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# African Studies Quarterly

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# France's Conflict Resolution Strategy in Côte d'Ivoire and its Ethical Implications

MAJA BOVCON

**Abstract:** This paper evaluates France's conflict resolution strategy by taking into account Côte d'Ivoire's internal dynamics and the wider international context over the last two decades. Contrary to the prevailing opinion, it will be argued that France, given the circumstances, has undertaken a successful conflict resolution strategy. The controversial implication of France in the 1994 Rwandan genocide made any further French military intervention on the African continent extremely problematic. In the case of the intervention in Côte d'Ivoire, however, France has succeeded in pursuing its interests with full national and international support. Much of the legitimacy of its conflict resolution strategy derives from both the lack of motivation of other international players to act and the inability of African multilateral organizations, such as ECOWAS, to cope with security issues. Since international organizations have been unable to act appropriately, accusations of French neo-colonialism made by the Gbagbo regime and the "young patriots" have never been fully addressed, and the true reconciliation and unification of Ivorian society has been hindered.

## Introduction

Côte d'Ivoire, once considered a model African country in terms of political stability and economic success, has, for more than a decade, struggled with an internal crisis. Xenophobic policies revolving around the concept of *Ivoirité* ("Ivorianness" or "being Ivorian") escalated in 2002, causing the country to split into the rebel-held north and the government-controlled south. French troops of Operation *Licorne*, under the aegis of a peacekeeping mission called United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), were, until very recently, providing the "buffer" or "confidence zone" that was keeping the warring parties apart.

This article evaluates France's conflict resolution strategy towards the Ivorian crisis by taking into account Côte d'Ivoire's internal dynamics and a wider international context over the last two decades. It addresses the following questions. Should we really view Côte d'Ivoire as France's Iraq, as some contend?<sup>1</sup> Or could we, in fact, state that, given the circumstances, France responded appropriately to the conflict? What role did France play in this "hybrid" peacekeeping operation, involving national, regional and international actors? And what are the ethical implications of France's intervention in what was once perceived as a favored colony and its strongest ally in sub-Saharan Africa?

The article is divided into three parts; the first is a brief presentation of the main causes of the Ivorian crisis, which is then followed by an analysis of the conflict resolution strategy that

**Maja Bovcon** is finishing her Ph.D. at the Department of Politics and International Relations at University of Oxford. Her research focuses on the current Ivorian politics and the Franco-Ivorian relations.

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v11/v11i1a1.pdf>

national, regional and international actors formulated. An attempt is made to determine the reasons behind France's choice for the apparently neutral position of its interposition operation. Through an analysis of the weaknesses and strengths of the other two actors, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (ECOMICI) and the UNOCI, and their interaction with the French military operation, *Licorne*, the role of France in shaping the overall conflict resolution strategy is made clearer. In the final part of the article, some of the ethical issues associated with the military implications of a former colonial power's involvement in its African colony are addressed. Based on this discussion, an assessment is made of the success of France's response to the Ivorian crisis. My conclusions are formulated primarily with help of extensive secondary literature and primary sources such as peace accords, UN resolutions, newspaper articles and reports. These findings are complemented by qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews with French diplomats conducted during my fieldwork in France and Côte d'Ivoire in late 2007 and early 2008. Interviews serve mainly to support or further clarify data obtained from other sources.

### **Background: Reasons for the Ivorian Crisis**

The Ivorian crisis is often interpreted in simplified terms, as a cultural clash between the Muslim north and the Christian south, between ethnic groups of the savannah and those of the forest zone. This reductionist approach, which is mostly propagated by politicians and the media, relies squarely on the "primordialist assumption", which understands ethnicity as an innate, objectively given and immutable substance of human identity, which, when confronted with a different cultural conceptions, can lead to confrontation.<sup>2</sup>

A more flexible and broader "instrumentalist" approach to ethnicity, which views it above all as an ambiguous ideological concept, susceptible to different meanings and instrumental usage in struggles for power, is far more promising. Namely, the Ivorian crisis is a truly multi-layered conflict where ethnicity appears to become a relevant distinguishing factor only after being tightly related to other issues such as economic crisis, economic and political discrimination, land, immigration policy, succession struggle and, above all, the concepts of autochthony and citizenship. All these factors and concepts contribute to one of the most evasive and instrumentally abused terms in recent Ivorian history, *Ivoirité*, which was coined but never fully explained by the former president Henri Konan Bédié, and which was open to the most xenophobic interpretations. While these factors are interwoven to such an extent that it is impossible to disentangle them and assess their individual contribution to the Ivorian crisis, I will, for the sake of intelligibility, examine them separately.

First, there is the succession problem, which arose in 1993 with the death of the charismatic president Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who had led the country for almost four decades. Houphouët-Boigny's opportunistic constitutional revision provided that, in the case of his death, his post would be filled by the National Assembly's speaker, Henri Konan Bédié, until the end of the presidential term. Bédié's incompetence and his inability to understand that the times had changed with the opening up of the political process through democratization and multi-partyism, encouraged his main competitors, especially the leader of the opposition FPI

(*Front Populaire Ivoirien*), Laurent Gbagbo, and a reformist within the governing PDCI (*Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire*), Alassane Ouattara, to challenge his authority.<sup>3</sup>

Bédié tried to legitimize his presidential position and to eliminate his main competitors by coining the contentious ideological term *Ivoirité*, which confined the status of "true Ivorians", and thus "natural" contenders for power, to the socio-cultural universe of the Akan ethnic group (more precisely, the Baoulé), with which Houphouët-Boigny, Bédié himself and the majority of the old PDCI elite identified.

