The same literature confirms and gives practical examples of the matrilineal organization of the Īnśāb, the Funj elite, a situation the editor’s appended dynastic tables are likely to obscure.2 Although the king-list obtained by James Bruce does appear in an appendix (pp. 184–5), little indication is given of its superiority; it not only offers more precise chronological information than does the Funj Chronicle, but antedates the latter by half a century. Other sources necessary for interpreting the Funj Chronicle are couched in European languages, of which two brief examples must suffice.

Charles-Jacques Ponçet’s valuable account of the court of Baḏī III (p. 12, n. 33) nevertheless pales in significance beside the contributions of other contemporary travellers.3 Similarly, while a close reading of the Funj Chronicle will reveal that the last titular Hamaj Wazīr was Ḥusayn b. Muhammad Abū Likaylik and not, as the editor believes (p. 186) the de facto strongman of the day, Muhammad b. ‘Adlān b. Muhammad Abū Likaylik, it is easier to confirm the titles the two men bore and to learn their respective positions in government through the testimony of Giovanni Battista Brochi.4

In sum, the Funj Chronicle offers rich rewards to anyone willing to invest the considerable effort necessary to understand it, and this very welcome edition should help it gain the attention it deserves.

2. Ibid. Documents 16, 24.

ON THE ETHIOPIAN PERIPHERY


In the first three paragraphs of his introduction, the author defines both the scope and the limitations of his work. He modestly characterizes the undertaking as ‘a very tentative account’ of the ‘peripheral’ regions of Ethiopia. The incidence and nature of the sources, it is argued, have shaped the narrative, thereby inducing a focus on those regions blessed with documentary reference and on the military
campaigns that tend to predominate in the literature. Moreover, there has been no attempt to ‘impose’ a schema on the sources, the preferred method having been to let the sources speak for themselves.

Within the constraints outlined above, the author has given us a fairly detailed historical account spanning five millennia. Almost all the available literature – from travellers’ accounts to chronicles – has been tapped to piece together the story. That story is divided into five major epochs: ancient times (c. 3500 B.C.–523 A.D.); the early medieval period (c. 890–1454); the era of Zar’a Ya’eqob and Lebna Dengel (1433–1540); the era of Imam Ahmad (alias Grañ, 1526–45); the era of Galawdewos and Sarsa Dengel (1540–1606); and the Oromo migrations and the Gondarine monarchy (1522–1800). Each part concludes with a chapter, uniformly entitled ‘The Borderlands and the Interior’, where the details are recapped in more manageable fashion. These summations suggest an alternative format for the whole book, a regional rather than a chronological one, wherein each region (e.g. Damot, Afar or Bizamo) would be dealt with exhaustively in one section rather than recurring piecemeal in each period. One could indeed argue that an essay on Damot, that borderland par excellence, might have proven more instructive than the tedious account of border regions that we are offered here. As it is, not only regions but also personalities are encountered with somewhat unsettling recurrence to fit the chronological straitjacket: four headings bear the name of Emperor Susenyos alone (pp. 329, 352, 395 and 397).

Even if one accepts the wisdom of such a faithfully chronological approach, one cannot fail to be struck by the considerable periodic overlap between Parts Three and Four, and further overlap between Parts Four and Five. Moreover, the validity of pushing the narrative to the fourth millennium B.C. is questionable, as the kingdom of Punt that has apparently necessitated such a distant foray can hardly be called a periphery of the Ethiopian empire, which was non-existent at the time. What exactly a periphery is has always been problematic. The author had done little to help dispel this confusion, other than intimating his discomfort by putting the term ‘peripheral’ within quotes. In a sense, what we have is not so much the history of the regions as a history of Ethiopia from a regional perspective. Indeed, in some parts, we have little divergence from the standard history of the country which we have come to know. Thus, it is difficult to see what relevance the introduction of Christianity in the Aksumite period has to a study of regional history. Likewise, the only apparent value of the detailed account of the wars of Ahmad Grañ appears to be to provide us with an English rendering of the chronicle of those exploits, which has hitherto been available only in the Arabic original or a French edition.

The conclusion offers us the kind of thematic treatment that would have given the book greater value and focus. The commercial and inter-ethnic relations that were promised in the introduction but were eclipsed by the dominant motif of military campaigns re-emerge again to breathe their last. The reader, while gratified at the massive data that the book offers, cannot help but wish that the conclusion and recapitulation at the end of each part had framed the narrative, even if that might have involved imposing the much dreaded ‘schema’ on the sources.

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BAHRU ZEWDE
Among the collections of Richard Rawlinson (1690–1755) held in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, are 3,000 letters written from 1681 to 1699 by agents of the London-based Royal African Company (RAC), stationed in the small trading forts on the Gold Coast. Robin Law has painstakingly organized and annotated 634 of these letters (and six receipts) in *The English in West Africa, 1681–1683, Part 1*, a volume in the Sources of African History series published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press. As Law points out in his introduction, RAC factors reported to the Chief Agent at Cape Coast Castle who then supplied his own reports to London. The Chief Agent’s letters are contained in the well-known Treasury (T70) class of documents in the Public Record Office. Because the Rawlinson collection includes the more detailed, original correspondence from sub-factors, it therefore supersedes the often-condensed PRO material.

This original correspondence from the RAC sub-factors is contained in three volumes, which have been bound ‘haphazardly, without much regard for chronological order’ (p. viii). Law separated these letters by location and date, and organized the correspondence from coastal agents based, from west to east, at Sekondi, Komenda, Anashan, Anomabu, Egya, Winneba, James Fort (Accra), Offra and Whydah. The last section of documents is a small number of notes, letters and bills of lading written by English ship’s captains on the Gold Coast. Law briefly introduces these sections, and also presents a glossary of words contained in the Rawlinson documents—separating the non-English words, weights, measures and values, and trade goods. At the end of the volume, he includes a concordance, bibliography and detailed index of places, people, ships and selected topics. The concordance matches each of the 640 documents in the volume with the Rawlinson archive reference and folio. This supplemental material is of great value.

The Rawlinson corpus covers an important period in West African history. During 1681–99, African merchants increased their trades in slaves and non-slave products with European agents and ship’s captains. The exportation of enslaved Africans doubled in the 1670s and 1680s, declined during the eight-year English-French war, and then reached new heights at the turn of the eighteenth century. By the early 1700s, the value of slaves leaving Africa began to surpass gold. Letters from RAC agents in 1681–3 discuss the interrelationship between these two principal trades and African political history. As one agent wrote in 1682, if Ahenesa ‘overcomes [the armies of the Achims] we may expect slaves, if [he is] over com a better trade for gold than hath been many years’ (p. 182). Indeed, as Law notes, the factors’ correspondence documents several military–political developments, including the rise of Adom on the western Gold Coast and Akwamu to the east. This volume will be of value to scholars who analyze alliances between Africans and Europeans, and the impact of the slave and non-slave trades on local societies.

Perhaps of most interest are the day-to-day marketing arrangements between Africans and Europeans detailed in the correspondence. Both groups of traders are clearly shrewd bargainers, raising and lowering prices to match supply and demand fluctuations. With scarce supplies of corn, African merchants increased prices and forced the RAC to limit demand by spacing the timing of their ship arrivals (p. 128). Their agents faced stiff competition from the Dutch and
interlopers, who frequently offered better assortments and quality of goods for gold, provisions and slaves. Prices also fluctuated due to the market power of African slave-trading merchants. Slave prices at Offra were 20 per cent less than at nearby Whydah, where ‘they grow upon every ship here’, as a captain stated in 1683 (p. 329). The short-term relationship between the provisions and slave trades was crucial. One RAC agent noted that he had ‘upwards of 50 slaves in [James Fort, Accra], which eats a chest of corne every day…And slaves comes in very plenty and I not having provisions to supply them, I must send my canoe to windward this night for more corne’ (p. 189). Captains and agents would not purchase enslaved Africans without sufficient supplies of water and corn.

Law’s brief annotations of select documents place information in the context of African political developments, clarify words (archaic and non-English) and specify geographical locations, although there are no maps in the volume. Unfortunately, there are few editorial remarks on the historical significance of many detailed entries. For example, the longest letter in the collection, from July 1682, includes observations of the estuary, markets and traders at Apa, near Badagry in modern Nigeria (pp. 232–7). Is this the first such commentary on record? For specialists in African history or the gold and slave trades, *The English in West Africa, 1681–1683* is an important volume, and Law organises a complex set of documents in a straightforward and accessible manner.

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**CAPTIVITY AND SLAVERY IN THE MAGHRIB**


Paul Baepeler’s anthology of American Barbary captivity narratives published between 1798 and 1820 is not only a valuable source for the study of American intellectual history; it also affords an opportunity for re-examining a theme of burning actuality: the relations between culture and imperialism. This is exactly what Paul Baepeler has brilliantly done in his rich and well informed introduction which places these writings within the context of nineteenth-century international relations.

Upon examining the ‘memoirs’ of these American captives, which range from the fictions of Eliza Bradley and Maria Martin to the detailed and verifiable accounts of Ion Perdicaris and James Cathart, one realizes quickly that it is very difficult to distinguish reality from fiction. We are in fact dealing with a literary genre. The conception of reality in this context dictates its own needs, rules and chronology. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was an ambience vis-à-vis the Islamic world in general and the Barbary states in particular with which the experience of every Christian captive had to resonate. The captivity accounts reproduce similar images of the ‘barbarian other’, representations nourished as much by ignorance as by prejudice. The narrators who attempt to go beyond the limits of the prevailing discourse – to show the human and even noble face of the ‘barbarian’ – are rapidly called to order by the rules of the genre. At best, the Moorish Muslim master could be depicted as ‘a noble savage’, as in the instance of the Sharif al-Raisuli in the movie based on Ion Perdicaris’ account.

The cultural code expressed in these relations could apply to all the ‘barbarian
others’, but the description is all the more fitting in the case of the ‘Barbary’ states. Attitudes towards this part of the world were determined by centuries of hostility between the lands of Islam and Christendom and by the de facto state of war that existed between the United States and some north-west African states in the eighteenth century. It was this climate and not the reality that shaped the discourses of the American captives. Moreover, the cultural context in which these narratives were received was dominated by currents of thought such as Orientalism, the Enlightenment and Christian activism in which Islam was depicted as a false religion, Muslims as satanic creatures and oriental despotism as the number one enemy of ‘the rights of God, nature and society’.

In order to mirror this climate, all Christian Barbary captivity relations since the seventeenth century followed one and the same pattern: the narrative starts with confrontation at sea between the civilized white Christians and the barbarian black Moors, a confrontation between the forces of good and the forces of evil. There follows the journey to the capital to meet the sultan or the bey – the devil in person – during which the captives are stripped of the last symbols of ‘civilization’. The conditions of their captivity, even if they could never equate in their inhumanity institutionalized chattel slavery in the Americas or the plight of Muslim captives in Europe, were occasions for the editors to present the captives’ ordeal as a trial of their faith and a test of their capacity to resist the temptation of apostasy. As for the renegades – of whom there were many – they were simply ignored because they constituted a false note in the alleged incompatibility between the civilized white Christian captive and the black, barbarian Muslim master. The account closes with the arrival of the saviours – ‘agents of God’ or envoys of democratic governments – who reward the faithful and patient captives by offering them both freedom and religious salvation.

Over the centuries Barbary captivity narratives became part of the cultural legacy of the West and were filtered through religious, popular and even academic literature. They reached millions of readers and viewers around the world in various forms, always evoking the same stereotyped images of ‘barbarian’ North African Muslims. After two centuries of cultural hegemony many ‘modern Moors’ have internalized this discourse and look back today at their pre-colonial ‘barbarian’ history through the same prism.

Mohammed Ennaji’s point of departure is also the issue of slavery, a subject still considered taboo in many Muslim countries. Based on his doctoral thesis in economics, which was a sociological analysis of Moroccan society in the nineteenth century viewed from the perspective of the institution of slavery (1987), Ennaji has produced a powerful speculative account in which he reveals his talents for compassion and his capacity to imagine himself in the conditions of the enslaved.

Because many historical sources do not offer direct evidence about the sociological conditions of slavery, Ennaji has complemented them with bits and pieces of information assembled at great effort from other scattered and varied sources: private letters, legal opinions, travel literature, etc. However, this rich data was analyzed from the perspective of understandings of slavery developed by scholars outside of the Moroccan or Muslim context. In effect, Ennaji applied a pre-established model of slavery to the Moroccan case. Thus, the reader finds a chapter on sexuality filled with all the western fantasies about oriental society, even though the lack of documentation requires the author to rely on his imagination (p. 31). Pictures of violence, torture and bloodshed completed the image, particularly when this violence was committed by an oriental despot, Sultan Mawlay Sulayman, who ‘kills one of his sons who has murdered a slave by pouring boiling water over him’ (p. 29). A section on ‘Revolt and revolution’ is included even though the author himself admits that ‘revolt is an overstatement’ because no ‘real revolt ever occurred’ (p. 48). The book closes with the triumph of European pressures which
led to the abolition of the slave trade in Morocco and ‘signaled the beginning of a new era’ (p. 106).

Thus, instead of an historical study of the phenomenon of slavery from within the local historical and cultural contexts, we are presented with another western discourse about a pre-colonial Moroccan practice. The author’s exceptional efforts to assemble his documentation was not matched by his methodology: sources have not been weighed and evaluated, chronologies have been foreshortened, and social and political institutions (sultan, religious order, state, tribe, family) have been levelled. Clearly, students of Moroccan and African history still face the formidable challenge of developing the appropriate tools to analyze this most complex phenomenon.

Université Mohamed V, Rabat

FATIMA HARRAK

SLAVES IN COLONIAL AFRICA


Suzanne Miers and Martin Klein are the impresarios of African slave studies. Both have been actively involved in the field since Africanists first turned their attention to the subject in the early 1970s. Both have sustained and deepened their understandings of the historical complexities of studying slavery and the end of slavery over the past quarter of a century. Both have nurtured the field by encouraging and publishing junior scholars’ research as well as more senior scholars in the five edited volumes on slavery they have produced, usually in collaboration with others.

Most of the thirteen chapters in this volume were presented at the multiple panels organized by Miers and Klein at the 1994 through 1997 annual meetings of the African Studies Association. Geographical coverage is uneven: seven of the chapters are on West Africa; one chapter focuses on East Africa and one on the Sudan. None covers Central Africa, Southern Africa or the Horn, although Miers’ chapter on international organizations uses some material from Ethiopia to demonstrate the power of these organizations to force anti-slavery issues in Africa. With three chapters on north-west Africa, including the Sahara, this volume provides the first sustained coverage of slavery and colonial rule in this region. The volume also features two chapters on German Africa (German East Africa and Cameroon). The volume has eight maps, although a dedicated map for each chapter would have helped readers see the spatial dimensions of material presented.

The editors provide a very short but serviceable introduction to the volume. Readers familiar with the literature will not find a stimulating new interpretation here, although the editors challenge their readers to pursue slave studies in order to provide further information on the range of former slaves’ experiences, particularly women’s, and to search for new sources to provide detail of the post-emancipation adjustments made by both masters and slaves. While some of the chapters cover familiar ground of anti-slavery policies, others provide fascinating new material drawn from new bodies of source material. Most of the chapters push the study of the end of slavery well into the colonial period, which itself became a justification for doing little to end slavery.

Three important themes emerge from this volume. First, as Klein pointed out in his 1993 volume, the end of slavery ‘involved a struggle that often lasted generations’. Why did the emancipation of slaves in Africa take so long? Many chapters examining the French, the British and the German anti-slavery policies
remind us of Sara Berry’s description of colonial rule as ‘hegemony on a shoestring’. Colonial officials were usually keenly aware of the weakness of their own authority and their dependence upon African elites to help them govern. Colonial officials thus selectively applied anti-slavery policies as a means of punishing chiefs opposed to their policies and ignored them when dealing with elites they wished to support. Most colonial powers used anti-slavery to end the trade in slaves, but acted less forcefully with dealing with what many began to represent as ‘domestic slavery’. Benign domestic slavery versus brutal plantation slavery became important tropes in international as well as in colonial policies.