General Gueï, who, to the general surprise and relief of most Ivorians, suddenly usurped power by military coup in 1999, brought about, after a very brief reconciliation strategy, a drastic change to the conceptualization of *Ivoirité*. As the first non-Baoulé leader, he defined it as differentiating southern, non-Dioula from northern Dioula people, and thereby transformed an ethnic divide into a regional one.<sup>4</sup>

This regional divide has been exacerbated by the xenophobic politics of the current president, Laurent Gbagbo, himself a member of a minor ethnic group, the Bété, from the southwest. Under his regime, the concept of "foreigner" gradually incorporated not only true economic immigrants from other countries like Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea, but also second-generation immigrants who had actually been born in Côte d'Ivoire and whose foreign roots could only be detected by the sound of their patronymic, their Muslim religion, and the scarring on their faces. What was more, not even the internal migrants, such as Muslims from the northern regions of Côte d'Ivoire and the mostly Christian Baoulé from the southeast who had moved to the southwest to work on the coffee and cocoa plantations, could escape the stigma of "foreigner."<sup>5</sup>

Initially, the introduction of the *Ivoirité* discourse concerned eligibility for the presidency. Bédié's and Gueï's constitutional revisions successfully barred Alassane Ouattara, now the leader of the reformist splinter party the RDR (*Rassemblement des Républicains*), from the 1995 and 2000 presidential elections, because of his alleged Burkinabé origin. The nationality problem, however, has unfortunately not been restricted to the presidential domain and the struggle for leadership. It has penetrated every aspect of Ivorian society, through the adoption of stricter rules for the acquisition of identity cards and resident cards for immigrants, the latter having been introduced in 1990 by, ironically, the then prime minister Alassane Ouattara.<sup>6</sup> These measures were intended to address the immigration problem, which had become especially burdensome due to persistent economic crisis. According to some Ivorians, the proportion of immigrants, estimated to be around 26 percent, surpassed the immigration tolerance threshold decisively.<sup>7</sup>

The immigration flows have their roots in the colonial period, when the French used Mali (formerly French Sudan) and Burkina Faso (former Upper Volta) as a reservoir of labor for the newly established Ivorian cocoa and coffee plantations in the south, as well as for the forest exploitation and the construction of the railway. It was a deliberate, well-administered, and often extremely brutal forced displacement of hundreds of thousand of northern people to the Ivorian south. Facilitating this was the integration of the major part of Burkina Faso, named Haute Côte, into the Ivorian territory between 1933 and 1947. This colonial practice was justified by the very low population density of Côte d'Ivoire. The inhabitants, only 1,900,000 in 1936,

were supposedly unable to cope with the freshly introduced capitalist system and France's increasing needs for primary commodities.<sup>8</sup>

Houphouët-Boigny's project of rapid economic development, a carbon copy of the colonial cash crop expansionism, continued to rely on the same migration practices after independence in 1960. This time, however, people came freely, lured by better job opportunities and higher Ivorian living standards. They were offered land in exchange for working in the plantations that propelled Côte d'Ivoire down its prosperous path.<sup>9</sup> Côte d'Ivoire became the biggest cocoa producer, accounting 40 percent of world production, a proportion that has only deteriorated slightly due to the civil war in 2002 and the consequent split of the country.<sup>10</sup>

Houphouët-Boigny found a strong political support base among immigrants, especially during the first democratic elections in 1990. The opposition even accused him of offering generous numbers of nationality cards in exchange for their vote. His personalized vision of an African melting pot was never fully achieved, nor open-heartedly accepted by the Ivorian population. As Dembélé views it, Côte d'Ivoire saw a mere cohabitation of different communities/ethnic groups on Ivorian soil, each community occupying its specific "socio-ecological niche."<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the division of labor and of economic and political status most often went along the same community lines, which further rigidified the socio-economic system and slowed down the integration process.<sup>12</sup>

Although Houphouët-Boigny tried to decrease inter-ethnic tensions by including representatives of each ethnic group in the political elite, the privileging of Akan/Baoulé, also known as *Baoulisation*, and the neglect of the whole northern region, were undeniable realities. The failure of the melting pot project may explain why Houphouët-Boigny's proposition of double nationality for people within the Conseil de l'Entente (encompassing Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Niger, Benin and Togo) was rejected by the population and the National Assembly.<sup>13</sup>

Fear of immigrants' usurpation of political and economic power was not a new problem in Côte d'Ivoire, however, as the massive exodus of Dahomeans (the old name for residents of Benin) in 1958 and of Ghanaians in 1993 attest.<sup>14</sup> Dahomeans, for example, were targeted by the newly established Ivorian intellectual elite, which was tempted by the lucrative positions in the colonial administration that had until then been mostly occupied by the former group.<sup>15</sup> In each case, the colonial or post-colonial practice of linking a specific ethnic group to a given political and socio-economic space by excluding other communities was the real trigger of dissent and resentment. The divide and rule process tragically substantiated the ethnic divides that caused the implosion of nationality.

Many view the Ivorian crisis as the legacy of Houphouët-Boigny's autocratic regime, a civil dictatorship that dangerously undermined a truly democratic debate wherein people could have expressed their values and their vision of the national question and which might have led eventually to a true social contract.<sup>16</sup> However, the opening up of the democratic process, the appearance of opposition newspapers and the formation of various groups within civil society occurred only in the 1990s.<sup>17</sup>

The radicalization of the immigration question after Houphouët-Boigny's death should thus not be viewed exclusively as the instrumentalization of ethnic and nationality concepts by new political elites struggling for power within the freshly established multiparty system. We

can, in fact, speak of a collective responsibility, where radicalization worked in both directions and where politicians built their political agenda and support by addressing the extant fears and resentments of the population. As Langer puts it, "the simultaneous presence of severe political horizontal inequalities at the elite level and socio-economic horizontal inequalities at the mass level forms an extremely explosive socio-political situation."<sup>18</sup>

The persistent economic crisis, caused by a sharp drop in the international prices for primary commodities and the corruption of the patrimonialist system of the PDCI one-party regime, delivered a decisive blow to the national cohesiveness. Ivorian indebtedness prompted the Bretton Woods institutions to impose structural adjustment programs, which introduced a savage austerity policy in exchange for financial assistance. These policies had detrimental effects on the functioning of the state and on the quality of life of the majority of people.<sup>19</sup> Limited access to resources such as land and employment further aggravated conflict, in urban as well as in rural areas, between the supposed indigenous population and African economic immigrants.