Many of the chapters discuss how unevenly anti-slavery policies were applied in the colonies. Klein’s chapter on the Sahara, Deutsch’s on German East Africa and Opare-Akurang on the Gold Coast discuss how local district officers designed within broad limits their own anti-slavery policies. Implementation of anti-slavery policies depended upon the degree of colonial authority, which varied from district to district. Thus, colonial authority was used within the same colony sometimes to support masters’ powers over their slaves or to encourage slaves to leave their masters.

Colonial anti-slavery policies underwent significant change during the inter-war period. As Miers argues in her chapter, the work of the Antislavery and Aborigines Protection Society kept the issues of slavery before the public and before international organizations, often forcing metropolitan officials to take stronger action in the colonies. But this period also saw the appointment of more ‘liberal’ district officers, particularly in the Sudan (Hagery’s chapter) and in Sierra Leone (Rashid’s chapter), who were less willing to turn a blind eye towards slavery.

Part of the persistence of slavery was that European colonial officials could not easily identify slaves. In a wonderful examination of a series of petitions written by slaves in Saharan communities to French officials, Cordell demonstrates how slaves could use the presence of European authority to end their conditions, but how quickly masters learned to argue that female slaves were their ‘wives’. French anti-slavery policy ended at the door to the conjugal unit, which limited female slaves’ strategies.

Slavery persisted because some slaves chose to remain close to their masters and to renegotiate their relationships. In a chapter on the maccube (domestic) slaves of the Fulbe in Bundu, Clark builds upon an argument raised by Baldus in the Miers and Kopytoff volume about the persistence of servility among Fulbe slaves. Baldus interpreted this persistence of servility into the present in terms of ‘false consciousness’; Clark prefers to describe it as a process of ‘refashioning ties of dependency’. Klein describes how masters in the Sahara used both psychological and supernatural intimidation to keep their slaves dependent and willing to work for their masters. In an article on the royal slaves of Kano, Stillwell reminds us that not all slaves were exploited field hands or household drudges, but privileged members of the elite. The royal slaves of Kano fought hard to maintain their servility, which guaranteed them important bureaucratic roles and significant rewards well into the 1920s.

Slavery persisted into the teens and beyond because masters often entangled their slaves in webs of property and contract relations. Slaves may have chosen to remain with their masters as they renegotiated their roles and waited until they had better access to economic resources. Uneven development and restricted access to resources and wage labour played important roles in determining the pace at which slavery ended among the Igbo (Ohadike’s chapter), among the Yoruba (Falola’s chapter) and in Cameroon (Eckert’s chapter).

Growing directly out of this discussion of the persistence of slavery is the second theme: what was the meaning of freedom? The papers presented here demonstrate that Africanists have come a long way from the naïve and misleading dichotomy
between slavery and freedom. Kopytoff reminded us that the range of dependencies lies at the heart of all social relationships and that freedom could be understood as the negation of social identity. Kopytoff certainly overstated the issue, but the notion of a range of dependencies is important in addressing the persistence of slavery. However, many slaves did seek to end their dependency upon their masters. Many fled when they could, as Rashid, Cordell and Falola make clear in their chapters. Others sought official German ‘letters of freedom’ to signify the end of their servile relations (Deutsch examines a body of some 50,000 letters of freedom issued between 1890 and 1914). Rashid, among the chapters in this collection, makes the strongest argument for examining slaves’ actions as means to uncover the meanings of freedom. As the editors make clear, one of the areas where new research is urgently needed is in recovering African testimony about the experiences of the end of slavery.

Recovering the African voice in this period of post-emancipation adjustment to slavery is the final theme and poses significant moral as well as epistemological issues. Many former slaves would ‘rather forget’ their former status; even for those former slaves who remained close to their masters, the lingering memory of slave status, as Clark discusses, is shameful. Sikainga, in his chapter on Morocco, argues that courts became a major arena for the struggle between masters and slaves. Others point to court records as potentially new sources of evidence of both African agency, but also of as a means of examining the complex sets of property relationships that stemmed from slavery including inheritance, child custody and property rights.

The papers in this volume continue to fill out the story of the range of experiences of slaves in colonial Africa. The papers also call attention to the rewards of deeply combing the archives for new sources about the post-emancipation adjustments and about the meanings of new forms of social relations.

Stanford University

RICHARD ROBERTS

2. Sara Berry, No Condition is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa (Madison, 1993), ch. 2.

HISTORY OF A SAHARAN ELITE


This highly detailed history of a Saharan region in Mauritania was shaped by its author’s personal as well as professional interest in his ‘ancestral home’, a small oasis named Tijjiga. Ould Khalifa’s intimate connection with his subject of study provided him with many advantages and a few uncomfortable choices. His ancestors were members of Tijjiga’s elite, the Idaw ‘Ali, who have been regionally famous for their commercial and scholarly activities since the early nineteenth century. But Tijjiga, like the rest of the Sahara, was a highly stratified society composed of elites, artisans, tributary clients, freed slaves of servile status and
slaves. Ould Khalifa’s challenge was to interpret the indigenous and French colonial sources of Tijigja’s history without compromising his scholarly integrity or abandoning his family and ancestral loyalties.

This book is based on the author’s doctoral thesis, completed at the Sorbonne under the direction of Jean Devisse, and is constructed in the style of the ‘Annales’ school of Ferdinand Braudel. The narrative begins just before the establishment of the oasis and continues to the end of the colonial period: if it has a central thesis, it is that a society’s history is best understood through an examination of long-term changes in economics and social structure. Yet Ould Khalifa builds his narrative around political and economic relations among elites, giving relatively little attention to lower ranks of society or the cultural dimension of social stratification. In particular, he almost completely ignores discourses on race and ethnicity, which were extremely important in the Sahara during this period. This lacuna is not reflected in the evidence he examined, which tends to focus on elites but also provides information on other social ranks and the cultural explanations for their subordination. Indeed, he draws on a broad range of sources, including overtly historical texts produced in the region, personal letters, contracts and other legal documents, French colonial archives in Senegal and Mauritania, and oral testimony.

After surveying Tijigja’s ecology, Ould Khalifa begins his narrative by analyzing the genealogies and origin stories of the Idaw ’Ali and the two confederations with which they had the closest relations – the Idaw ’Ish and the Kunta. He argues that these stories were created in part to justify these groups’ political and economic dominance, yet he also chastizes the early colonial scholars who dismissed the stories as myths. By contrast, he describes the Idaw ’Ali’s claim of descent from the Prophet Muhammad as quite plausible, though he is much more sceptical of the Kunta’s claims, indeed as sceptical as the colonial scholars were. The narrative next describes the historic relations between these three confederations and the apparent ‘civil war’ that divided the Idaw ’Ali in the mid-seventeenth century into sub-groups designated by the names Idaw ’Ali ‘Noirs’ and ‘Blancs’. Ould Khalifa argues that these names do not refer to any racial or ethnic distinctions within the Idaw ‘Ali Blancs, although the oral traditions of the Idaw ’Ali Blancs attribute the appellations to a character flaw in the ancestor of the Idaw ’Ali Noirs, a story that resembles the Hamitic myth. In any case, the oral and written accounts describe the Idaw ’Ali as being based in the town of Shinqit before the conflict, after which the Idaw ’Ali Blancs departed and established Tijigja, around 1660. Ould Khalifa explains conflicts within groups such as the Idaw ’Ali by reference to climatic or economic conditions that enhanced competition for scarce resources – eschewing segmentary theory, which he calls le modèle gellnerien, alluding to Ernest Gellner (p. 101). The rest of the book deals primarily with issues such as the French conquest and the ‘assassination’ in Tijigja in 1905 of Xavier Coppolani, a military diplomat who espoused a policy he called ‘penetration pacifique’; French colonialism and Idaw ’Ali resistance; the economic crises that struck Tijigja’s region in the colonial period and the methods that trading families used to profit by them; and the political relations between the colony of Mauritania and Morocco on the eve of independence.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this book is Ould Khalifa’s relatively brief treatments of slavery and what he called the ‘hartanisation’ of slaves, a type of conditional manumission. But these sections are also disappointing, for while the author clearly sets out to be non-apologetic, he is not completely successful. To his credit, he describes the process by which the Tijigja elite dispossessed their ‘freed’ slaves of property by monopolizing the local market and selling basic commodities at exorbitant prices (p. 271). But he also describes a 1932 case in which elites killed several freed slaves whom they had accused of practising ‘witchcraft’ by stating
that the murders were understandable given the elites’ fears and their Islamic piety (pp. 516–21). Ould Khalifa’s brief and unsympathetic treatment of slavery is not surprising, especially considering the great sensitivity of this issue in Mauritania now, but he does not help his case by claiming that his book is a broad examination of Tijiga’s social structure.

Scholars of the Sahara will value this book for its encyclopedic detail, as will many Islamicists specializing in North or West Africa. It is their misfortune that the publishers have neglected to provide the book with an index. This and other oversights render it somewhat difficult to use. The great number of typographical errors, inconsistencies of transliteration, and duplication of paragraphs are distracting. Worse, an appendix to which many important references are made is missing.

University of Florida

HISTORY OF THE PERIPHERY


This book is an effort to move away from the focus on state and nation in Muslim Africa to an emphasis on regions and the relationship between regions and centres of state power (p. ix). The area of study is Kordofan, a huge region in the Sudan between the northern White Nile to the east and Darfur to the west. Although there are settled agricultural villages and some modern mechanized schemes, Kordofan has been dominated by nomadism, mainly camel nomads in the north (exemplified by the Kababish) and cattle nomads in the south (exemplified by the Baqqara). In the Nuba Mountains we find a settled population of farmers who have maintained a distinct culture until the present day.

The book contains an introduction written by the editors and eleven articles written by well-known Sudan researchers (mainly historians), namely Jay Spaulding, Endre Stiansen, David Decker, Martin W. Daly, Ahmed I. Abu Shouk, Stephanie Beswick, Heather J. Sharkey, Awad al-Sid al-Karsani, Mustafa Babikr, Martha Saavedra and Kurt Beck. As the title of the book indicates, the guiding theme is various forms of ‘invasion’, i.e. cultural intrusion from outside, political domination by outsiders since ancient times, incorporation into the world market, local reactions and social change. Both the regional focus, the chronological frame and the variety of themes have combined to produce a very interesting book.

Throughout recorded history Kordofan has never been the nucleus of larger state formations. Its role has been that of periphery and buffer zone, independent at times, but more often being tributary to or incorporated into one or other of the neighbouring states. In the nineteenth century, under Turco–Egyptian rule, it was also largely a peripheral area which attracted dissatisfied farmers and traders from the north as well as religious teachers and Sufi shaykhs from afar, creating a breeding ground for political opposition and the cradle of the Mahdiyya. The Mahdiyya represents in many ways, most clearly under Baqqara leadership from 1885, the revolt of the periphery against the centre. But in the end Kordofan gained nothing but devastation. During the present century Kordofan has been rebuilt and the old patterns of Nile valley dominance over the peripheries have reasserted themselves, expressed for example in cultural hegemony and external expropriation of export products. At the same time the increasing failure of the central governments after independence to promote economic development and to gain
legitimacy in the peripheral regions of the Sudan (not only in Kordofan) has threatened the country with disintegration.

The present book throws new light on all these important processes. Its starting point is a situation of impending state disintegration and a criticism of scholarly traditions which, we are told, have ignored this fact for too long by concentrating on the political centres and overlooking the regions and peripheries. To what extent is the present book then able to move beyond the pitfalls of traditional scholarship with regard to African states and issues like nation-building and integration? It is suggested that in state-centred analyses, the weak state is thought to be the problem. A strong state must be (re)constructed, sectarian and racial conflicts must be eradicated. But what if the state itself is the problem? The modern state is a new phenomenon in Africa, whereas the regional institutions (tribal, religious, political or economic) express the continuity, history and culture of the peoples. Interaction with the state (the centre) may bring both positive and negative results, but the state, with all its powers, is often seen as an invading force in the peripheries. These are crucial questions, which are dealt with from various angles and which serve to some extent to underline the value of the book as an alternative approach.

The introduction, which is a major contribution to the subject in itself, paints the broader picture and shows how each article fits in. The emphasis on non-state structures and institutions interacting with, and responding to, invading state structures and institutions is particularly informative. Unfortunately, there is no space available for a review of each article. The articles cover a wide range of topics, such as the history of Kordofan in general, or with emphasis on particular groups (for example, the Ngok, the Nuba or the Bidayriyya), as well as economic, cultural and religious issues. The studies clearly show that the strengths and weaknesses of an African state are best understood in the remote regions far away from capital cities. The themes reflect the research interests of the various authors. There is therefore no claim to completeness, and the contributions do not always follow the lines drawn up in the introduction.

One or two studies of the role of Kordofan in the formation of the Mahdist movement and in the constitution of the powerbase of the Ansar/Umma movement in present-day Sudan might have added an important component to the total picture. One may also ask what are the broader implications of the fact that Kordofan seems to constitute a perpetual periphery through history? And to what extent would a study of Darfur, which has moved from being the centre of a sultanate to becoming the periphery of a modern state, reveal contrasts with findings in the present book?

University of Bergen

ANDERS BJØRKELO

SOCIAL DIVERSITY AND IDENTITIES


Emphasizing the pluri-ethnic character of the Borgu region, this collection of papers realizes wonderfully well its purpose of transcending the one-sided fascination with Bariba-Wasangari socio-political organization that marked much previous anthropological and historical research in this part of northern Benin and Nigeria. The authors manage to evoke the large diversity of population groups, as well as the considerable intermingling of their histories and the interpenetrations of their modes of socio-political organization. ‘Otherness’ is shown to be of crucial
importance for grasping the dynamic social construction of group identities, and the various power and exchange relations between population groups.

The focus is alternately on how difference, or ‘otherness’, intervenes in the social production of identities of particular population groups and on how it structures inter-group relations in a complex and dynamic way. Following Lombard’s comparative analysis of socio-political organization of the Borgu and Moose chief laincies, and preceding Jones’ summarizing presentation of the population groups living in the region, Farias deals in a key essay with the reimagining of the Borgu by the new discourses of identity produced by the linguistic committees that were created under the Kérékou regime in the 1970s. Demonstrating the existence of multiple histories and the complexity of inter-group relations, he concludes that the different Borgu population groups have no separate histories, but that each history implicates the other. A crucial point made is that the linguistic committees, through which elites pursue interests in the national political arena, manipulate historical and mythical narratives. They threaten to reduce diversity and interpenetration to a series of homogeneous, mutually exclusive and antagonistic histories – that is a reimagining which undermines the foundation of the plural Borgu society. Farias, and other authors addressing the same issue, leave largely unexplored, however, how the new discourses of identity are reworked in day-to-day intergroup interactions.

Brégand and Bako-Arifari nicely illustrate Farias’ argument. Emphasizing their role in linking Sahelian and Soudanic regions through trade networks, Brégand shows how Wangara–Dendi groups were constituted in the course of migration processes and were joined by elements of population groups among which they lived. Bako-Arifari acknowledges Brégand’s contention regarding the Dendi’s diversity of origin and heterogeneous constituency. However, whereas Brégand understands Wangara-Dendi identity as a historical construction rather than an ethnic identity, Bako-Arifari maintains that the French colonial administration did succeed in formalizing the Dendi as an ethnic group. The ‘politique des races’ fused formerly different groups, while the privileging of Dendi speakers regarding the distribution of administrative posts accentuated antagonism towards other groups. The promotion of national languages and the ‘politique des nationalités’ under Kérékou furthered the institutionalization of a previously non-existent collective consciousness among the Dendi. From a multi-ethnic compromise among culturally different groups, Dendi-identity evolved into an ethnic identity. Likewise, as demonstrated by Akinwumi, successive colonial and post-colonial administrative reorganizations promoted ethnic consciousness of Bariba sub-groups, deepening ethnic differences where previously there had been none or where divisions had been otherwise embedded.

Three other papers concentrate on Bariba–Wasangari rule built on earlier religious and political structures. A diversity of socio-political institutions and relations emerged from the mutual cultural integration of autochthonous population groups and conquering Wasangari. Alber provides further nuancing by arguing that the Wasangari, whose power depended on a permanent conversion of wealth into military strength by means of raids and gifts, did not constitute a closed, homogenus aristocracy. Members of other population groups could ascend to the position of Wasangari by exercising violence and establishing relations of protection and redistribution with dependent groups. Schottmann’s contribution stresses the ‘mark and seal’ function of joking relations and shows how a mechanism for accommodating intra-group difference and tension is extended to inter-group relations.

Issues of diversity, ambiguity and ethnicization of identity are also dealt with in the series of essays on the Fulbe. Bierschenk analyzes how colonial rule changed the Fulbe’s socio-political organization by creating the office of Fulbe chief, an
event essential for understanding the transformation of the Fulbe from a status group into an ethnic group. Focusing on the role of verbal expressions and occult competences in the exercise of authority, Guichard points to a homology between narratives about power and discourses of identity. She argues that the former are to be understood as expressions of inclusion and exclusion, as ethnic categorizations which are heavily influenced by the Fulbe’s continuous exclusion from power in the region. Boesen studied Fulbe conceptions and experiences of space. Describing movements between bush and non-Fulbe village, the role of cattle in transcending the dichotomy culture–nature, and aspects of bodily culture, she evokes beautifully what it means to be Fulbe, and how this changes during the course of an individual’s life.

Hardung, like several of the other authors starting from a Barthian view of ethnicity, unravels the relations between Fulbe and their former Gando ‘slaves’ through an analysis of rules surrounding food consumption and of the symbolic role of milk and cattle. She provides an illuminating insight in the dynamics of group-identity construction. The necessity of distinguishing between categorical stereotypes and their tacit reinterpretation is emphasized, the latter being of crucial importance for comprehending the identity construction and social and economic emancipation of a [symbolically] subordinate group, in this case the Gando.

Unfortunately, the closing section of the book, subheaded ‘economic diversity and development’, constitutes a missed opportunity. Van Driel, tackling the changing relations between Fulbe herdsmen and Dendi fishermen and farmers, argues persuasively that former complementary use of space has given way to growing tensions and competition for natural resources as a consequence of population growth, increasing aridity and the introduction of new technologies. Still, how this affects identities or discourses of ‘otherness’ of one group vis-à-vis another is not clarified. And the papers by Schareika on the economics of cattle raising by Fulbe, and Bruntrup on the growing importance of cotton cultivation, although interesting, figure as a kind of annex. The issue of how changing land use practices and development processes relate to the dynamics of identity construction and inter-group relations is not addressed.

This book constitutes a valuable contribution to the field of ethnicity and identity studies. Its major achievement is that it convincingly presents an ambiguous image of what Bariba, Wasangari, Dendi, Fulbe and Gando were and are. Thanks to its historical depth, its emphasis on processes cross-cutting the different population groups, and its effort to distinguish between stereotypes and simultaneously existing close and intimate relations across group boundaries – showing the integrative potential of difference – and by taking into account important wider historical contexts (e.g. Wasangari migrations, colonial rule, promotion of national languages), it contributes to the demystification of ethnicity and of processes of ethnicization.

University of Amsterdam

MARK BREUSERS

CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY AND SELF


Rising dramatically out of the south-eastern Kenyan savanna, the Taita Hills dominate the surrounding landscape, a lush, fertile oasis in the midst of semi-arid
plains. As such, they have long served as a rich resource and refuge from drought, famine and social conflicts among people on the plains. Over the years, successive groups of migrants have found their way into the nooks and crannies of the hills, creating distinctive ways of life and ethnic identities in the process. With the development of the caravan trade and the onset of colonialism during the course of the nineteenth century, they became an important way station to the interior, bringing new cultural and economic influences to the peoples of the hills. Taita is thus an important area for probing such critical topics in African history as the relationship of ecology and culture, processes of ethnic formation, the influence of long distance trade on local societies and the impact of colonialism, Christianity and capitalism on them.

Bill Bravman’s reconstruction of this history is a meticulous and carefully nuanced study of socio-economic, political and ideological changes from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth. In the process, we gain a detailed understanding of the settlement of the hills, the development of intricate patterns of lineage politics that knit different peoples and ecologies together, the complex reciprocal relations between Taita and the early missionaries, the influence of colonial rule on local patterns of authority and the impact of Christianity on changing social relations and values. Bravman’s analyses of how Taita interpreted Christianity and appropriated it as their own, adapted colonial political categories to their own purposes and transformed new forms of wealth are incisive and extend our understanding of how Africans appropriated alien concepts and powers. As such, Bravman’s work will constitute our principle source for Taita history for years to come. It makes a substantial contribution to our understanding of East African history generally.

History of this sort is painstaking work, requiring extensive and meticulous fieldwork collecting social and historical data as well as careful work in the archives to exploit the limited sources available. Bravman’s work is distinguished on both counts, enabling him to construct a subtle and detailed account of this complex and highly diverse area. He is less sure of himself with linguistic and archaeological data, however, and he fails to exploit significant differences between the Daũida and Sagalla languages, earlier Cushitic linguistic influences or archaeological data relating to prior populations.

The issue of ethnic identity in Africa has come increasingly to the fore over the past decade as scholars have become aware of the degree to which ethnicity is socially constructed and has assumed its modern, highly politicized form only during the colonial period. Bravman carefully details this process in Taita, showing how small, localized, lineage-based societies gradually assumed a common ethnic identity and culture over the course of the colonial period. As the topic of the construction of ethnicity has become more popular, however, analysts have increasingly come to employ the concept more broadly and facilely as a historical force itself, attributing agency to an analytical concept in ways that frequently confuse cause and effect and subsume other, more utilitarian concepts. Bravman’s understanding of ethnicity is more subtle than most, but he does employ the analytical concept as an active force itself (e.g. ‘ethnic ideologies thereby endeavour to construct and naturalize creeds of unity and commonality…’, p. 7) and exaggerates its conceptual purview.

Certainly many of the social processes he discusses are related to changing Taita conceptions of community and self, and are thus appropriately discussed in terms of ethnicity. But the concept is also imposed on recalcitrant data. While changing forms of ethnic identity were certainly one historical phenomenon in Taita, it remains to be seen if they were the phenomenon, or whether much of what Bravman glosses as identity can more productively be seen as ideology, social practice or cultural values.
Nonetheless, this remains an extremely valuable study of a critically important but little known people and area of East Africa, one that casts considerable light on important social, economic and political processes over the past two centuries. We are all likely to be in Bravman’s debt for some time.

University of Wisconsin–Madison

CHRISTIANITY IN EAST AFRICA


The book is a collection of essays resulting from a joint research project of the Universities of Wisconsin–Madison and Dar-es-Salaam. The project studied the meanings, values and appropriations of Christian faith and practice in East African societies over the last 100 years. Of the 15 chapters, eight are concerned primarily with Tanzania, three with Kenya, one with Uganda and one with an area in the western Congo Democratic Republic (a valuable contribution, if somewhat out of place!). A basic premise for the book is expressed cogently towards the end: ‘Christianity is no longer an exotic transplant in Africa today, but is deeply embedded in everyday thoughts and expressions…[L]ocal and Christian “traditions” are now so intertwined that we can no longer separate them analytically or see them as discrete entities. African worlds are still “enchanted”, but now their spiritual universe embraces both African and Christian forms’ (p. 307).

The ‘mainline’ churches are still the institutions to which the majority of East African Christians belong and in which they endeavour to express both Christian faith and African identity. This volume concentrates on those churches. An earlier generation of scholarship might have looked first to the African Instituted Churches to exemplify this process of ‘embeddedness’. The present emphasis is an appropriate one, and it produces a number of very useful local studies, particularly of Catholic and Lutheran communities. For Kenya, there are two contrasting studies of African responses to, and critiques of, the Africa Inland Mission (Waller on the Maasai, and Sandgren on the Kamba). They are both based on a wealth of archival research, primarily for the colonial period. They are particularly welcome in the light of the comparative lack of scholarly attention given to what has become one of the most powerful expressions of Christianity in modern Kenya. One regrettable consequence of the heavy weighting towards Tanzania, is that there is no local study of an Anglian community, which is comparatively weak in Tanzania in terms of numbers and political clout. But this is by no means the case in Kenya and Uganda, where Anglicanism precisely manifests that embeddedness which is a major theme of the book. One of the most significant movements within African Protestant Christianity since the 1930s has been the East African Revival (Balokole), a movement which has a Ugandan (and Rwandan) Anglican origin, but which has had a profound impact on many of the Protestant churches throughout East Africa. The different meanings of the word ‘revival’ and its varying degrees of institutionalisation, as well as the complex ways in which revival has interacted with different societies throughout East Africa, would have provided a further means of examining analytically the diverse strands under discussion. Mlahagwa does have an interesting essay on contemporary understandings of revival within Tanzanian Lutheranism, but that does not quite compensate for the lack of a thoroughgoing analysis of the Balokole revival itself. The first two chapters
(Spear’s masterly survey and Maddox on ‘African theology and the search for the universal’) are important interpretative essays, and do provide a good general context in which to understand the local studies that are the heart of the volume. There are particularly good chapters on popular Catholicism (Maddox on Gogo, Kassimir on Toro, Comoro and Sivalon on Dar). There are also a number of fascinating accounts of near contemporary events, such as Omari’s account of the schism within Mt Meru Lutheranism. Parallels could be drawn with similar conflicts, around issues of episcopal authority and local particularism, in other parts of East Africa, conflicts which are expressive of the ways in which churches have become deeply identified with local identity and culture.

There is a short essay about the beliefs and practices of Arathi (prophetic) groups of Kikuyu Christians who emerged in the 1920s, but otherwise not much else on African Instituted Churches, apart from the Congolese chapter by Wamba dia Wamba. This is the story Ne Muanda Nsemi and his ‘Bundu dia Kongo’ – which might be described (to adapt a phrase from a Ugandan rebel of a previous age, Reuben Spartas) as a church for right-thinking Congolese people, called by God to carry on the work which Kimbangu had begun but was prevented from truly implementing. What is interesting is that Spartas’s call to take control, not to be ‘houseboys’ in one’s own home, has been adopted far and wide by East African Christians within the mission-founded churches. This sense of ownership by the community is fundamental. The extent to which the new pentecostalism undermines this sense of belonging, redefining community, especially in urban contexts, as well as the wider issues of ‘enchantment’ and ‘secularism’ which urbanization throws up, are questions which are not really tackled by this otherwise extremely valuable collection. Spear reflects (p. 20) on the distinction between the historical task as conceived by ‘church’ and by ‘academic’ historians, and the intermingling of these strands in an East African context. The last decade in East Africa has seen the mushrooming of tertiary academic institutions with an explicitly religious and confessional character. This new phenomenon will have significant consequences for the ongoing relationship between church and academe in the historical study of Christianity in East Africa.

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KEVIN WARD

MUSLIM EDUCATION IN ILORIN


The peripheral zones of the Islamic world have recently become a more attractive cynosure of a rigorous intellectual exploration by Africanists and Islamists. The present work is an eloquent demonstration of this trend. It examines the evolution and development of the Islamic system of education in the city of Ilorin—the intellectual powerhouse of south western Nigeria from the pre-colonial period to the present. The role of Islamic youth organizations as agents of social and political mobilization in post-independence Nigeria, particularly in the city and the adjoining Yoruba urban settlements, is another issue that is critically examined. It is made up of four chapters and an appendix, which contains a typological listing of Arabic schools, and a list of the Arabic manuscripts available in the city on a variety of Arabic–Islamic subjects.

Chapter 1 gives an historical overview of Ilorin from the eighteenth century when it was part of the Oyo Empire, through the nineteenth century, when it became a city state of the Sokoto caliphate, to its present role as a melting pot for a number
of cultures. In Chapter 2 the binary structure of the traditional Islamic education system, namely Qur‘anic (introductory) school and ‘Ilmi (advanced) school, is critically discussed. It is analyzed within the natural matrices of curricula, instructors, teaching materials, structural models and influence on other Yoruba towns and settlements of the nineteenth century. Under British colonialism the dawn of the twentieth century emerged a new generation of scholars with a remarkably modified Weltanschauung, which is the subject matter of Chapter 3. It is here that the contributions of Sheikh Adam al-Ilori (1917–92), the most illustrious representative of the intellectual culture of Ilorin and a principal mentor of this author, are analyzed. The enduring impact of western models of education on the traditional Islamic system, the propitious effects of sustained contacts with renowned centres of learning in the Arab world, particularly al-Azhar, and the emergence of politically virile Islamic youth organizations are discussed in Chapter 4.

The location of Ilorin as a gateway to the north and an entry point to the south gave it a strategic position in the cultural and commercial equations of Nigeria. This may help to explain the dominance of the Islamic character of the city once the Fulani savant and warrior Alimi succeeded in stamping the city with an Islamic seal through the establishment of an emirate (p. 29). But one point which the author has not satisfactorily explained is whether the suppression of the religious deviancy of the locals, especially by Emir Suberu (r. 1861–9) was motivated by religious zeal or political expediency (p. 51).

However, he has brilliantly demonstrated how the western system of education influenced the traditional Islamic system, and how this in turn left its marks on the western-oriented school system – even after the political authority of Islam has literally paled into insignificance, the sustained Islamic character of the city notwithstanding (p. 99). This should ultimately be traced to the strong suspicion by the native Muslims that western education was essentially a tool for the conversion of Muslims to Christianity, and their insistence that whatever merits found in it should be adapted to an Islamic model intended primarily to serve the Islamic faith.

One particularly striking hallmark of Ilorin is the strong emphasis on the ethical and moralistic aspect of adab at the expense of its other connotations, hence the quotidian expression, ‘al-adab fawqa al-‘ilm’ (adab is above ‘ilm). This may well explain the seeming paradox in someone being characterized as possessing ‘ilm if he is knowledgeable in the traditional Islamic sciences, but lacking in adab if he exhibits moral or social depravities. But then the term adab came to be identified with knowledge of religious sciences, proficiency in spoken and written Arabic, and indeed efficiency in preaching, going by the tradition in the school of Tāj al-adab (1885–1923), the eponymous father of the modern system of Islamic education here (pp. 228–50). The contributions of the Sufi brotherhoods have been put in their right perspective, but the suggestion that Nasiru Kabara (1924–96), who later became the patron saint of the Qādiriyya, was initiated into the order by Sā’d Ahmad (d. 1933) is probably not accurate (p. 217). The credit for this is more reasonably attributable to his son and successor, Malam Sidi.

The role of Islamic organizations in promoting social cohesion and political relevance of the Muslims is brilliantly highlighted by the author, but there seems to be a confidence crisis between the older movements and relatively younger youth organizations. For example, the Jamā‘at Naṣri’ī al-Islām (founded 1962) and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (founded 1975) seem to have lost their relevance and status among Muslim youth organizations, which consider them bereft of the kind of dynamism and commitment required by the Muslims in today’s socio-political environment. This is an intriguing subject that requires further investigation.
The author has brought together a mass of useful materials and information in a systematic fashion, and an English translation of the work is to be encouraged.

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AMIDU SANNI

WAR AND WARFARE


War in the Early Modern World is an ambitious and stimulating work that can interest readers with very varied interests and specializations. Individual chapters written by experts in their respective fields cover warfare at sea, warfare in Japan, China and India, warfare and slave trading in West Africa, Ottoman warfare, European warfare, the conquest of Mexico and the primary resistance of the indigenous inhabitants of North America to the arrival of European colonists.