Houphouët-Boigny's development project, relying on the philosophy that "the land belongs to whoever wants to cultivate it," caused the distribution of the fertile land in the southwest for the cultivation of coffee and cocoa to the immigrant workers from the northern neighboring countries as well as from the north and southeast Ivorian regions. This meant that the autochthonous population from the southwest, namely the Krou and Bété ethnic groups, gradually became minorities in their home region. Economic recession, combined with population growth, pushed some of the autochthonous unemployed urban youth into this rural area, where they claimed their rights to the land. These disputes over land, which was by that time seriously exhausted due to continuous intensive cultivation, added to the already present clashes between the "traditional" villagers and the more recent economic immigrants. The reform of the rural land tenure law in 1998, which tried to address the tensions between locals and newcomers by redistributing land according to criteria of autochthony, had disastrous effects in practice, especially in the coffee and cocoa regions where foreigners were in the majority.<sup>20</sup>

Laurent Gbagbo found especially loyal supporters for his xenophobic policies among the disgruntled unemployed urban youth from the south.<sup>21</sup> They organized raids and destroyed Dioula shops and shanties.<sup>22</sup> As the chief victims in the socio-economic crisis, youths used disputes over citizenship and national belonging as an opportunity to renegotiate their own position.<sup>23</sup> Once the decisive pressure group for social change and democratic reforms, students now often represent politically instrumentalized and regressive forces, organizing themselves in militia groups, such as the "young patriots", which have been responsible for many attacks on civilians and Ouattara's supporters.<sup>24</sup> Alassane Ouattara, for his part, acquired equally powerful support groups among the northern population, as well as among economic immigrants and their descendents, who became ever more reluctant to contribute to the economic prosperity of the country that was increasingly treating them as second-class citizens.

To complicate things even more, there are indications of a regional dimension to the Ivorian crisis. The Burkina Faso government is suspected of protecting the instigators of the failed military coup in 2002 and of actively supporting the rebels.<sup>25</sup> The Compaoré regime has, however, retroactively faced the destabilizing pressure of Burkinabé immigrants returning from

Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, the Liberian civil war produced a spillover effect on Côte d'Ivoire. Charles Taylor contributed greatly to the creation, arming and military training of the members of the two rebel groups from the southwest, the MJP (*Mouvement pour la justice et la paix*) and the MPIGO (*Mouvement patriotique ivoirien du Grand Ouest*), which emerged after the military coup on 19 September 2002 that tried to overthrow Gbagbo. Gbagbo himself financed and armed some of the Liberian soldiers to protect his regime.<sup>27</sup>

### **Civil War and the Conflict Resolution Strategy for Côte d'Ivoire**

Internal tensions reached their peak on 19 September 2002 when a straightforward mutiny on the previous day, involving simultaneous attacks in Abidjan, Bouaké and Korhogo and which was allegedly prepared by a group of pro-Gueï soldiers who had been purged from the National Army by the Gbagbo government, quickly escalated into a failed military coup.<sup>28</sup> The structure, size, organization and source of armaments of the rebel group remain unknown to the present day. What is even more intriguing is that its demands changed drastically within few days of the military coup. While at the outset the mutineers simply requested financial compensation and re-integration in the army, the group very soon acquired a more visibly political orientation: it renamed itself *Forces nouvelles* (New Forces) and put the following goals on its agenda: Gbagbo's resignation, organization of free and fair elections, and the end of the discriminatory politics based on the concept of *Ivoirité*.<sup>29</sup> Côte d'Ivoire sank into the violence of its first civil war, and the time had come for the international community to respond.

Conflict resolution strategy for Côte d'Ivoire has progressively incorporated national, regional and international actors, and thus provides one of the most recent examples of "hybrid operations" in Africa.<sup>30</sup>

#### ***France's Intervention***

France was the first to intervene, only three days after the rebels' failed military coup. Its military intervention, however, was initially confined to the protection and evacuation of French expatriates and civilians of other nationalities who wanted to escape the civil war. France legitimized its action in terms of its duty to protect French citizens on the territory of another country when their lives are threatened and the host country is incapable of, or unwilling to, provide for their security.<sup>31</sup> Except for the expatriates of the United States, who were evacuated with help of American special troops, French troops rescued other civilians on the demand of their respective governments.<sup>32</sup>

At the beginning of October 2002, Gbagbo requested that France help governmental forces to suppress the rebel insurgency, appealing to the many defense accords that have linked the two countries since Côte d'Ivoire's independence in 1960. Laurent Gbagbo insisted on the involvement of external actors in this rebel insurgence, especially Burkinabé president Blaise Compaoré, former Liberian president Charles Taylor, and Libyan leader Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi. According to bilateral defense accords, France was supposed to intervene in the case of an external threat to the sovereignty of Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>33</sup>

It is true that, as in the case of the Sierra Leonean Revolutionary United Front (RUF), many of the rebel fighters were foreigners, including, in the southwest of the country, many Liberian mercenaries. After the end of the Liberian civil war, they had crossed the border with Côte d'Ivoire to continue fighting and pillaging the villages. Most of the fighters, however, came from the northern part of Côte d'Ivoire and were external and internal immigrants who were discriminated against by the concept of Ivoirité.<sup>34</sup>

The vagueness of the stated conditions in defense accords, as well as the confidential status of many of them, offered France room to interpret events in a way most convenient to it.<sup>35</sup> Insistence on the interpretation of the war as an internal conflict enabled France to restrict the military action to a mere interposition of its troops between the warring parties in the newly formed "buffer" or "confidence" zone, and to the protection of civilians.<sup>36</sup> France thus clearly indicated its preference for maintaining the status of a peacekeeping force, as opposed to giving active military support to either party involved in the dispute, a decision that enraged Laurent Gbagbo as well as the rebels.

There are many reasons that could have influenced France to take this position. Its reluctance to get involved in the Ivorian crisis should partly be understood within the historical context of the widespread criticism of France's past support of the dictatorial Mobutu regime in Zaire and its acceptance of highly questionable electoral processes in Chad, Niger and Togo.<sup>37</sup> The peak of this discreditable French African policy was reached with the implication of French troops in the Rwandan genocide in 1994.<sup>38</sup> The domestic and international community accused France of providing military and logistical support to Hutu-dominated Habyarimana government in its fight against the Tutsi-controlled, pro-American Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in the run-up to the genocide. In addition, the French military *Opération Turquoise* helped governmental forces, at that time already responsible for the genocide of some 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus, to avoid persecution by enabling them to escape across the border to Eastern Congo through the "humanitarian" safe zone formed by French troops.<sup>39</sup> From that time onward, France became increasingly reluctant to intervene overtly in any conflict on the African continent that could attract international and national indignation.

France's stagnating economy at the time and its consequently shrunken aid and military budgets doubtless also help explain its disengagement in African policy, including its approach to military interventionism.<sup>40</sup> Integration into the European Union, closer co-operation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and increasing involvement in other multilateral institutions, have impeded France from making unilateral and often opaque decisions in its foreign policy.<sup>41</sup> The criteria of European monetary union (EMU) further constrained France by requiring it to keep its public expenditure low and more transparent, which substantially reduced its capacity to maintain clientelistic relationships with African countries.

The African continent itself underwent many changes during the 1990s. Economic globalization, large debts incurred by most African countries, and political instability provoked by the democratization process and multi-partyism, substantially marginalized the African continent in the international system and consequently made it less attractive in political or economic terms. Both involvement in Africa's escalating conflicts and investment in business appeared to be more risky than ever before and contained no strategic gains.<sup>42</sup>

France did not have any desire to overtly support the rebels in Côte d'Ivoire, since the United Nations and the African Union had both condemned the attempted military coup as an unacceptable means for those involved to achieve their goals.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, France could not and did not want to support Laurent Gbagbo, because of his contentious ascension to power in 2000 amidst what he himself described as "calamitous conditions," the exacerbation of his xenophobic politics of Ivoirité after the elections, and the violation of the human rights by his militia groups.

France's neutral position and its relatively slow response to the Ivorian crisis -- which had escalated dangerously since the military coup in 1999, through the contentious 2000 presidential election to the civil war in 2002 -- could be interpreted also in the light of the extreme opportunism of French politics towards Côte d'Ivoire, which were enabled by the strong colonial links tying the two countries together. France has maintained strong relationships with all Ivorian political figures, which means that it can easily adapt its realist politics to practically any change of situation at the top level of the Ivorian ruling elite, without losing much of its influence.<sup>44</sup> Laurent Gbagbo, both initially and during the cohabitation period, found supporters among members of the French Socialist Party, which may explain France's tardy condemnation of the illegitimacy of the 2000 presidential election, whereas European Union, United States and many African countries all called for a rerun early on.<sup>45</sup> By contrast, Alassane Ouattara, whose strong American links are a myth, has been close to the new generation of the neo-liberal French politicians, including the current French president, Nicolas Sarkozy. Simple post-colonial inertia was, to begin with, sufficient to maintain control of the situation.<sup>46</sup>

The Rwandan genocide, however, brought to global public awareness another important message: that of the failure of the regional and international organizations to prevent one of the biggest humanitarian catastrophes of the last two decades, and of the urgent need for quicker responses to xenophobic discourses in multi-ethnic African countries. The war in Liberia, on the other hand, exemplified the spillover effect of the internal conflict that could suddenly regionalize. The Ivorian crisis doubtlessly produced fears of genocide and regionalization of the conflict. France, the former colonial power in Côte d'Ivoire, and which maintained a military base on Ivorian territory, seemed to be more adept at responding quickly and eventually preventing a second Rwanda.

It is interesting to note, however, that a more recent report produced in June 2004 by the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KA IPTC) and the Centre for International Peace Operations (ZIF) states that "with hardly any of the warring groups having an ideological determination to carry out ethnic cleansing, the threat of genocide on the scale of Rwanda, which has been persistently evoked recently, is virtually non-existent".<sup>47</sup> Additionally, unlike Liberia and Sierra Leone, which were virtually bankrupt by the time their insurgencies started, Côte d'Ivoire was still a relatively well-functioning state, with established institutions and a growing middle class.<sup>48</sup>

While French military officers generally agree with this evaluation, they contend, however, that their interposition between the warring parties substantially diminished the number of potential victims and the further deterioration of the situation. As Captain Prazuck explains: "The more you intervene belatedly, the more things become difficult, and the more difficult it is to extinguish the fire."<sup>49</sup> One should not forget the extreme geo-strategic importance of Côte

d'Ivoire: it is the economic engine of Francophone West Africa and an immigration magnet for less developed hinterland countries. Its descent into chaos would thus have had a serious impact on the whole West African region and perhaps even beyond. The goal of the French interposition was to exercise pressure on the Ivorian political elite and thus to persuade them come to the negotiation table and finally address the pernicious Ivoirité issue that was tearing the country apart.<sup>50</sup> Thus, even the most virulent critics of France's opportunistic and corrupted African policy did not protest, at least not initially, against the intervention of French troops. The international arena demanded action in the name of humanity, and France could step in without being blamed for the neo-colonial aspects of its protection of French expatriates or the fact that, because of the Franco-Ivorian defense accords, the National Army of Côte d'Ivoire (FANCI) was reduced to a simple gendarmarie unable to defend its own territory.<sup>51</sup>

### *ECOWAS Operation ECOMICI*

The second actor to intervene in the conflict resolution in Côte d'Ivoire was the mission organized by ECOWAS. ECOWAS responded very quickly on the diplomatic level. It organized an Extraordinary Summit in Accra on 29 September 2002 to discuss the recent events in Côte d'Ivoire, on which occasion a Contact Group facilitating the dialogue between the rebel parties was created. With the help of France, it finally succeeded in obtaining a cease-fire accord, signed by representatives of the government and the rebels on 17 October 2002. However, the deployment of its troops for monitoring adherence to the cease-fire agreement proved to be more problematic.<sup>52</sup> The authorized strength of the ECOWAS Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (ECOMICI) of 2,386 men from Benin, Ghana, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo, which should have been deployed as of 31 December 2002, was too small to execute the agreed mission, and was diminished in number since many countries, for various reasons, did not contribute soldiers after all. As a matter of fact, by February 2003, only some 500 ECOWAS troops were deployed on Ivorian soil, at a time when the French force Licorne numbered already more than 3,000 men.<sup>53</sup>

Apart from the limited strength of its troops, ECOMICI also struggled with several other problems, such as the delayed setting up of the basic force headquarters, lack of coordination and organizational skills, a too small professional staff, and overall deficiencies of equipment, logistics support and funding. In spite of the many problems that ECOMICI faced, however, this military intervention included also many positive factors. This was especially true when compared to the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in the Liberian civil war, which was described by Lansana Gberie as an "ill-conceived and regionally divisive intervention exercise by autocratic leaders with disastrous consequences."<sup>54</sup> In Côte d'Ivoire, by contrast, a total consensus existed between all ECOWAS heads of state regarding the intervention: there was no division between Anglophone states supporting one party and the Francophone states supporting the other party, which had been the case in Liberia. ECOMICI enjoyed credibility as a relevant peace-broker, and its troops received prior training in peace support training centers and other military schools, which contributed substantially to their discipline.<sup>55</sup> French presence, however, was still essential to the implementation of the mission, especially in the

most volatile areas in the southwest. The French were also the ECOMICI's main backers for the human, financial and other resources.<sup>56</sup>