Black, in his introduction, claims justifiably that this wide ambit serves to correct existing Eurocentric beliefs that early modern military history is simply that of the imposition of superior European military technology and organization on large areas of the world often fielding very much larger armies. He draws attention to the vast scale of a number of purely inter-Asian conflicts, reminds us that an important reason for the failure of the Ottoman Turks to overrun western Europe was their parallel set of commitments in Asia, and notes how much European expansion was through ‘battles that did not take place’ – Portuguese expansion in Asia, Spain’s entry to the Philippines and the Russian arrival on the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk.

In this introduction and in several later chapters the role of the military in state-building is discussed. Black notes that the military superiority which distinguished Europe from forces elsewhere was the ability to support transoceanic operations. In Whitehall nowadays this is called ‘power projection’. The Royal Navy’s newest large warship, an assault helicopter carrier, is called Ocean. Plus ça change…

The chapter that will most interest readers of this journal is that by John Thornton on Atlantic Africa. Where existing writing has concentrated on two forms of military organization – cavalry, dominant in the savannah but impotent in face of nagana in the forests, and infantry in the forest zones – Thornton highlights a third, ‘marines’. Cavalry armies in the sixteenth century, such as those of Oyo, attacked first with missiles, javelins and arrows, with follow-up sword charges. Infantry forces relied on disciplined cohesion and bows with poison-tipped arrows, swords and axes; in many infantry armies soldiers would have helmets, armour or shields. Battles would end in hand-to-hand mêlées, the losers fleeing the scene.

The marine units described by Thornton were based around craft carrying some fifty men, who showered their opponents with javelins and arrows from a distance, the shallow draught of their craft providing mobility in creeks, rivers and estuaries. Thornton ascribes the rise of Benin, and later the inability of hinterland states and, later, Europeans to dominate the coastal polities to this amphibious warfare. Europeans were generally confined to forts securing only a small urban area with their guns. There they fought against each other, or fought as participants, in local conflicts. In this early modern period, only in Angola was there conquest for
extension of sovereignty; here the Portuguese formed local alliances and used naval power on the Kwanza river together with large mercenary bands.

Gunpowder, when it arrived, provided cavalry armies with carbines and infantry with firearms, the latter leading to a combination of movement with firepower and fewer hand-to-hand conflicts. Infantry with firearms, however, failed ultimately to secure Dahomey from Oyo’s cavalry, and Asante could only extend its power northwards when it raised its own cavalry. The carrying of muskets by water greatly developed the power of the marines, thus denying Dahomey control of the lagoon statelets, but inland fighting in Angola continued long to rely on massed sword and shield infantry.

For the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Thornton presents a pattern of warfare in which several African states were able to field sizeable armies with guns; these alone or in alliances with other states fought campaigns in which losers suffered pillage. In these wars European weapons and trade demands increasingly affected tactics and the victims of pillage. But Thornton argues that it was the prospects of financing these inter-state wars through the sale of prisoners that was the more important cause of conflicts that were actually being fought for reasons more connected with local hegemony and natural resources.

Not the least valuable part of Black’s book is the evidence of careful research in the footnotes, together with useful lists of suggested further reading.

Marjomaa’s *War on the Savannah* moves us on to the early twentieth century, with a country, Britain, specifically out to acquire territory and possessing developed weaponry that could annihilate massed cavalry with very little effort or manpower. His work is a military account of the British defeat of the Sokoto caliphate from 1897 to 1903. The caliphate, at first sight a very large polity, was a loose federation of some twenty large emirates, some of them with internal subdivisions, often quarrelling among themselves, with no permanent military force, but capable of mobilizing very large numbers of men, in time of war.

Marjomaa divides his book into sections. The first section ‘Strategy’ sets the stage, notes the ineffective efforts pre-1900 of the constabulary of the Royal Niger Company, and then provides an almost blow-by-blow account of events from Lugard’s declaration of the protectorate on 1 January 1900 to the death of Caliph Attahiru and two of his sons on the walls of Burmi on 27 July 1903. The two following sections are concerned with tactics and the individual battles, with one further section entitled ‘The Fear’. A brief epilogue ‘The Circle of Death’ concludes the work.

Of these sections, the concluding part of ‘The Strategy’, ‘The Tactics’ and ‘The Fear’ are the most interesting. Here Marjomaa notes the success of Lugard’s riverine garrison network, the skill with which the British would mount a sudden thrust giving an emir insufficient time to react, the use of artillery to break town walls, and the efficiency of the unity of British command. The caliphate suffered disunity, but drew with success on the Islamic tradition of evasion if confrontation was likely to be unsuccessful, so protracting the campaign. Rifle fire from bolt-loaded rifles, steadily controlled, together with the Maxim machine-gun, gave the British a decisive advantage over the Caliph’s units, few of which had firearms. The infantry used bows, swords and spears, the cavalry javelins.

The Caliph’s forces tactics, when forced into a set-piece battle were those of desperate, fruitless mass charges, cavalry led, infantry following, preceded by missile fire and accompanied by deafening music, shouting and the thundering noise of horses’ hooves. This was met, almost invariably, by the British square providing all-round defence.

In ‘The Fear’, Marjomaa opens by noting the miniscule casualty totals suffered by the British and their African soldiers, and the relatively low totals suffered by the Caliph’s forces, a significant reason for this being the rout that often followed
the near destruction of the leading files in a charge, making defeat seem inevitable. Analyzing British self-confidence, he highlights professionalism, beliefs in racial superiority and a close-knit regimental spirit.

The Africans who served in West African Frontier Force units volunteered for the pay and the prospects of booty. Desertion was common. Inevitably, the large numbers of slaves, or men that at one time or another volunteered to fight for the Caliph’s cause, lacked military training, but they could draw comfort from the Moslem faith that, even if the battle were lost and they were killed, would at once transport them to paradise. Marjomaa argues that British training also desensitized, making individuals see themselves as part of an invincible war machine, which, if the correct procedures were followed, would inevitably win. The colonel of the Scots Guards, issuing orders before the final Falklands battle, said to his officers: ‘Gentlemen, this is straight Warminster [the British infantry school]’. Again, plus ça change…

It just remains to be added that this work also is the result of meticulous research in Kaduna, London and Oxford. It is agreeably written and as far as any history of warfare can be, a pleasure to read, with useful maps.

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ANTHONY CLAYTON

GOLDDIGGERS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY


Ray Dumett has written a thorough and detailed account of late nineteenth-century gold-mining in Ghana. The book’s starting point is 1875, when the British army briefly occupied Asante and then withdrew, weakening but not destroying or replacing Asante government. Subsequently, unregulated commercial activity flowed rapidly into disengaging Asante territories. The book’s end point is 1900, chosen because only then did Britain complete its conquest and annexation of Asante and finally institute colonial policies which admitted large-scale investment in railroads and deep water harbours. Such infrastructural changes, Dumett insists, were prerequisites for the significant capitalization, large machinery imports and economies of scale necessary for substantial profits in gold-mining. Thus Dumett’s book focuses on the various events and activities of the era before heavily industrialized gold-mining in Ghana in a period of vibrant growth and transition.

The book draws on considerable data accumulated by the author on pre-colonial African gold-mining techniques. Dumett convincingly depicts the phenomenon of the African farmer–miner whom he believes produced the majority of the region’s gold throughout the time period under study. He maintains that gold-mining by cadres of kinless and property-less slaves was strictly the exception, and family-based mining the rule. Thus, the farmer–miner might be male or female, slave or free, part of a family group or individual digger. As a category, these persons dug and tunnelled and crushed and panned in non-farming seasons through all the major gold-bearing areas for centuries, surrendering as much as two-thirds of the fruits of their labour to chiefs in rents and royalties, but still retaining sufficient gold to make it worth their while. They were innovators and risk-takers, applying many rudimentary technologies such as chisels, crushing stones, bamboo lagging and fire-setting (cracking the rock by quickly cooling it with water), and readily adopting new ones such as the mercury amalgamation process for extraction.
Dumett also maintains that these African miners continued to dominate production in the late nineteenth-century gold rushes, when their numbers greatly multiplied. The lucrative rewards that could accrue to the self-employed miner explain why more mechanized, centralized and capitalized mining endeavours were always short of labour.

The book examines the immediate impact, unintended effects, limitations and long-term by-products of the development of western Ghana’s gold-bearing regions with regard to labour recruitment, capitalization, technology, health, transportation, landownership, political authority of chiefs and colonial policies. Generally, labour was always short because Africans who could mine on their own preferred not to work for wages at capitalized/mechanized mines. Kru labourers were imported for the latter and, not surprisingly, worked under oppressive conditions. Technology transfer was more frequent than one might think, occurring whenever a technique or machine could be made, adapted or moved around locally, such as in the theft of dynamite or the purchase of small pumps. Dumett is at his best when documenting and describing such technological change. Chiefly authority was redistributed, depending on who was and was not well-positioned for granting concessions. Land disputes multiplied, land values were commercialized and attitudes shifted, but not conclusively, toward individual- over group-rights to land. On a more controversial note, Dumett argues that colonial policies in this period were strongly opposed to any appearance of subsidizing ‘ungentlemanly capitalists’ through road construction or labour recruitment legislation.

Dumett adds considerably to our knowledge of the middle-class African partnerships that pioneered gold concessions. He provides details of family background, education and social connections, and tells us who went to the interior to negotiate concession terms, who contributed how much capital, who was snookered and who knew just when to sell. This adds rare depth to pre-colonial business history. Most concessions failed to realize a return on their subscriber’s investments. One of the few successful enterprises, the future Ashanti Goldfields Corporation, was established by three educated middle-class coastal Africans (J. E. Ellis, J. P. Brown, and J. E. Biney) who, through their knowledge of interior geography and personal contacts, obtained a concession over what proved to be extremely rich veins of ore. In just three years their financial investment, personal management of over 200 workers and four deep shafts sunk with limited machinery, turned a speculative venture to a steadily producing mine of tremendous future value.

Dumett’s research is impeccable and his sources are wide, ranging from business records, mining reports and contemporary newspapers, to his own fieldwork and secondary sources. His photographs alone represent an intriguing technological record. There are times when the book reads as if the author has strung his note cards together rather than woven them into the narrative, when examples intended to amplify lead off to nowhere, and when the evidence presented could bear more synthetic and elegant interpretation. Nevertheless, Dumett has produced a solid work that adds to the accumulating research representing Africans as empowered participants rather than victims, as active workers, entrepreneurs, prospectors, pioneers, innovators, manipulators and developers. We await his future volume which is to cover the post-1900 era, when this picture of African entrepreneurship, while not completely effaced by colonial restrictions, was surely dramatically altered.

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DONNA J. MAIER
The efforts of the colonial state to regulate the Ugandan cotton trade has been the subject of two previous studies: Cyril Ehrlich first wrote a history of the Uganda Company in the 1950s; Thomas Taylor’s unpublished doctoral thesis, completed in 1981, used dependency theory to explain the exploitation of Uganda’s peasant cotton-farmers by an alliance of the state and business interests. This new study of cotton marketing in Uganda between 1904 and 1918 breaks new ground in applying transaction costs analysis to the case, and in the far more rigorous use of colonial archival materials.

Transaction costs exist all along the market channel that sees cotton move from the farm gate to the manufacturer. Torbjörn Engdahl argues that the need to limit these costs drove growers and intermediaries, as well as the larger exporting firms, to seek to regulate the market. The state also added to the pressure to hold down transaction costs, principally in order to increase the incomes of farmers so that the level of taxation could be raised and incomes from trading activity enhanced. However, although all actors saw potential benefits from regulation they were not all successful in gaining the kind of regulation they desired, nor did regulation always function in the manner anticipated. These divergent outcomes, and the gap between the rhetoric of the debate over regulation and the reality of events on the ground, gives Torbjörn Engdahl’s book a dynamic narrative.

The first part of the book describes each group of actors in the market channel, and looks at the conditions affecting the costs of doing business. The four chapters here deal with the imperial aspect of the cotton market, including the role of the British Cotton Grower’s Association, the role of farmers, chiefs and local intermediaries, the financing of local purchases by the exporting companies, and the position of the colonial administration in Uganda. Engdahl convincingly demonstrates the divisions within colonial government over regulation, but he is less able to reveal details about the role of African and Asian intermediaries in the trade, a failing which raises questions about the precision with which transaction costs can be evaluated.

Part 2 of the study then moves on to discuss the way in which the market came to be regulated. Chapter 5 sets out the whole problem of transaction costs, to demonstrate their importance at each stage of market exchange. This is methodically done and it is clear that Engdahl has a sophisticated understanding of the economic motives at work here. The remaining three chapters are organised chronologically, following the impact of regulation up to 1918. These chapters are recounted in a clear narrative, interspersed with analysis of the implications for transaction costs of each reform. The important Cotton Ordinance of 1908 is fully discussed, as are the difficulties caused by the instability of the world market in cotton between 1915 and the end of the First World War.

The shift of a substantial portion of the Uganda crop to the Bombay market during these years is analyzed in terms of transaction costs to show that the move brought considerable benefits to all traders, whether of Indian origin or not. Although Engdahl concedes that Indian traders probably made more significant gains in this move than did other traders, if only because it gave them easier access to credit in the Bombay financial market, his approach is an important corrective to earlier interpretations of this development that have tended to view it in a highly
essentialist way as being merely illustrative of longer-term manoeuvring by Asian trading interests to gain market advantage.

Whilst the analytical concentration on transaction costs opens up many new and interesting dimensions, the author’s inability to get to grips with the production sphere or fully to consider the range of trading activities in which intermediaries in the Uganda cotton market may have been involved suggests that it would be unwise to take the argument too far. The extent of coercion, the status of growers in relation to land ownership, the credit systems that may have operated in the local market and the patterns of differential access to technology and to infrastructure are all questions that are not given enough attention here.

Despite the limitations of the approach, all those interested in the economic history of colonialism in Africa will find this study rewarding. Torbjörn Engdahl is to be applauded for having again opened up research on the history of Uganda cotton, and for showing that in the present economic context of market liberalisation there remain many good reasons to study the economic history of colonial market regulation.

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DAVID M. ANDERSON


Charles van Onselen has written a superbly researched and unique study. Taking as his focus, the paterfamilias of a peasant household, the author and his team of researchers have plucked the most obscure of South Africans from a rural backwater, interviewed him and those who came into contact with him and constructed a massive archive of testimony pertaining to his life and times. The late Kas Maine, who at the end of his life was utterly marginal to the centres of power in South Africa and was about to slip into a final and total obscurity, has become one of that small group of South Africans about whom an immense amount is now known. Painstakingly – the feat of intellectual stamina is a formidable one – van Onselen has mined the vast holdings of interview transcripts and other sources to reconstruct Kas Maine’s story, and it is hard to see how a more convincing portrait could be drawn of the life of a peasant assailed by the forces liquidating the pre-conditions of peasant existence.

The book operates on a number of levels. First, there is a profound analysis of the patriarchal structure and culture of the life of a Sotho peasant family, with the cycle of ritual around production, birth, maturation, marriage, death seamlessly integrated into the narrative. Second, there is a close tracking of the relationship between this sharecropping family with its landlords and, more distantly, with the state in its various guises. Finally, embedded within these two grand narratives, there is another story, one which continually asserts itself: a story of surprising connections between the rural races and classes, of cultural borrowings and interchanges, of intimacies, kindnesses and cruelties. If, for this reader, The Seed is Mine is not persuasive in its assertions of a rural paternalism existing between sharecroppers and their landlords for reasons to be advanced below, van Onselen convincingly complicates the South African platteland, refusing the familiar dichotomies of the countryside and enriching our understanding in the process.

Van Onselen places his sharecroppers firmly within a peasant nexus, with family production and patriarchal discipline being seen as the keys to their existence.
What he reveals is that the peasant patriarch’s command of family labour was, arguably, his single most important asset. Not only was it central to the productive enterprise commanded by the paterfamilias, it could be crucial to his being able to strike tenancies with landowners: like his father before him, Kas was to pledge the labour of his children to white landlords when circumstances demanded this. And, as van Onselen demonstrates, if the context of the sapping of Kas’ power as a peasant was the advance of agrarian capitalism and apartheid’s drive upon independent black peasants, a powerful component of it was also the diminishing power Kas had over the labour of his children. For as they matured and sought to make their own lives, not necessarily on the land, given the diminishing opportunities there and – it must be said – the harsh and demanding qualities of their father, so Kas struggled in vain to find a way back to secure agricultural production. From the 1950s onwards, he was increasingly faced with an ebbing away of his children and difficulties in ensuring unfettered access to the labour of his grandchildren.