### *Linás-Marcoussis Accords*

In January 2003, French President Jacques Chirac organized roundtable talks in France at which all the Ivorian political forces involved in the conflict were gathered in order to discuss possible solutions to the persistent crisis. The parties agreed, by signing the Linás-Marcoussis accords, to preserve the integrity of Ivorian territory and to set up a transitional Government of National Reconciliation composed of representatives of all the parties participating in the roundtable and led by a consensus prime minister. The main role of this interim government was to organize the free and fair elections after the identification and DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration) processes.<sup>57</sup>

Most importantly, the Linás-Marcoussis accords removed the contentious Article 35 of the Constitution on the basis of which Alassane Ouattara had been barred from two presidential elections. They formally abolished the village committees responsible for issuing statements of origin. Formerly, under the Gbagbo regime, anyone who wanted an identity document had to prove his/her nationality by obtaining a statement of origin issued by a committee from their village of origin.<sup>58</sup> This enabled village chiefs and local notables in the village committees to acquire disproportionate power and often to abuse it.<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately, as Banégas explains, the "aliens hearings" (*audiences foraines*) that were introduced in May 2006 as a way to identify people who do not have identity cards but wanted to participate in the elections gave local notables the same authority to decide whether an applicant was indeed born in a given locality. These "aliens hearings" were interrupted many times due to violent eruptions of militia groups, who were protesting against the identification of immigrants, and only resumed at the end of 2007.

Despite more or less justified criticisms of the Linás-Marcoussis accords, especially on the part of Gbagbo's supporters who complained about the neo-colonial attitude of the French diplomats and the undermining of the legitimate Ivorian government, they were still a very important step in the peace process. As a French diplomat contends, they address the main cause of the Ivorian conflict, the Ivoirité discourse, and attempt to find remedies for it.<sup>60</sup>

The Linás-Marcoussis accords constituted, until the Ouagadougou accord signed on 4 March 2007, the foundation of the Ivorian peace process, and later accords as well as the 2004 Accra Accord as well as UN resolutions are based on it. On 4 February 2003, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1464, which a posteriori legitimized the Linás-Marcoussis accords as well as the Licorne and ECOMICI interventions.<sup>61</sup>

### *UN Interventions MINUCI and UNOCI*

The United Nations was the last to intervene. On 13 May 2003, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1479, establishing an essentially political United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI), whose mandate was to observe and facilitate the implementation of the Linás-Marcoussis accords with the military help of Licorne and ECOMICI.<sup>62</sup> France called for a

more concrete international intervention, but was initially opposed by the United States, which considered the bigger peacekeeping operation to be unnecessary and costly.<sup>63</sup> The UN Security Council authorized the full peacekeeping operation, including nearly 7,000 UN personnel, almost a year later, on 27 February 2004. Resolution 1528 established the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) for an initial period of 12 months (further resolutions prolonged its mission), starting on 4 April 2004, on which date the mandate of MINUCI ended.<sup>64</sup> The ECOMICI and MINUCI forces were absorbed into the UNOCI forces, while the Licorne operation co-operates with it. The UNOCI mission was to monitor the application of the cease-fire agreements and the implementation of Linas-Marcoussis accords, to help the transitional government to execute the DDR program, to control the embargo on arms, and to support the organization of elections.<sup>65</sup>

The Licorne mission was to contribute to the general security and protection of civilians and to support UNOCI forces in executing its mission. 26 French officers of UNOCI filled the role of liaison officers.<sup>66</sup> UNOCI and Licorne forces thus operated together with separate but permanently liaised command and control structures. Most importantly, Licorne provided a guaranteed Rapid Reaction Force for the international peacekeeping mission. According to Captain Prazuck, the reason for this arrangement is to be found in the catastrophic UN military operation in Srebrenica in 1995, when 91 French soldiers died, allegedly due to bad UN management of the situation.<sup>67</sup> From then on, France has preferred to provide international peacekeeping missions with its Rapid Reaction Force. In practice, this means that French troops partially retain their autonomy in terms of decision-making, allowing them to intervene without prior UN authorization. While the general framework of the UNOCI mission was set, the individual actions within it were not really specified. This was the case with the destruction of the Ivorian National Air Force by the French Army at the explicit request of the French President Jacques Chirac. The action was a direct response to the Gbagbo regime's bombing of both the rebel positions and the French military base in November 2004. The French Army is also responsible for the disproportionate suppression of the violent protests led by "young patriots," which had been sparked by the French military action mentioned above, and involved about 60 civilian casualties.

The troop strength authorized by UN Resolution 1528 was 6,240 military personnel and 350 policemen; however, by the end of May 2004, only 3,004 were yet deployed. "About half of the troops in place were former ECOMICI contingents from Benin, Ghana, Niger, Senegal and Togo."<sup>68</sup> The remainder comprised Bangladeshi and Moroccan contingents, 63 officers at mission headquarters, 123 military observers and 171 members of the French engineering company. As of August 2009, UNOCI comprised about 8,385 uniformed personnel.<sup>69</sup>

UNOCI was struggling with significant limitations at the operational level, because the logistical support system could not adapt fast enough to the growing number of UNOCI personnel.<sup>70</sup> This resulted in further delays. In addition, the UNOCI budget was received late. Apart from material inadequacies, the UNOCI operation was tarnished by the apparent lack of discipline of its troops. The Moroccan contingent was suspected of sexual abuse of the Ivorian women and children.<sup>71</sup> UNOCI troops were unable to prevent Gbagbo troops from attacking the rebels due to the initial limitation of its mission to the mere observation of the implementation

of the cease-fire agreement. This provision was changed only after the attacks of November 2004.<sup>72</sup>

At the summit in Addis Ababa on 6 November 2005, and on the recommendation of ECOWAS, the UN Security Council and the African Union (AU) established an International Working Group (GTI), composed of representatives of South Africa, Benin, the United States, France, Ghana, Guinea, Great Britain, Niger, Nigeria, UN, AU, ECOWAS, EU and the International Organization of Francophonie (OIF). Its mandate consisted in evaluating, controlling and following the peace process and the respect for the engagements by all the involved Ivorian parties. Here again, France played an important role by acting independently, through the UN, EU and OIF. As one French diplomat in Abidjan admits, French experts prepared all UN draft resolutions.<sup>73</sup> However, according to another French diplomat, these drafts were thoroughly discussed by other UN members, and modified appropriately.<sup>74</sup>

*Final Stage of the Ivorian Conflict Resolution Strategy: Ouagadougou Accords or the "Ivorian Solution to the Ivorian Problems"*

The hostility between the Gbagbo regime and the international community intensified progressively. Laurent Gbagbo accused France and the United Nations of helping rebels to destabilize the legitimate Ivorian regime and dismantle its democratic institutions. The "young patriots" accused France of playing a dirty game of neo-colonial politics.

At the end of 2006, it became obvious that the elections could not be held, since the DDR program and the identification process were not accomplished. With Resolution 1739, the UN Security Council postponed the elections for the second and last time, prolonged the mandate of UNOCI and Licorne and accorded, under the suggestion of France, more power to the prime minister of the interim government.<sup>75</sup> When Laurent Gbagbo made clear that he did not intend to respect the provisions of this resolution, claiming that it violated the Ivorian Constitution and attacked the sovereignty of Côte d'Ivoire, the diplomatic crisis reached its lowest point.

To the surprise of many, things were drastically changed by Gbagbo's initiative, first presented in November 2006, of finding an "Ivorian solution to the Ivorian problems," based on a direct dialogue between himself and Guillaume Soro, the leader of the rebel New Forces. On 4 March 2007, the Ouagadougou Accord was concluded, with the aid of Blaise Compaoré, acting president of ECOWAS. A month later, Guillaume Soro finally replaced prime minister Henri Konan Banny, who had been appointed by the international community. Together with the president, he formed a new government. Apart from a schedule for the identification process, dismantling of the militia groups and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) program, this accord also provided for the suppression of the confidence zone and the progressive replacement of the impartial forces (UNOCI, Licorne) by mixed forces composed of rebel fighters and Ivorian National Army soldiers. The suppression of the confidence zone and the repositioning of the impartial forces at seventeen observational points began on 16 April 2007 and finished on 15 September 2007. The Licorne and UNOCI troops have been gradually reduced, but intend to stay in the country until the successful accomplishment of the presidential elections.<sup>76</sup>

The international community, including France, has generally responded positively to Gbagbo's initiative, although many remain skeptical about Gbagbo's good intentions. The implementation of the Ouagadougou accord and its following four complementary accords are already far behind schedule. Because of the serious delays in the identification process, the disarmament of the former rebels and militias, and their reinsertion or reintegration into civilian life or the military, the elections have been repeatedly postponed. On 15 May 2009, the Ivorian government announced that it would hold the presidential election on 29 November.<sup>77</sup> Much depends on the good will of the Ivorian political elite.

### **Assessing France's Intervention and its Ethical Implications**

It is therefore clear that France was an important mediator between the warring parties throughout the conflict resolution strategy and shaped the peace process significantly. Historically strong links between the two countries, as well as the superior operational skills and equipment of the French Army, which maintains a military base on Ivorian territory up to the present day, can partially explain France's significant involvement in the Ivorian crisis. There are also, however, many other reasons why this apparently unproblematic and neutral position of France could give rise to serious ethical issues that could hinder true conflict resolution in the long term.

It has to be taken into account that France has played a decisive role in defining the political, economic and social structure of Côte d'Ivoire since the beginning of the twentieth century. "The common history of the people of Côte d'Ivoire as a single entity only began with the arrival of Europeans" -- in particular, French colonizers.<sup>78</sup> The freeing up of labor and its subsequent categorization and compartmentalization, including the construction of a hierarchy of ethnic categories among the local population, has been an essential process of capitalist development and lies at the heart of the modern state.<sup>79</sup> French colonial agents are, thus, certainly partially responsible for instigating the present ethnic conflict.

The Houphouëtist post-colonial state merely appropriated these colonial practices and further exacerbated them through a development policy marked by extreme extroversion, based over all on close cooperation with France and an unrestricted reliance on foreign labor and investment.<sup>80</sup> Houphouët-Boigny's Côte d'Ivoire was the epitome of the strong Franco-African links that were enhanced after independence by the increasing number of French technical assistants offering their skills in all vital sectors, such as political counseling, administration, economic investment and education.<sup>81</sup> The number of French technical assistants started to diminish only after the economic crisis began in the second half of the 1980s.

The constant presence of the French military force in Côte d'Ivoire, a force that was, according to bilateral defense accords, responsible for the defense of the sovereignty and integrity of the Ivorian territory, practically reduced the Ivorian military to a simple gendarmerie incapable of defending its own territory and people. Laurent Gbagbo thus relied completely on the guidance of the French government to determine the nature of the attack and, in fact, to evaluate whether such military action would be worth pursuing.

A closer examination of the French conflict resolution strategy itself reveals inconsistency in France's supposedly neutral position. After the imposition of Licorne between the warring

parties, France still provided the Ivorian National Army with logistical support and agreed to open the so-called “confidence zone.” This allowed the governmental forces to attack the rebel positions in Bouaké. After failing to conquer the town, the governmental forces withdrew and Licorne closed the passage again.<sup>82</sup>

On the other hand, France legitimized rebellion by inviting its representatives to the Linas-Marcoussis roundtable, where they were offered the strategically most important ministerial positions of defense and internal affairs within the newly established interim government. It was naïve to expect that Laurent Gbagbo would humbly swallow this humiliating (for him) provision, which was probably dictated by Jacques Chirac, who could not hide his animosity towards the Ivorian president. Furthermore, the boundaries of the confidence zone itself did not reflect the actual ethnic or cultural division, since most of the so-called “foreigners” reside today in the southwest region and in Abidjan.

Laurent Gbagbo supposedly introduced an abrupt and brutal change in the close Franco-Ivorian relationship, which reached its lowest point in November 2004 when he broke the ceasefire agreement by bombing the rebel positions and the French military base. The consequent complete destruction of the Ivorian National Air Force by the French provoked violent protests by “young patriots” who attacked French expatriates and their property under the slogan of the “fight for the second independence.”<sup>83</sup> About 8,000 French expatriates left the country within days after the incident, helped by French soldiers.