Whatever his great skills and spirit as an agriculturalist and craftsman – borne witness to by the ability to ensure the survival of his family in the harshest of centuries for a South African peasant, in his shrewd mutations to handle fluctuations in the market, in his indominitable appetite for new challenges and opportunities until the very end of his life – Kas was often a brutal husband and father. Van Onselen demonstrates how he could mercilessly drive subordinate family members, cruelly discipline his children, beat a wife and violently force a daughter into a marriage she did not want. His maltreatments were severe enough to lead to the flight of members of his family, as well as to cause, it would appear, psychological malady. Van Onselen does not flinch from evoking this brutality and roots it in a life and culture, but it is arguable that his strategy of focusing upon Kas and his world alone does not enable the reader to determine whether or not such domestic violence is a common phenomenon within family-based rural economy, or whether it arose from the peculiarities of character of one man. Here, as elsewhere in the book, a brief shift of focus would have been welcome. A wide-angled look at the place of violence within peasant society more generally and its relationship to the power of the paterfamilias would have helped the reader to discern if van Onselen’s findings in this regard were of more general significance. Interestingly, some of the more dramatic instances of violence take place when Kas is at his most prosperous, in the 1940s, so one could not argue that this was a man pressed to the wall who was displacing the pressures on to his children and wives.

Van Onselen’s enquiry into the familial relationships of the Maines treats us to an acute portrait of the psycho-dynamics of a family and the contest of power between the sexes, particularly that between Kas and his wife Leetwane. Moreover, the study of these familial relationships has a bearing upon theories of the peasantry. For van Onselen’s detailing of the way in which Kas drove his unwilling family’s work-team into the lacerating process of sunflower harvesting (pp. 313-4) must beg questions of Chayanovian theory, which in part hinges on the proposition that peasants are perpetually and finely judging whether or not the drudgery of a particular enterprise is adequately compensated for by the gains that will be realized from it. Van Onselen’s evidence suggests that it is the peasant patriarch who makes the judgements – and if he is not involved in the labour process, he need have little consideration for the drudgery. Interestingly, in this case the family work-team so resented the demands foisted upon them that they came to sabotage the crop.

Van Onselen has done a fine job in etching the relationships between Kas and his various landlords, relationships which foundered more than once on treatment meted out to his children. The Seed is Mine demonstrates how much landlords and tenants borrowed and learned from each other, and also sketches the forms of class
conflict that arose between the two sides. Aside from siphoning off a great proportion of the sharecroppers’ harvests, landlords appear to have routinely stolen their *agterskot*, final monetary settlement made by a co-operative to a seller of grain. The sharecroppers, for their part, often engaged in a ‘night harvest’, that is the removal of a portion of the crop under cover of darkness prior to the formal harvest so that there was at least some part of their output that the tenants did not have to share with their landlords.

One might argue that this continuing battle to intensify or reduce exploitation – an exploitation that could also manifest itself in a landlord suddenly taking over ground made productive by the tenantry – runs counter to van Onselen’s frequent assertion that landlords and sharecroppers were partners. Much of the detail he provides concerning the relationships between these classes seems to belie his assertions of a paternalism existing between them in the southwestern Transvaal prior to the Second World War. Even in the period when Kas was able to get the better conditions and when his social and economic power continued to rise – broadly speaking Part 3 of the book – one finds too much evidence of processes at work which suggest that paternalism was not operating effectively: there is an endless moving from one landlord to another, sometimes spurred by eviction; there is a notable changing of conditions of tenure by landlords; and evidence of some of the landlords being oblivious to customs.

There are certainly occasions in this book where one cannot help feeling that van Onselen has misconstrued evidence of close contact or kindness as – too often – evidence of paternalism. For example, a kindly Afrikaner farmer whom Kas meets on the road during one of his numerous treks to a new sanctuary allows him to quarter his cattle on his land for a night (p. 362). Later, quite by chance, Kas comes across the same man in a bank and he helps Kas with a financial transaction (p. 369). Kas has no links to this man apart from these incidents – we are never given his name – so one could not view these actions as forming part of a wider social relationship. At most, one could view them as the generosity of one Afrikaner farmer towards an African who is less fortunate than himself. Van Onselen, however, takes this as evidence of ‘the ambiguities of paternalism’ (p. 369). Yet, as Ian Ochiltree has pointed out in a recent presentation at the University of Essex, paternalism between sharecroppers and landlords has to mean more than kindness or intimacies: it has to entail a set of norms, rights and duties that are accepted and internalized by both parties.

On van Onselen’s evidence, this appears not to have arisen between landlords and sharecroppers on the *platteland* in the area and period he studies. How could it have? Conditions were altered too often, and relationships between particular sharecroppers and landlords ended too frequently and easily for it to have done so. (Indeed, one is much more likely to have seen paternalism arising between wage labourers of long service and their masters, partly because such workers were with their employers for decades and also because they did not enjoy the relative socio-economic sovereignty enjoyed by a sharecropper like Kas, which tended to keep him at something of a remove from the landlords’ direct control.) Paternalism requires stability, but it is the endless tearing up of roots that marks Kas Maine’s life.

If van Onselen’s argument regarding paternalism might not be convincing, the way in which he builds it up is an important achievement. For by emphasizing the manifold instances of generosity, humanity, mutual dependence and intimacy that existed between the classes in the countryside, he reveals something that was crucial to their survival. And the cultural residues of all this interaction remind us that human experience was always much more complex than racial categorization supposed. This was a world, as van Onselen memorably reminds us, of cultural surprises: a world in which Kas could act as herbalist to Africans and to poorer
whites; in which his children could enjoy their locust delicacies with a white landlord’s children; a world in which Kas could be called upon to restore the equilibrium of a white woman tormented by a mythical African creature with huge genitals (and what in her past predisposed this poor woman to such a fear?). It was a world where black and white farmers swapped rituals to protect crops, where a landlord might use the sharecropper’s networks to disperse stock during a drought. It was also a world where a white police sergeant with utterly fluent Tswana masqueraded as an African, his racial transvesticism no doubt bespeaking his commitment to spying as well as his acculturation. And The Seed is Mine is no less surprising in the way it discloses the ways in which white traders, farmers’ cooperatives and even the law were used by Kas and his kind.

For all of its surprises, The Seed is Mine is not an easy book. This does not flow from any laziness in the writing. Van Onselen has gone to great pains to craft the prose, and the work contains many memorable passages and characters so that its form sometimes approximates to that of a novel: the reader wants to know how the plot will unfold, and what will become of the characters. Despite all this, completing the book – though immensely rewarding – is an arduous undertaking. All lives, but especially peasant lives, contain much that is ordinary and repetitive. And van Onselens’s determination to reconstruct a peasant life, season by season, year by year, sharecropping contract by sharecropping contract, means inevitably that the reader is often presented with exceptional detail on subjects he or she has already encountered. The Seed is Mine therefore becomes a book for the committed reader. But the commitment is well worth making. For scholars of the peasantry, this is as deep an excavation of the life of a peasant paterfamilias and his impact upon those around him as one is likely to find anywhere. For those interested in the complexity of rural race and class relations in twentieth-century South Africa, there are insights aplenty.

Littered across the pages, there are many nuggets, whether on the labour processes intrinsic to various crops, or on the cultural deposits left in the languages of the countryside; whether on the forces liquidating the ‘sharecropping frontier’ or on the ways in which historical forces (war, epidemic, depression, dispossession, state exactions, social engineering) struck ordinary people. In all these ways, The Seed is Mine is a book of riches. It will be plundered for as long as people are interested in twentieth-century South Africa.

University of Essex

RURAL RESISTANCE

A Lion amongst the Cattle: Reconstruction and Resistance in the Northern Transvaal.


Peter Delius’s valuable study of the rural history of the northern Transvaal is in some ways a companion volume to his earlier book on the Pedi and Sekhukuneland in the nineteenth century, with which the first chapter dovetails chronologically. Here Delius etches the political and economic dispossession suffered by the Pedi and evokes the politico-cultural world that they somehow managed to preserve within the official administrative order that circumscribed it. As Delius shows, that world had a complex variety of age and gender roles, and was centred upon patriarchal authority and a communal conception of the land.

Having sketched the history and structure of the Pedi, Delius offers the reader a series of chapters centred largely on moments of intervention and struggle. All
are illuminating, although a more explicit tracking of themes across the chapters and more emphasis on ‘bridging’ might have given the book less of an episodic feel. The all too brief emphasis in Chapter 1 on the importance of communal land and the world erected upon it, for example, is never really followed through, so that we are not treated to an analysis of precisely how it changed and was dissolved over the half century considered. Still, the first of the episodes dealt with by Delius is a vivid look at the results of the ‘conservationist’ interventions of the 1930s and 1940s, and the resistance they elicited, notably in the areas around Pietersburg, where officials – armed with their ‘science’ – mounted an assault on existing patterns of tenure and attempted to impose changes. The politics of opposition were somewhat fitful during this period, with political associations never really taking off. But, as Delius shows, processes beyond Sekhukuneland were at work to transform this situation. For a start, the ANC and the Communist Party were beginning to take more interest in the rural areas in the 1940s. Moreover, the changing occupations of the migrant workers – which saw them moving outside of the mines – opened them up to more radical (including Communist) currents of urban politics which then fed back into the countryside. By the mid-1950s, ‘the Sebakgomo…a peasant’s movement’ with specifically Pedi resonances (pp. 102–3) had been launched, which was to have connections to the 1958 Sekhukuneland Revolt, of which this book offers a rich and convincing analysis.

The revolt cannot be understood apart from the social engineering of the early apartheid state, whose imposition of Bantu authorities in the countryside was central to a fight over the chieftaincy. As the battle emerged, taking on elements of civil war in Sekhukuneland, particular social strata (notably traders, and some teachers, and Christians) lined up behind the new system, while other groupings (Baditsuba – that is, non-Christians – and those still committed to land and livestock) ranged themselves against it. It proved to be the migrants with their ANC/CP connections who were central to the revolt and its organization, Khutubamaga. But, as becomes clear from Delius’ analysis, if the world and organizations beyond Sekhukuneland proved crucial to the rebels, so too did Pedi culture. Thus ‘collaborators’ were accused of witchcraft, and the Pedi regimental system was mobilized to defend the resistance movement against the police. Delius’s insightful analysis also reveals how the revolt was to have important ramifications for national resistance politics as one of the streams that fed into the ANC’s conversion to armed struggle.

The rebellion was, however, suppressed and after the repressions and state interventions of the early 1960s, there was an effective co-option of the chiefs, who became ever more exploitative and unaccountable. There was also increasing migration, clearly symptomatic of dire poverty. If mass education was increasingly provided for youth, so was an ever-burgeoning unemployment for school leavers. The resource base of the area was further burdened by the settlement in the region of Africans evicted from areas held to be white. Not surprisingly, these desperate circumstances saw an increasing rise in witchcraft accusations, with murderous sanctions. The scene was thus set for the convulsions of the 1980s and 1990s, when – as Delius shows – highly politicized youthful ‘comrades’ combined their brave defiance of the state with a frightening witch-killing movement.

Chapter 6 illustrates how the people of the region began to offer a fundamental challenge to the local apartheid order from the 1970s, when released detainees and even ANC guerrillas were inspiring local politics in the area. Crucially, youth and migrants were mobilized in SEYO (the Sekhukhuneland Youth Organisation), which became a key forum for mobilization from 1986. Its confrontation with the police, creation of no-go areas, school boycotts and mass opposition to the Lebowa authorities, created a well-nigh revolutionary situation. But running within this movement was a cruel and terrifying drive against ‘witches’, which also subsumed
family squabbles and jealousies. This story is taken up to the mid-1990s when the massive turnout for the ANC in the northern Transvaal in South Africa’s first democratic election campaign was accompanied by a hunt for witches even more murderous and frenzied than the earlier one.

Delius’ account suggests that the increasing frenzy of the witchcraft accusations during these decades resulted from some kind of socio-economic implosion. In the late 1950s, the accusations were more controlled and bounded by the possibility of restoring a social equilibrium; not so in the 1980s, when they flew like the angel of death through an utterly gutted society.

A few final points. This reader would have welcomed a clearer analysis of the changing socio-economic profile of the communities discussed. The book presents a picture of deepening poverty over the decades, but offers no systematic discussion of the balance of rural to non-rural sources of income, and how this changed over time. What proportion of the population constituted functioning peasant households and how did this change? What was the specific contribution of migrant remittances? Were they linked to functioning peasant economies? Precisely how and when were the communal mechanisms of allocation eroded? In the 1930s, we are told that migrant remittances were ‘the life blood’ of the region, but this point is somewhat confused by an immediate focus upon households that suffered from such ‘erratic remittances’ that rural production was the key to their existence (p. 34–5). Moreover, the popular rebellion of the late 1950s is led by those who seem to have been committed, in some way, to rural production. Does this mean that such production continued to remain a socio-economic mainstay even a generation after migrants’ wages are held to be the very ‘life blood of the reserve economy’ (p. 35). One leaves the book feeling that a more systematic probing of what happened to agrarian production (and how it was linked to migrant labour) over the decades would have yielded a clearer understanding of the basis of the rebellion of 1958.

Delius offers us an intensely local study. Those from the region will appreciate this, but the close focus does sometimes create difficulties for those looking for illumination for non-Pedi studies. It is striking that, although some of the political activists from Delius’ area were inspired by the Mau Mau uprising (p. 131) and although journalists covering the 1958 Sekhukuneland Rebellion interpreted it in terms of the stereotypes regarding the Kenyan revolt (pp. 108–9), Delius himself offers no comparative reflections – however brief – of the two rebellions. More striking is the lack of an assessment of the 1958 revolt in the light of the Pondo rising in South Africa with which it was more or less contemporaneous. Building a more explicit comparative framework into the analysis would not only have illuminated it; it would also have made it easier for scholars and students to use the findings of the book. Is the Sekhukuneland Revolt to be placed in that great arc of post-war rebellions in which specifically peasant aspirations are crucial? It is likely, but the question is not addressed in Delius’ commentary. A more determined location of this subject within generic categories and wider patterns would be rewarding. Perhaps Delius will turn to that task next.

But let this survey end not on what the book has not done, but on what it has. A Lion Amongst the Cattle is a most serious recovery of the rural past. Researched in the most diligent way, it is carefully constructed and offers a set of valuable findings. It is also written with an exemplary commitment to the hopes and future of the people it studies.


Memories are constructed through complex relationships between the past and the present. The words, images, feelings and objects of the past are constantly lived, acted and contested in the present. Both Evans’ account of French opposition to the Algerian War and Nuttall and Coetzee’s edited collection of articles about negotiating memory in post-apartheid South Africa are testimony to this ongoing contestation.

Through the oral history method, Evans documents and interprets the memories and motivations of French men and women who assisted the Algerian struggle against French occupation. He documents the life stories of members of clandestine networks such as the Jeanson group. These groups provided safe houses, financial support and in some cases smuggled arms for Algerian freedom fighters, especially those belonging to the Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN). He provides schematic details about how the liberation struggle in Algeria developed, especially during its most intensive period, from 1954 to 1962. However, the primary focus of the book is on what the French thought about the Algerian anti-colonial struggle. The right-wing view saw Algeria merely as another ‘department’ of France, but Evans’ book traces the anxiety-ridden pondering of left-wingers who decided to support the Algerian struggle directly. Not only were they seen as traitors by the right-wing, but even the Communist party, the Parti Communiste Français (PCF), did not condone French support for the FLN. The PCF were afraid of alienating the strongly nationalist, and often racist, sections of their own rank and file. The people that Evans interviewed felt betrayed by the PCF. Most of these groups were patriotic to France, and felt that their work was in the tradition of the anti-Nazi underground resistance during the Second World War.

I found Evans’s use of oral history methodologically rigorous, his interpretations of memory thoughtful and insightful. He breaks from the more romantic uses of oral history, but still stresses the need for empirical rigour. However, if memory-work is the central focus for the oral history interviewer, then the relationship between interviewer and interviewee needs to be unpacked more carefully. For example, how did his relationship to interviewees shape the memories told? Evans is sensitive to the moment in which the story is told, but I wondered why he has so little to say about himself. What were his motivations for studying the political motivations of others? Furthermore, what role did language and translation play in the construction of this study?

I also wanted to know more about the Algerian struggle and especially about Algerian ‘voices’ during this period. Evans interviewed a handful of FLN activists about how they saw French underground support for their struggle. Nonetheless, the Algerians themselves are an unsettling presence on the edges and between the lines of the narrative. The life-story approach dominates the organization of chapters, and this is a revealing way of understanding interviewees’ motives and decision-making. However, the book lacked a detailed account of the evolution of these underground groups; I suspect underground work does not lend itself to tidy historical descriptions. The problem that most participants of underground work face is that they are seldom seen and are therefore rarely recognized for their work. Evans’s clearly written and moving account should contribute to the recognition
of these individuals and their work. But I am left with the feeling that what wasn’t said or heard are powerful motivations shaping the narratives contained in this book.

In contrast, the focus of the Nuttall and Coetzee book is more expansive. The book is located in the post-apartheid terrain of remembering, forgetting and silencing the South African past. The first cluster of articles, by Ndebele, Brink, Holiday and de Kok, raises interesting questions about the nature of ‘truth’ in the making of memory. De Kok’s piece is the most useful, as she deals with the difficulties of living with and representing forms of loss. Where Evans draws on Alistair Thomson’s notion of ‘composing memories’, De Kok draws on Peter Sacks’s idea of ‘fictions of consolation’. As she correctly argues, if reconciliation is to succeed then evidence of ‘our suffering and complicity need to be displayed as part of a new pattern’ (p. 70).

The second cluster of articles deals with memory and the self. Articles by Nuttall, Coetzee and Godby explore the construction of the self within various genres of South African literature and art. Minkley and Rassool in contrast provide an appropriate critique of how social historians have used oral history in ways that are blind to the fluidity of memory and narrative. Robins explores his own family history to critique the problem of nationalism in Nazi Germany, apartheid South Africa and the emergence of a new nationalism in post-apartheid South Africa.

The third cluster of articles by Davison, Deacon, Hall, Ward and Worden deals with the difficulties of the public representation of memory. As Deacon states (and here she echoes Robins), ‘A museum of apartheid may allow the erasure of personal memories as it tries to construct a public memory’ (p. 177). The fourth cluster of articles by Bertelsen, Makoni and Fagan deals with the ‘inscription of the past’. These seemed somewhat tagged on at the end, and could have been more integrated with the rest of the book.

As is often the case with collections, there is a sense of unevenness. This is particularly the case when some writers present ideas from their discipline as new, when in fact the debate has moved on in another discipline. Memory studies are multi-disciplinary terrain. But can we expect writers to have read everything on the topic across all disciplines?

The book bravely crosses the disciplinary ghettos of the academy. Given the ambitious title, there are some gaps; for example, very little is said about land and memory. Also, there is an undeniably urban feeling to the book. Nevertheless, Nuttall and Coetzee’s book is an excellent beginning to the dynamic area of public memory and representation in South Africa.

University of Cape Town

SEAN FIELD

GENDER AND COMMERCE

Trouble Showed the Way: Women, Men and Trade in the Nairobi Area, 1890–1990.

It takes courage and hard work for a scholar to change geographical region. Claire Robertson has turned her attention to Kenya, following up her early work on female traders on Accra (Sharing the Same Bowl: A Socioeconomic History of Women and Class in Accra, Ghana, 1984) with a twentieth century history of gender and trading in Nairobi. Her work incorporates a wide variety of data: first, a survey of 6,000 Gikuyu and Kamba traders (two thirds of whom were women) in fifteen urban and rural markets, followed by a survey of a sub-sample of bean sellers,
intensive interviews with 56 female dried-staple sellers and discussions with administrators, civil servants, scholars and experts. This primary data is supplemented by a wide range of secondary data from academic, governmental and archival sources.

Using trading as her lens, Robertson examines gender and class relations of the Gikuyu and Kamba during the twentieth century. A major premise of this work is that the control of women’s labour is the basis for the male domination of women. Another major premise is that small-scale urban trading has implications for gender relations, class formation and female solidarity. Robertson starts by reconstructing the pre-colonial Gikuyu/Kamba gender division of labour, with special reference to trading. Women had a close involvement with long-distance trade and were part of a complementary gender division of labour with a male bias.

The next three chapters trace the growth and development of trade to the growing urban centre of Nairobi during the colonial era (1900–69). The first of these chapters is on the history of bean growing in Kenya, beans being a quintessentially women’s crop. While providing interesting insights into female farming and trading, this chapter does not seem to fit into the major trajectory of the book and Robertson does not return to the subject.

Women’s active trading both grew out of and diminished the existing gender division of labour and challenged male lineage elders’ control of women’s labour and sexuality. The colonial state’s policy on small traders was contradictory. The need to feed Nairobi’s work force led administrators to promote small trade and discourage the elders’ more extreme attempts to prevent female trading. Yet the bureaucracy constantly attempted to control and regulate trade in ways that hampered smaller traders, who were often women. Robertson charts the complicated and contradictory threads of administrative activity; policy development; traders’ responses and innovations; male elders’ attempts to control lineage women, and female traders’ resistance to elders, missionaries and administrators.

The last three chapters examine the history of trading in the 1980s and 1990s; the post-colonial state’s frequently negative responses to small trading (increasingly dominated by women); the role of trading in responding to shifts in gender division of labour, and alterations in expectations of marriage, economic depression, ethnic conflicts, class formation and female activism arising out of participation in trading.

The chapter on changes in marriage contains the most qualitative supportive data, which may account for its vividness and impact. Overall, the book contains relatively sparse and fragmentary material on women’s and men’s lives. This is in contrast to Sharing the Same Bowl, which imaginatively included four extended ‘portraits’ of women, permitting the reader to comprehend the interrelationships and human implications of the elements and historical trends identified in the author’s analytical framework. Perhaps Robertson’s dense data and detailed analysis would have profited from the inclusion throughout of more qualitative data on people’s histories.

Robertson addresses critical issues in the gender relations, class and economy of Kenya. The conclusions of the study are somewhat ambivalent about the potential of the small trading sector for poverty alleviation or for the empowerment of women. Robertson recognizes that limited capital formation in the micro-entrepreneurial sector, unhelpful government policies and overcrowding does not provide a strong basis for expansion and upward mobility for the under classes. At the moment the most that the small trading sector can do is to provide a survival strategy. Robertson expresses the hope that the small trading sector has helped empower women and given women access to property (rural or urban), while demonstrating the depressing truth that the increase in women’s trading is also an expression of increased poverty and an evolving structure of family and marriage.
in which couples operate more or less independently and 'do not help each other as much as they could' (p. 280).

This book will be of interest to feminist social scientists, urbanists, East Africanists and social economists. It is a thorough, meticulously researched and provocative book which should contribute a great deal to debates on gender division of labour, female empowerment, family change and small-scale trading in Africa.

Goldsmiths College, University of London

NICI NELSON

WARTIME COLONIAL POLITICS


The ambitious title of this volume suggests a political history of the Second World War in French West Africa (FWA). Instead, we are given a much more modest study of wartime French colonial politics, more heavily weighted towards Europeans than the emerging African political elite. Akpo-Vaché skilfully weaves her narrative from the governorship of Pierre Boisson under first Vichy and then American tutelage, through to the Gaullist takeover, the Brazzaville conference and the dawn of a new era of post-war politics. Although the canvas is stretched to include all of the colonies in FWA and the mandate of Togo, in fact regional politics are probed only in Senegal and in the author’s homeland, Benin.

Not the least of the book’s strengths is the detailed listing of political files in the French National Archives in Aix-en-Provence and in the former federation archives in Dakar; the author has also examined relevant British documents at the Public Record Office at Kew. A few interviews, mainly with retired Dahomeyan politicians, and the selective use of secondary accounts round out what is an archivally based, revised dissertation. One of book’s refreshing contributions is its shift in emphasis away from Dakar and Senegal to regional hotbeds of wartime politics such as Cotonou and Lomé.

The weakest sections are those devoted to the interaction between the Americans and the French after the allied landing in North Africa in November 1942, and to political tensions in the Ivory Coast, especially after 1943. Even a brief visit to Washington to consult American consular and military files would have enabled the author to appreciate the seriousness of the American threat to a continued French presence in West Africa. Rear Admiral William O. Glassford, Roosevelt’s representative in Dakar, recommended at one point that the French move their federal administrative capital to Saint-Louis; Dakar itself should, he suggested, be taken over by the United States as a strategic base and a continental beachhead.

Similarly, a better grasp of the secondary literature in English and French relating to the Ivory Coast in the 1940s would have provided more depth to the analysis. Missing from Akpo-Vaché’s study are now classic works by Wallerstein and Weiskel, Nancy Lawler’s major book on Ivorian _Tirailleurs_, and Hubert Deschamps’s _Roi de la Brousse_. In this self-serving autobiography, the former governor of the Ivory Coast under Vichy, later professor of African history at the Sorbonne, sought to rationalize his harsh collaborationist policies by invoking his earlier socialist connections with Léon Blum and the Popular Front.

Like others before her, Akpo-Vaché emphasizes the importance of the Brazzaville Conference of January 1944 as a decisive marker in the region’s history. French officials at Brazzaville rejected both the path of trusteeship leading to independence which the British adopted, and ‘assimilation’, which the French
Left and African elites favoured. Instead, they proposed the conservative option of ‘association’. Akpo-Vaché shows that a new African elite, active in youth associations and in the Communist-inspired Comités d’études franco-africains, turned to nationalism as a result of their displeasure. What she fails to explain is why this more militant new guard proved to be so easily mollified by the very modest concessions made by France in the new French Union that emerged in 1946.

Small infelicities do not, however, spoil what is a well-written and clearly organized study. Kouadio Adjoumani is correctly identified as ruler of the Abron of Dahomey (p. 99), but incorrectly called emperor of the Mossi earlier (p. 21). It is a valuable study, both as an overview of this important but neglected period, and as a tool for future researchers.

McGill University

Myron Echenberg

QUESTIONING THE ‘CONSENSUAL VIEW’ OF WARTIME AFRICA


Understanding the implications of the Second World War has been a slippery problem for historians of Africa. A substantial body of literature has built up that depicts the war as a watershed event in the political, economic and social development of the continent, but few of these broad assertions are borne out entirely when applied to individual colonies and territories. This contradiction is brought into sharp focus in Ashley Jackson’s Botswana 1939–1945: An African Country at War. Under the heading of what Jackson terms the ‘consensual view’, these popular generalizations suggest that the Second World War inspired sharp changes in colonial administrative and economic policies, nurtured and inspired African nationalism, undermined ‘white prestige’, and created a class of restless and politicized African ex-servicemen. On the whole, Jackson argues that these interpretations are too metropolitan, too teleological and too elite-based, and he finds little evidence of such radical changes in wartime Botswana (Bechuanaland).

By synthesizing the political, economic, social and military history of the territory, Jackson sees the war as a period of continuity rather than change, concluding that Botswana in 1945 was closer to 1939 than 1960. He finds that metropolitan policy had little significant impact on wartime Bechuanaland and that rural areas were particularly untouched by the war. In contrast to many studies of the conflict which depict African soldiers as victims of coercion and exploitation, Jackson argues that many were volunteers and tended to be a force for conservatism rather than agents of radical change after they were discharged. He convincingly dismantles the myth of the war as a threat to white prestige by pointing out that since few Africans regarded Europeans as superior before the conflict, African soldiers had little reason to be less respectful of them once the fighting was over.

Jackson is careful to confine his analysis to Bechuanaland, but he suggests that the generalizations embodied in the ‘consensual view’ will prove equally inaccurate when they are examined on a case by case basis in additional African territories. While he successfully calls many popular generalizations concerning the war into question, the lessons that can be drawn from Botswana appear to be limited. The book paints a rather harmonious picture of wartime Bechuanaland where Africans (particularly chiefs) willingly contributed to the war effort. Jackson argues that the Batswana did not consider themselves to be a colonized people and instead viewed Britain as their protector against the Afrikaners who pushed for the incorporation
of the High Commission Territories into the Union of South Africa. He asserts that wartime politics were confined to competition over the powers of chiefs within the parameters of indirect rule, and that local colonial officials had few real fears about the destabilizing consequences of the war. Even Batswana soldiers appear to have had an easier time than most other African soldiers because they experienced less overt racial discrimination while serving in mixed artillery units with regular British troops. The low incidence of disciplinary incidents in Bechuana units can also be attributed to the appointment of African chiefs to senior non-commissioned ranks, a practice that few other territories were able to duplicate.

Much of this stability can be attributed to the lack of a significant European population in Bechuanaland. British settlers in Kenya, the Rhodesias and to some extent Malawi used their influence to oppose improved pay and working conditions for African troops and exploited wartime economic opportunities at the expense of African labourers and farmers. It was these settler communities that worried most about the war’s threat to white prestige. Thus, Africans from territories with larger European populations had a much more difficult time during the war than Jackson’s Batswana informants.

Jackson’s revisionist critique of the ‘consensual view’ of wartime Africa runs counter to the work of many African historians (including some Botswanans) who have argued that the exploitive nature of colonial military service helped inspire African nationalism. Ultimately, debates over the nature of African service in colonial armies and the influence of African veterans revolve around the question of balancing oral and archival evidence. Many of the works which fall under Jackson’s ‘consensual view’ of the Second World War give greater weight to the testimonies of surviving ex-servicemen who recall incidents of discrimination and insubordination that are rarely mentioned in military reports and colonial archives. What makes Jackson’s book so interesting is that he seems to have found the opposite situation in Botswana. Rather than complaining of exploitation, most of Jackson’s African informants had few grievances about their treatment by the army and the colonial administration. They claim to have no recollection of communal labour on government sponsored agricultural projects (known as warlands) or the several serious disciplinary incidents that took place while Batswana soldiers were awaiting demobilization. Jackson does not go into much detail on how he gathered his oral data, and one has to wonder if he simply could not find surviving ex-servicemen with first-hand knowledge of these incidents or if some informants had a reason for recalling their wartime experiences in such benign terms.

In any event, Jackson has made a provocative contribution to ongoing debates on the impact of the Second World War on Africa and the influence of African ex-servicemen, and his call to re-examine the war’s legacy from the perspective of individual Africans has a great deal of merit.

Washington University, St Louis

TIMOTHY H. PARSONS

FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN RESEARCH


This volume contains essays by sixteen African historians who received their graduate education in French universities and who now teach in universities in their home countries. With one exception, they deal with subjects in the history of
the authors’ countries, mainly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their sources include the French and African colonial archives, oral tradition, interviews and personal experience as well as secondary works. The last category encompasses unpublished theses and mémoires written in the national universities of Francophone Africa since independence.

The editors have grouped the essays into three categories – inherited structures, adaptations and innovations; state resistances, pressure groups and reinterpretations of the political; and economy and society: changes and networks. At the same time the editors recognize that the diversity and richness of the topics extend well beyond such groupings. In broad terms, the essays investigate dimensions of the pre-colonial, colonial and national periods that have helped to shape contemporary states, economies and societies, and in several cases contribute to understanding current problems.