This abrupt change in Franco-Ivorian relations and the fight of the Gbagbo regime against French neo-colonialism are considered to be in many ways superficial, mere rhetoric on the part of Laurent Gbagbo to gain support from the disgruntled youth seeking revolution. Namely, indications exist that France, while playing the part of a neutral interposition force, knew how to protect its economic and strategic interests. France remains the preeminent commercial partner of Côte d’Ivoire, and bilateral exchanges increased by 17.5 percent between 2005 and 2006.<sup>84</sup> The number of big enterprises has only slightly diminished since 2003 (from 147 to 143).<sup>85</sup> There are still more than 400 small- and medium-sized French enterprises (compared to around 500 before the crisis). These French enterprises still represent about 30 percent of GDP and account for 50 percent of the fiscal revenues.<sup>86</sup> Many French expatriates returned to Côte d’Ivoire, and most of the contracts of French firms, such as Bouygues (electricity, water), France Télécom (telecommunication) or Bolloré (transport), were renewed.<sup>87</sup>

The involvement of the United Nations and ECOWAS, as well as the European Union and the African Union, in the conflict resolution strategy does not necessarily mean that the French influence in Côte d’Ivoire was considerably tarnished. Considering the reduced military budget of France, the multilateral peace operation actually helped France lower the costs of its military intervention, while at the same time allowing it to pursue its national interests. The hybrid operation and the close co-operation with UNOCI also offered France a suitable guise of neutrality.

I thus disagree with most interpretations which state that the French military action in Côte d’Ivoire was a complete failure.<sup>88</sup> Many of the analysts contend that the French management of the Ivorian crisis reflects France’s outdated and confused African policy, whose effectiveness has been further hindered by the rivalry among various interest groups within the French political elite.<sup>89</sup> It is certainly true that the French response to the Ivorian crisis is above all

reactive and sometimes inconsistent. However, one should not forget the extreme evasiveness of Laurent Gbagbo's politics towards France, which requires from the latter a constant reassessment of its position and the adaptation of its *realpolitik*.

Marshall-Fratani also argues that French interventionism is handicapped by its heavy post-colonial heritage, which ultimately only exacerbated the already present ultra-nationalist feelings of some Ivorians, including the "young patriots."<sup>90</sup> It is exactly the ambiguity of France's relationship with its former colony that offers Gbagbo a convenient excuse to attack every decision made by France or the international community that does not please him. It is, however, hard to imagine a case in which Gbagbo would not be able to employ the powerful mobilization discourse of the "fight against French neo-colonialism." Whatever France does, the fact remains that it constitutes an integral part of Ivorian history and identity. We should also keep in mind that France initially supported Gbagbo, despite the problematic elections and criticism from the European Union.

The only possible alternative to French interventionism would have been one involving the African states in a more decisive role in the conflict resolution strategy, which, unfortunately, did not happen. As the recent example of Zimbabwe's presidential elections and ongoing political crisis illustrate, African presidents remain all too lenient when it comes to criticizing one of their counterparts, especially if the person in question enjoys the status of being an old anti-colonial fighter, and regardless of how their actual style of rule diverts from stated ideals. When the African leaders, nonetheless, adopt a more critical stance, as the Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade did in the case of Côte d'Ivoire, the attacked leader can always resort to accusations of the former colonial power's covert manipulation. The involvement of neutral and disinterested states in messy situations such as civil wars is problematic for another reason. The realist perception of the nation states as actors pursuing their national interests within the anarchical international system is still well entrenched within the minds of the politicians. It is, therefore, almost impossible to expect a state to contribute its material and human resources solely on humanitarian grounds.

Furthermore, it is not at all clear that the French intervention aggravated the situation, as Marshall-Fratani contends.<sup>91</sup> France succeeded in preventing potential massive killing and further institutional disintegration. The prolonged situation created by the interposition forces, in which there was neither peace nor war, doubtless exacerbated the economic crisis, which subsequently affected Ivorian social wellbeing. Nevertheless, military coups or civil wars almost certainly provoke a more acute institutional degradation than situations in which the opposite parties are still willing to pursue their talks.

Comi Toulabor insists that with continuous external interventionism, African states will never learn how to solve their problems on their own. He gives the example of France, whose history was equally made through bloodshed and wars.<sup>92</sup> This argument reflects Mohammed Ayoob's defense of non-interventionism, based upon the assumption that all states share the same evolutionary path and should, therefore, be left to accomplish their own trajectory.<sup>93</sup> In this view, all states go through similar evolutionary phases, differing only in the pace at which they pass from one phase to another. This assumption is disputable, since the origins of the African states evidently differ from those of Western countries. They, moreover, are unique in regard to governance and in terms of history itself. A non-interventionist approach, on the other

hand, in practice results in a serious ethical dilemma when it comes to situations similar to those found in Rwanda or Liberia. In both cases, the international community was criticized precisely because of its lack of will to intervene and prevent the human catastrophe.

In summary, France's interventionism was not a failure. France succeeded in preventing potential massive killings and acute institutional disintegration, while at the same time protecting its economic and strategic interests under the guise of neutrality.

## Conclusion

Côte d'Ivoire has been struggling with an acute political crisis for more than a decade. This truly multi-layered crisis revolves around the contentious concept of Ivoirité, initially introduced by former Ivorian president Henri Konan Bédié, which, on the basis of their not being "true Ivorians", excluded a great part of the Ivorian population from political, economic and social rights. The crisis peaked on 19 September 2002 with the failed military coup that escalated into an insurgency, the rebels claiming to be fighting against the discriminatory mechanisms of Ivoirité and the illegitimate Gbagbo government.

Despite the fears expressed by the international community about the possible repetition of the Rwandan genocide and further destabilization of the West African region, it was France, the Ivorian former colonial power, which, although reluctantly, intervened first. By the interposition of its military troops between the warring parties and the creation of the buffer zone, it actually froze the situation and opened the space for negotiation.

The regional (ECOWAS) and international (UN) actors were, apart from the delayed deployment of their troops, struggling with a number of other problems, especially logistic and financial inadequacies. French troops seem to be the best prepared for the conflict resolution and, up to now, have played a decisive supportive role to UNOCI troops. French troops have been the best equipped, have had access to good financial and logistic support, and have been quick to react. In addition, despite the recent discussions about the actual possibility of the repetition of Rwandan genocide in Côte d'Ivoire, it can at least be stated that French troops substantially diminished the massive killings and contributed to the gradual stabilization of the situation. Moreover, it would be somehow unrealistic to expect that reconciliation could have been achieved within days or weeks. France has also provided the basis of the conflict resolution strategy by the organization of the roundtable which resulted in the signature of the Linas-Marcoussis Accords. Even the Ouagadougou accord respects the framework of these accords, which was a precondition for its acceptance by the UN Security Council.