This review describes briefly the topics covered in each essay and to the extent possible indicates the importance of some of the findings. Aduayom Messan Adimado discusses the need for a history of ideas in the societies of the Bight of Benin in the era of the Atlantic slave-trade. His examination of the problems involved in such an effort shows the necessity for including oral data and employing social sciences methodologies as well as historical ones. Bourema Alpha Gado’s review of the application of the rural land reform of March 1993 in Niger lacks the historical background essential for understanding the issues he explores. In contrast, Doulaye Konate provides a detailed and incisive discussion on the history of land management in Mali during the pre-colonial, colonial and national periods. He shows the resulting ambiguities that troubled the applications of the land reform of 1986. Sébastien Dossa Sotinjo examines land speculation in suburban Cotonou between 1945 and 1985. His essay is enriched by statistical data and a case study of an important speculator.

Ayouba Arziza’s pioneering essay on French efforts in public health in Niger prior to independence indicates very real achievements despite the meagre resources devoted to social services. Claude Sissao examines both the cultural and social dimensions of health care in Burkina Faso during the colonial and national periods. His study offers valuable insights into the changing roles of western and traditional medicine, including the resurgence of the latter because of the country’s economic and financial problems, worsened by the devaluation of the CFA franc in January 1994.

Ismail Barry reviews the divisions in Fuuta-Jaloo society that made the kingdom a comparatively easy French conquest. Ibrahima Thioub discusses Portuguese use of an African agent, Abdou Ndiaye, and mercenaries in the conquest of the Rivières du Sud societies between 1894 and 1919. Bellarmin Coffi Codo describes how the Afro-Brazilians who sought to remain a privileged group in the kingdom of Xogbonou (Porto Novo) after its conquest by the French in the 1860s lost their economic power and political influence; like the rest of the population, they were subjected to French colonialism.

Léon Kaptué relates how the opposition of Cameroon’s French administration in the 1940s and 1950s to coffee-growing by individual Bamiléké farmers and to production cooperatives led to political radicalization favouring the Union des Populations du Cameroun and independence. Kaptué’s original and insightful essay also demonstrates how changing patterns of individual land ownership contributed to the drastic decline in the power of the traditional chiefs. Fassinet Beavogui discusses the changing role of West African poro societies, particularly in Guinea, and the brutal measures of the Sékou Touré regime to suppress them and their revival since 1984.

Odile Ekindi-Chatap reports on the tiny percentage of mémoires and theses at the University of Yaoundé since 1960 devoted to women’s issues and history, and the
lack of analysis in several of them. In his essay on commerce among the Wolof, Mamadou Fall examines the correlation between systems of exchange, ethnic groups, and maraboutic networks. His findings challenge current notions about the informal sector.

Kimba Idrissa discusses the details of France’s failure to construct a railway system that might have promoted economic development in Niger and its effective integration into larger West African units. Cheikh Faty Faye shows how the grievances of Dakar’s African population over the rampantly rising cost of living, 1938–48 ultimately contributed to demands for independence. Michel Akue-Goeh examines the economic, social and political impact of French colonial rule in Togo during the inter-war period. He shows how privileged groups with western education became notables and, after the Second World War, the political leaders. The epilogue by Mohamed Mbojd on the influence of post-modernism and post-colonialism in Africa recognizes their very limited impact upon Francophone scholars.

Marquette University DaviD E. Gardinier

HISTORY IN LITERATURE


In approaching the imperial experience, both colonizer and colonized often resorted to fiction. The three books under review here study the imprint on literary production of colonialism. The first considers the literary output of Europeans in a colony-French Algeria. The other two are devoted to the way in which writers from sub-Saharan Africa have dealt with European conquest and rule.

In Writing French Algeria Peter Dunwoodie shows the way in which French writers in Algeria from the time of conquest until independence in 1962 attempted to create an ideology that would explain the unique qualities of the Europeans from France, while at the same time asserting their allegiance to the metropole. The first generation of writers produced an orientalist image of Algerians. The second generation, at the turn of the twentieth century constituting the ‘Algerianist movement’, insisted on writing that reflected the French imperial mission. Challenging it in turn came a new generation in the 1930s, the Ecole d’Alger; this attempted to overcome the conflicts of imperialism and uphold a more humane view of the relationship of colonizer and colonized.

The basic approach of the book is intertextuality; it reveals how each school of thought sprang up as a conscious reaction to its predecessors. To the English reader few of the authors discussed in Dunwoodie’s book will be familiar, except for one – the most distinguished member of the Ecole d’Alger group – Albert Camus. As Professor Dunwoodie reminds us, there is a huge secondary literature on Camus, but there is little understanding of the general literary milieu from which he sprang. This book provides just that, but it should be enjoyed for its own sake and not just as the key to Camus. It is a fine and revealing history of how the French writers in Algeria wanted their presence in North Africa to be understood.
Our second book is by a seasoned writer on Francophone African literature, Christopher L. Miller. The book’s title is supposed to suggest two possible poles for interpreting literature: the nationalist draws clear categories and boundaries; the nomad knows no frontiers and roams freely. Luckily for us, Professor Miller, a ‘nomad’ with few preconceptions, explores in this collection of articles the cultural dimensions of Franco-African relations. The French point of view is dissected in a couple chapters devoted to the colonial exposition of 1931; the other chapters are devoted to African understandings of French colonialism. Among the latter, my favourite is Miller’s chapter on ‘Nationalism as resistance’, which includes an interesting and eye-opening discussion of Ferdinand Oyono’s *Houseboy*.

Miller seems to feel that his first chapter, ‘Involution and revolution – African Paris in the 1920s’ provides new and unknown material on the various colonial nationalist movements in Paris in the 1920s that were often more radical than, for instance, the approach colonial intellectuals were to show in the 1930s. Actually, the first person to document nationalist thought among Africans in Paris in the 1920s was James S. Spiegler in his dissertation ‘Aspects of nationalist thought among French-speaking Africans, 1921–1939’ (unpublished dissertation, Nuffield College, Oxford, 1968). Remaining unpublished, this valuable dissertation may have escaped notice.

Our first two authors, Dunwoodie and Miller, although analysts of literature, engage in their subject without resort to the jargon of literary theory. Their work is thus accessible. Our third author, Eleni Coundouriotis, is far more enamoured with theory. Coundouriotis notes that ethnographers have often neglected history, assuming that a society they observe has always been that way, or vice versa that evidence from the past describes contemporary value systems or social interactions. With regard to Africa, such a sense of timelessness supported the colonialist discourse of an Africa bereft of history – needing the intrusion of the European to be transformed.

Professor Coudouriotis studies the way in which several African and one Martinican novelist attempted to restore historicity to Africans. In their work, authors as different as René Maran (the Martinican), the Dahomean Paul Hazoumé and Chinua Achebe among others, try to show that the Africa in their work is one that has been shaped by the impact of the white man. Africa was not always that way. Yambo Ouologuem’s novel, *Le devoir de violence*, which appeared in 1968, was greeted as an ‘authentic African novel’ by European readers; they appear to have meant it was also a novel describing an authentic Africa. But, Coudouriotis suggests that the erotic, violent, savage Africa was more an invention of the white imagination. When Ouologuem was describing such an Africa, it was one that had been perverted by savage slave and colonial wars. Unlike many, however, Ouologuem, was also able to transcend a convenient African mythology which suggested some ideal existence prior to contacts with the European. That too was a myth that needed debunking.

Africa’s struggle with the past is suggested in the Nigerian novelist Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road* (1991). Given the unsettling experience of colonialism and the particularly artificial construct of territories that became ‘nations’, how are these newly independent nations, Okri asks, to find a usable past. Coudouriotis has an interesting set of questions she asks of her materials; but heavily laced with literary theory, the book may not be for everyone.

Literary theory seems to allow licence to read intent into authors’ motivations that are not supported by the historical record. The Dahomean Hazoumé in his writings in the late 1930s certainly wanted to undermine the European image of African barbarity, but that hardly made him a nationalist. His paean to French rule at the end of his novel *Doguicimi* (1938), which claimed that French rule brought
'peace, liberty, and humanity', was not – as Coudouriotis claims – meant ironically. She would like it to have been so. The author needs the historical perspective she reproaches European ethnologists for lacking, to understand a young West African educated in French schools and living in France in the 1930s. The nationalist leaders she is looking for among French African authors – with the rarest of exception – had not yet appeared on the scene. And Hazoumé is not one of them.

Other actors also seem to be victims of achronicity. With many Nigerians bereft of literacy, clean running water, and decent shelter, how can they already have experienced ‘passage into postmodernity’ (p. 148)? I know modernity is a controversial term that needs careful definition, but what about postmodernity? If the latter term has a defined meaning in literary theory, I am at a loss to understand how ‘the Nigerian people’ are experiencing ‘their passage into postmodernity’.

If Coudouriotis’s writing is at times opaque, her work nevertheless has real value in examining how history has been a field of contestation between colonialists and nationalists. Our three authors, in fact, shed valuable light on how literature has been the battleground for colonialism and its resisters.

Indiana University

WILLIAM B. COHEN

COLLECTING OBJECTS AND IMAGES


Inspiré par le succès du livre de Christopher Steiner, African Art in Transit, la décision de ne retenir que les textes portant explicitement sur l’activité de collectionneur en Afrique centrale, au dix-neuvième et au début du vingtième siècle, a limité la portée du volume. Elle n’a d’ailleurs pas été rigoureusement appliquée; au moins de trois chapitres s’en écartent. Par ailleurs, l’excellente communication de Gordon Gibson sur Verner n’y figure pas. Néanmoins, le volume traite d’une question importante qui auparavant n’a été abordée qu’anecdotiquement. L’accent mis sur les objets, sur les motifs et la démarche de celui qui constitue une collection, souvent pour le compte de quelqu’un d’autre, donne à ce volume son originalité. Les chapitres de Johannes Fabian sur Frobenius et d’Enid Schildkrout sur Lang et Starr sont au coeur de cette problématique. La contribution de Wyatt MacGaffey apporte un nouveau regard sur l’histoire de la construction occidentale de la notion d’art africain.

Deux questions pourraient guider le lecteur du volume. Tout d’abord, c’est le rapport entre le fait de collectionner et le savoir qui autant l’accompagne qu’il en émerge. À partir d’un objet, le minkisi, MacGaffey questionne l’usage des concepts d’art et de symbolisme. Il montre la fluidité de la relation entre l’image et l’univers
qu'elle représente, puis insiste sur l'historicité du concept d'art. Il écrit: ‘if Bakongo, in 1905, could appropriate a green bottle to make into a work of magic, *nkisi Nkodi a Mungundu*, it is only fair that we should reciprocate by recognizing the result as art’ (p. 234). Les contributions de Fabian, de Binkley avec Darish, de Mack et de Schildkrout permettent de suivre la démarche de collectionneur sur le terrain. Fabian écrit: ‘In the logic of ethnographic collecting...objects are collected that are doomed to disappear because they really belong to the past...’ (p. 101). Au cours de la période que couvre ce volume, on passait en occident de la collection, une activité cognitive prenant le contrôle du ‘primitif’ par l'appropriation de son univers matériel, vers l'exposition donnant le ‘primitif’ à voir. En Afrique, le volume croissant de la demande favorisait l'émergence d'un marché et de la production artisanale. Et pourtant, l'exigence occidentale d'authenticité imposée par la museification et par le marché naissant de l'art ‘primitif’, écartait tout objet qui n'était pas marqué par l'usage local. Il est dommage qu'on n'exploite pas d'avantage l'important livre de Krzysztof Pomian, cité en passant, par les éditeurs, dans une note de l'introduction.

Le statut de l'objet constitue une seconde question, déjà absordée dans le catalogue *African Reflexions: Art from Northeastern Zaire*, aussi édité par Keim et Schildkrout. Sur l'exemple d'un objet kongo, le *mintadi*, MacGaffey montre à quel point il était, et demeure, difficile de voir le *folk art*, dans toute sa banalité, là où le collectionneur ou le conservateur de musée s'attend à trouver l'exotisme d'un fétiche. L'attitude occidentale à l'égard de l'appropriation des objets rituels d'origine chrétienne (crucifix, statuettes de Saint-Antoine) par la même société kongo, en offre un exemple différent. Le dernier livre de John Thornton, *The Congolese Saint Anthony*, publié aussi par Cambridge University Press, apporte à ce sujet un éclairage très important.

Évidemment, l'analyse de ce que collectionner veut dire en et pour l'occident, ne sera jamais ni complète ni équitable sans son autre versant. Jan Vansina m'a fait remarqué que les détenteurs africains du pouvoir, certains rois kuba dans ce cas, collectionnaient aussi. S'agissait-il d'une réponse/imitation à l'appropriation occidentale, à la manière occidentale de construire un savoir? Au contraire, était-ce une activité ancienne s'apparentant à celle de retenir à la cour diverses personnes d'origine étrangère et aux compétences rares? Pour nous soutenir l'hypothèse que les dessins anthropomorphes sur les murs extérieurs de cases, une activité qui semble avoir pris de l'essor à l'époque de l'expédition Lang et Chapin, ‘collectionnaient’ les images de l'autre afin de s'en servir pur construire un savoir adapté à la nouvelle situation? Lang et Chapin, mais aussi d'autres explorateurs et fonctionnaires, ‘collectionnaient’ massivement des images, autant photographies que dessins. Plusieurs Congolais ordinaires collectionnent aujourd'hui des images peintes par des artistes locaux, ils collectionnaient auparavant des images découpées dans des publications illustrées. Cette activité – son ampleur numérique ne peut pas être comparé aux milliers d’objets ou d’images collectionnés par un occidental en Afrique – ne semble pas attirer l’attention d’aucune discipline universitaire. Pourtant, les *soap opera* américains, indiens, brésiliens, que de milliers de spectateurs regardent en Afrique sur vidéo, souvent alimenté par une génératrice de motocyclette, sont peut-être aujourd’hui une autre manière de collectionner des images d’ailleurs.
Ever since Mudimbe’s *The Invention of Africa* (1988), social scientists have shown signs of curiosity and unease regarding the investigative apparatus through which the cultures, histories and literatures of the world are understood. With time, the resulting call for introspection has culminated in the awareness that ‘development’ is a concept at the heart of all academic social science research. Whether one likes it or not, intellectual trends and the development concept are interrelated, strongly and uncomfortably, and this close relationship needs to be grasped and located in historical conjunctures if social scientists are to engage meaningfully with development practitioners. Representing a range of disciplines (anthropology, history, economics, demography) and a variety of regional expertise, the contributors to this volume encourage healthy scepticism regarding commonly used dichotomies – ‘the market’ versus ‘the state’, policymakers versus academics, universality versus community – to promote better awareness of how people around the world engage with the structures of power in ‘more varied and complex forms than acquiescence or resistance’ (p. 30). This awareness, in turn, invites critical appreciation of the fact that development cannot be reduced to a different form of colonialism or presented as the tyranny of modernity.

The ‘uncomfortable intimacy’ between development and the social sciences is conveyed most lucidly in James Ferguson’s demonstration of how development constitutes anthropology’s ‘evil twin’. Unearthing the roots of anthropology, Ferguson shows that it was the idea of social evolution that gave anthropology its early conceptual coherence. Out of that close relationship has come the systematic separation of ‘modern’ and ‘backward’ people – a vision which has proved durable, and which gained further momentum with the demise of colonialism. At this juncture, anthropologists became the appointed experts on ‘backward peoples’, who, as individual (i.e. unconnected) entities, needed guidance in taking up the challenge of development.

As twins, anthropology and development went through a long period of gestation. When breaks with the discipline’s developmentalist past did occur, anthropologists commonly looked to socialism as the system that would deliver the goods of ‘real development’; they looked even to the point of endorsing ‘the exploitation of peasant producers by radical Third World states in the name of “socialist development”’ (p. 163). Like any other social science, anthropology must come to terms with its history: academic anthropologists alarmed at the idea of direct development must realise that their discipline has a track record of embracing development in a less than critical manner. The need for awareness regarding the uncomfortably close link has peaked in recent times with the (still increasing) tendency to view anthropology, applied or not, as ‘a kind of attentiveness to local knowledge’ (p. 170).

The invitation to read development as a historically situated, multivalent phenomenon permeates the book, and will come as a magnetic refreshing challenge to anyone accustomed to thinking in terms of neat boundaries. The challenge is put most forcefully in Cooper’s appreciation that the political significance of development ‘did not simply spring from the brow of colonial leaders, but was to a significant extent forced upon them, by the collective actions of workers located within hundreds of local contexts as much as in imperial economy’ (p. 85).
Mamadou Diouf illustrates this for Senegal, where the post-colonial development project went against the colonial grain, at least for a while, because it emphasized the country’s dynamic socio-economic heterogeneity and hence its potential for mass mobilization and empowerment.

India’s development trajectory, mapped out in chapters by Sugata Bose and Akhil Gupta, also reveals ordinary people’s engagement with the structures in power. Bose finds evidence of this engagement in the way the fifth and sixth Five-year Plans built strategies around food and fuel issues, thereby moving away from the earlier preoccupation with heavy industry, while Gupta shows how populist developmentalist ideas emanating from Indira Gandhi’s National Congress came to be embraced (and transformed) by rural opposition leaders as an ideology and strategy for popular mobilization. Such engagements point to the multiple, but as yet little understood, ways in which ideas pass into the realm of policy – a theme taken up in Michael Carter’s chapter on disequilibria in contemporary development economics.

Packed with challenges, this edited volume reminds us how little we know about the inner workings of national, international and transnational institutions. The chapters on the World Bank (Martha Finnemore), the Economic Commission for Latin America (Kathryn Sikkink) and the modelling of Nepal’s health policy (Stacy Leigh Pigg), however, bring insightful beginnings. Reflections on how to account for specific policy shifts for instance, such as the rejection of structuralism by a group of ECLA development specialists or the World Bank’s adoption of a ‘poverty alleviation’ focus, provide us with tentative explanations and new angles through which the intricate world of policy implementation and institutional learning can be analytically unpacked.

Equally exciting, contributors remind us that the study of social change, situated in specific contexts and histories, requires an open mind as to which outcomes are likely. As the chapters on health and development (Randall Packard), population and development (John Sharpless) and health in Nepal (Pigg) show, the outcome of the interplay of global and local forces (local–global being another dubious opposition) can never be taken for granted. Policy reversals are common, as illustrated in the way the primary health care concept has ‘reverted’ to selective primary health care; a case of ‘back to the future’ (Packard). The starting point then must be the acknowledgement that ‘local’ and ‘global’ interpenetrate. Open-endedness is also what Pigg advocates in the context of Nepal’s health policy. She puts it cogently: ‘Social scientists critical of development mirror the thinking of development planners when they treat local perspectives as if these consist only of “culture” or “indigenous knowledge” and not of ideas about development’ (p. 283).

Rich in observation and reflection, this volume is destined to be a milestone in social science epistemology and methodology. Besides plugging gaps and opening up new projects for research, contributors also argue persuasively for a more respectful engagement based on the mutual recognition that either side (now an untenable opposition) articulates concerns that are essentially similar. There is thus little difference to be discerned between the practitioner’s concern with project or programme replicability and the academic’s concern with contextual analysis, since both pursuits are anchored in self-serving professionalism. The close, historically shaped relationship between development and academic research should make all concerned more receptive to mutual difficulties and less inclined to indulge in stereotyped derision. This immensely challenging book cannot be ignored; its effects will be multiple, far-reaching and profound.
MATERIALIST HISTORY RECONSIDERED


The first edition of this book, published in 1984, was reviewed in these pages by John Lonsdale under the heading ‘A materialist history of Africa’. 1 It was a respectful if critical review; and the header captured the strengths and weaknesses of Bill Freund’s considerable achievement. The author had and still has a clear, individual interpretation of the African past. It was, just as the second edition is, a brave book which picked fights not merely with right-wing readings of the African past but also, as Lonsdale noted, with a variety of pillars of the left. It has been a successful book and that is why we now have a second edition.

Have the arguments stood the test of time? As importantly, does this second edition capture the significant changes in the intervening decade and a half? Such changes might include both the historical experiences of Africans and the shifts in the ways in which scholars try to understand that past. About the former, Freund is worrying. On the plus side, the first edition got South Africa right; among the predictions in his final chapter was ‘victory for African nationalism in South Africa’; but it was a victory which more questionably would ‘bring the working class to the fore and have explosive international consequences’ (p. 288). Although Freund is always fascinating about South Africa, its proximate history, important as it is, enjoys a disproportionate amount of text space in this edition.

But does the new edition prepare the reader for what is happening in much of tropical Africa now? With all too few exceptions, people north of the Limpopo have endured nearly two tragic decades of torment since the manuscript of the first edition of The Making of Contemporary Africa was delivered to Macmillan. This includes declines in life expectancy, in standards of living, the loss of skilled people to more propitious economic environments, rates of growth which scarcely keep abreast of population growth, extensive wars, the ravages of Aids and, if much of the African press is representative, deep despair. The attention paid to some of these in this edition can be bewilderingly slight. ‘Warring factions’ in Sierra Leone and Liberia are reported (pp. 264–5) as having ‘destroyed any remnant of central state authority’. This is the only reference to that ghastly story. The only mention of the horrors of Rwanda is an uncontroversial but unelaborated comment that ‘...aid-linked pressure for democracy and negotiations was a factor in the spectacular and bloody events of the middle 1990s’ (p. 262). The repercussions of those events, of which the adjective ‘spectacular’ seems particularly ill-chosen, have included the bloody redrawing of the regional political map of much of east and central Africa, including the dismemberment of the state formerly known as Zaïre; despite being among the most important earthquakes in contemporary African history there is nothing here which suggests that events in Rwanda might have regional significance. The Aids epidemic is mentioned but once in an inaccurate comment about Uganda’s ability to respond to the tragedy (p. 258).

It is surely this litany of recent and not so recent events which have made many scholars far more dubious about the wisdom of relying on materialist explanations not merely for the recent past but for the longue durée. Some, perhaps many, of these tragic events might be ascribed to the unsentimental machinations of capital and capitalists; but some cannot. The concerns of modern historiography with issues like identity, belief systems, religious revivalism and culture in its widest

sense have been driven by two imperatives. Firstly, and most importantly, materialist explanations can look remarkably neat but frequently come apart when it comes to grappling with issues like mass killings in Rwanda or the Sudanese civil war where materialism struggles over the issues of agency. But, secondly, the purely materialist standpoint has been eschewed not only by some western intellectuals but more importantly by many African intellectuals who live through what has made too much of Africa the haunt of tragedy at the end of the millennium.

These developments in how we think about Africa are not much reflected in the text or in the extremely useful annotated bibliography, although Kwame Appiah, David Cohen and Atieno Odhiambo figure here. To Freund’s great credit the bibliography brings to the attention of an Anglophone audience a wealth of valuable material in French. But it is a very selective bibliography, which tends to give prominence to the diminishing amount of scholarly writing which shares the author’s analytical approach and underplays the work of those who are less convinced. The great virtue of the book is that it has a clear argument. Its weakness is that this argument looks less convincing with the passage of time.

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RICHARD RATHBONE

SHORTER NOTICES


One of a series of well-produced, very reasonably priced reprints of Italian travel accounts from Marco Polo onwards, this volume consists of the letters written by the Capuchin Michelangelo Guattini to his father in Reggio Emilia during his voyage from Italy to Luanda (1667–8), together with an account by his companion Dionigi Carli of their mission to Bamba, of Guattini’s death there and of Carli’s subsequent return to Italy in 1671. Originally published in Bologna in 1671, subsequent editions were slightly expanded and this volume is based on the most widely-known edition, that of 1674.

Compared with the accounts of Cavazzi, Merolla and other Capuchins, this volume is of less importance for the historian of Africa. Most of it is occupied by the descriptions of Lisbon, of Pernambuco, and of the dangers, discomfort and delights of ocean voyages in the seventeenth century, which also illuminate the culture, spirituality and intelligence of the two authors. Both are keen and sharp observers, and their descriptions of Luanda, of Bamba and of the slave trade are noteworthy.

The introduction by Francesco Surdich, Professor of the History of Geographical Exploration in Genoa, seeks to place these accounts in the context of the history of the Kongo kingdom and the Capuchin mission. It rests on somewhat dated analysis – the major works of Thornton, Hilton and MacGaffey are notable omissions from the bibliography – and as a result far too great an emphasis is laid on the European impact rather than on indigenous developments. The value of this reprint for Africanists is, however, greatly enhanced by the inclusion of twenty illustrations from a manuscript copy of ‘Missione in pratica…’ by Bernardino Ignazio da Asti. Although the text of the manuscript was published with a French translation by J. Nothomb (Louvain, 1931), these illustrations, together with the
transcribed texts attached to them, provide delightfully vivid glimpses of the Soyo mission and of the interpreters or Maestri della Chiesa.

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RICHARD GRAY


Msimang’s Natives Land Act 1913 is a reprint of an early ANC publication highlighting the effects of that notorious act of dispossession in South Africa. Tim Keegan has written a masterful introduction to it, placing Msimang in the context of the black elite of which he was a part and identifying his role in the ANC; he has also neatly placed the publication within the early ANC’s famous campaign against the act. Of that Act – its origins and results – Keegan offers a superb summary, effectively distilling the findings of his 1987 book into a few pages. For Keegan, the evictions and transformations of social relations intrinsic to the act were spurred by a context of black peasant success, concerns over white impoverishment, and the strides of a state-supported agrarian capitalism. Importantly, too, Keegan stresses that the evictions were spread across the South African highveld. In part, because of the power of Sol Plaatje’s famous exposé (Native Life in South Africa, 1916) and in part because of the centrality of Keegan’s book on the Orange Free State to the subject, historians probably incline to the view that the initial evictions/transformations of the Land Act were largely a Free State phenomenon. But Keegan usefully reminds us of the drives against tenants in Natal and the Transvaal also, and this is just as well, for much of Msimang’s compilation deals with Natal.

The ANC published Natives Land Act to give the lie to the Union government’s assertions that claims of African distress were never supported by evidence. Through a set of case studies, it revealed the wreckage of tenant lives and resources wrought by the Act, how peasant independence and substance were converted into a harsh subordination to the landlords, and how entire communities were sometimes evicted. Although the African testimonies that emerge in this work are sometimes rendered in language that is much too formal (e.g. pp. 12–13), the central themes emerge vividly and often enough: the compulsion to sell livestock, the threat of servile status ‘whereby we must agree to work…for nothing’ (p. 14), and the arbitrariness of evictions or changes in conditions. Sometimes short, telegraphic descriptions next to names tell of families reduced to ‘wandering’ with their livestock after eviction. Another entry tells a terse tale of a man brought under the fist of the landlord: ‘Anbooi Molele…Evicted but returned under labour conditions after selling all stock at a loss’ (p. 16). A narrative of lost houses, crops and livestock emerges. And by naming the evictees and describing their separate fates, the compilation highlights the human factor in the evictions.

Msimang’s compilation also leaves one with an abiding sense of anger at the power of the state-backed landlords who could reduce people to nomadic poverty or – as did the master of the tenant foreman Ranope, who allowed his cattle to graze upon peasant crops, arguing that in a time of drought it was better that cattle should live rather than Africans.

Essex University  
JEREMY KRIKLER

To many in the north, Soweto evokes images of black youths battling with the South African security forces, funeral marches, toyi-toying crowds and necklacing. These were the dominant images conveyed by the media during the 1980s and early 1990s when South Africa was in the news on an almost daily basis. Present-day Soweto has a reputation as a wasteland of violence and urban decay with the same audience, as it does with many white South Africans. Soweto – A History, both the documentary film series and the accompanying book, provides a corrective to these commonly held views by bringing the city and its inhabitants to life.

One of the book’s greatest strengths is its accessibility. It is a popular history written for a general audience and the authors provide a rich overview of life in Soweto from its inception to the 1994 elections. With photographs throughout, accessible prose and excellent use of oral testimony, this book puts a human face on Sowetan struggles and triumphs. Residents discuss their experiences and revisit their memories on a range of subjects, from the difficulties of obtaining housing to the carnage of township battles. And while the authors pay the requisite attention to the icons of Soweto’s history – the 1976 uprising, the attempts to make the townships ungovernable by the young lions of the 1980s, and the battles between Inkatha-supporting hostel dwellers and township residents in the late 1980s and early 1990s – they also explore the more mundane details of everyday life in Soweto.

The struggle against apartheid is central to the story of Soweto, but the authors do not canonize Sowetans; rather they openly discuss the darker side of life in the townships – alcohol abuse, gender oppression, criminal violence and the internecine rivalries that pitted residents against one another.

In the six-part documentary series, still photographs and film footage are accompanied by interviews with Sowetans from all walks of life. These characters discuss inter alia fashion and social practices, communal identity, juvenile delinquency, transport problems, education crises, pass laws and protests against them, and the violence that has marked the lives of so many. The interviews with the young comrades who explain their actions and motivations, including the persecution of informants, is especially effective. A voice-over pulls all the diverse strands and themes together and the soundtrack provides a taste of township music.

The book was written to complement the film and there is much overlap between the two. Rather than being repetitive, this serves to reinforce the subject matter. For teaching purposes, students might best be advised to read the relevant chapter before watching the corresponding film segment, as the book provides necessary background information. Without an introduction some parts of the film will be difficult to follow for non-South Africans (or non-South Africanists), unfamiliar with the colloquialisms. These two resources are recommended for all people interested in South African history, and particularly for teachers looking for lively undergraduate course materials.

Dalhousie University

Gary Kynoch

Extreme tardiness on the part of the reviewer has delayed the appearance of this short notice. Despite this infelicitous circumstance, Pierre Kalck’s annotated bibliography of the Central African Republic (CAR) merits review – both because it is comprehensive, and because no comparable work exists.

In his preface, Kalck, the *doyen* of CAR historical studies, introduces the country by explaining that the paucity of publications in English has led him to focus instead on introducing the French language literature to English readers. He includes a very useful introductory essay reviewing the geography, peoples, history, contemporary institutions and economy of the CAR, followed by a list of abbreviations and acronyms, and an extensive chronology of the country’s history since French colonial conquest in the 1890s.

The vast majority of the 538 entries are indeed French titles, for which Kalck provides very useful annotations in English. He divides the entries into 22 categories, ranging from obvious topics such as geography and geology, peoples, prehistory and history, languages, religion, social conditions, politics, law and administration, and other bibliographies to less apparent, but extremely useful, sections on tourist guides, expeditions and exploration, literature, memoirs and folklore, arts and music, and biographies. The bibliography concludes with author, title, and subject indices which make the volume easy to consult.

Several features of the book make it particularly useful. First, Kalck includes a listing of master’s, doctoral and *DEA* theses on the CAR submitted to French and francophone institutions. Given the limited published academic literature on the country, it is vitally important for scholars to be aware of unpublished research and where to find it. In addition, Kalck includes a lengthy section on missionary literature, compiled with the assistance of the late R. P. Ghislain de Banville, an extraordinarily humane human being and an able scholar who spent most of his adult life serving at missions in the CAR (entries 265–84, 514). The volume is also very good on linguistics and urbanization; in both areas, the publications are more numerous than might be expected.

As with all compilations, there are a few problems. Kalck should not have translated the proper names of French and francophone institutions and degrees. And a few French terms are mistranslated. ‘*Nouvelles*’, for example, refers to short stories and not ‘news’ (entry 459) and the French word ‘*anthropophagistes*’ is not the same in English, but is translated as ‘cannibals’ (entry 66). More serious are the omissions of Suzanne Renouf-Stefanik’s monograph on Islam among the Manza (1978), several publications by Anne Retel-Laurentin and several of my own essays on the country’s history. Taken together, however, these problems are minor. Pierre Kalck’s bibliography will, without doubt, remain the authoritative bibliographical work in English on the Central African Republic of the foreseeable future.

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