Conflict resolution in Côte d'Ivoire is one of the most recent examples of "hybrid operations" in which a former colonial power plays a substantial role. The legitimacy of France's military operation lies primarily in the fact of the belated intervention by the regional and international actors and the many problems they encountered. The new strategy of "hybrid operation" actually helped France diminish the costs of its military intervention, while, at the same time, allowing it to pursue its national interests. However, reasons for the Ivorian crisis are partly rooted in the colonial past of the French management of Ivorian territory and society, which were continued after the independence by the Houphouët-Boigny regime. France is thus far from being a neutral party in the current conflict resolution strategy and may, to some

extent, hinder the true reconciliation process. As long as the regional and international institutions are not able to assume the desired leading role in the conflict resolution strategies, the former colonial powers will have to play a central role, despite all the possible suspicions and accusations of the neo-colonial practices. At the same time, it is hard to imagine how the former colonial powers could possibly escape the legacy that links them to their former colonies.

## Notes

1. This is the general position defended by “young patriots”, supporters of the Gbagbo regime.
2. See Banks.
3. See Fotê; Koli.
4. Dioula is the name of a language similar to Bambara and spoken by people from the north. Dozon, pp. 51-59.
5. See Bouquet 2003.
6. Banégas 2006, p. 7.
7. See Conseil économique et social.
8. Bouquet 2005, p. 183.
9. See Amin; Bazin; Akindès 2004.
10. See Global Witness report.
11. See Dembélé.
12. Ibid.
13. Diabaté, p. 53.
14. Serhan, pp. 181-82.
15. Bouquet 2005, p. 171.
16. Gbagbo, p. 49; Diabaté, p. 50.
17. Koli, p. 96; Ségui.
18. Langer, p. 25.
19. See Akindès 2000; Campbell.
20. See Bouquet 2003; Chauveau.
21. See Konaté 2003.
22. Dioula people traditionally occupied the sphere of informal economy and small-scale trade.
23. See Marshall-Fratani 2006.
24. Konaté 2005, p. 270.
25. See Smith 2003.
26. See Banégas and Otayek.
27. See Ero and Marshall.
28. See Akindès 2004.
29. Hofnung 2005, p. 56.
30. Gberie, Ado and KAIPTC, p. 8.
31. See Balmond.

32. Interview with Captain Cristophe Prazuck, military officer working for French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Paris, June 26, 2007. All interviews refereed in the text were tape recorded and translated from French by the author of this article.
33. See Hofnung 2005.
34. See Gberie, Ado and KAIPTC.
35. On the defense accords see Vasset.
36. Interview with a French diplomat 1 working for The French Embassy in Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan, February 20, 2008. The diplomat wished the interview to be confidential and selectively tape recorded. The interviewees, who wished to remain anonymous are identified in the article by numbers.
37. See Marchal.
38. Gregory, p. 439; Chafer, p. 168; Hofnung 2006, p. 381.
39. See Verschave.
40. See Glaser and Smith.
41. See Bryant.
42. See Ulf and Olsen.
43. See Balmond.
44. Smith 2002, p. 324.
45. See Bouquet 2005. The cohabitation period (1997-2002) involved the rightist president Jacques Chirac and the socialist prime minister Lionel Jospin.
46. See Smith 2002.
47. Gberie, Ado and KAIPTC, p. 14.
48. Ibid., p. 15.
49. Interview with Captain Prazuck.
50. Interview with the French diplomat 1.
51. On the national armies of the former French colonies in sub-Saharan Africa see Nugent.
52. See Gberie, Ado and KAIPTC.
53. Ibid., pp. 23-24.
54. Looting was so common among the ECOMOG troops that Liberians corrupted the acronym ECOMOG to stand for "Every Car Or Moving Object Gone". See Gberie 2005.
55. Gberie, Ado and KAIPTC, p. 27.
56. Ibid., p. 24.
57. See Linas-Marcoussis Accords.
58. Ibid.
59. Banégas 2006, p. 8.
60. Interview with the French diplomat 1.
61. See UN Security Council resolution 1464.
62. See UN Security Council resolution 1479.
63. Balmond, p. 94.
64. See UN Security Council resolution 1528.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. Interview with Captain Prazuck.

68. Gberie, Ado and KAIPTC, p. 30.
69. See UNOCI Website.
70. Gberie, Ado and KAIPTC, p. 31.
71. See Amnesty International. The Maghreb Arab Press recently reports, however, that some of the Ivorian girls, manipulated by a local NGO, were lying about Moroccan sexual abuses. See Maghreb Arab Press 2008. I could not find other sources approving this story.
72. Interview with the French diplomat 1.
73. Interview with a French diplomat 2 working for The French Embassy in Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan, February 19, 2008.
74. Interview with a French diplomat 3 working for The French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Paris, November 30, 2007.
75. See UN Security Council resolution 1739.
76. See Ouagadougou Accord.
77. See IRIN.
78. Gonnin, p. 163.
79. See Marshall-Fratani 2006.
80. See Amin; Bazin; Banégas 2006.
81. See Gbagbo; Crook.
82. See Bouquet 2005, p. 113.
83. See Konaté 2005; Banégas 2006.
84. See Economic Mission.
85. Ibid.
86. See Yves.
87. See Bouquet 2005, pp. 251-52.
88. See Médard; Smith 2003; Glaser and Smith.
89. See Hofnung 2006; Marshall-Fratani 2005; d'Ersu.
90. See Marshall-Fratani 2005.
91. Ibid.
92. Comi Toulabor is a researcher at the *Centre d'études d'Afrique noire, Institut d'études politiques*, Bordeaux. Cited in Marshall-Fratani 2005, p. 24.
93. See Ayooob.

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# Local Needs and Agency Conflict: A Case Study of Kajo Keji County, Sudan

RANDALL FEGLEY

**Abstract:** During Southern Sudan's second period of civil war, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provided almost all of the region's public services and greatly influenced local administration. Refugee movements, inadequate infrastructures, food shortages, accountability issues, disputes and other difficulties overwhelmed both the agencies and newly developed civil authorities. Blurred distinctions between political and humanitarian activities resulted, as demonstrated in a controversy surrounding a 2004 distribution of relief food in Central Equatoria State. Based on analysis of documents, correspondence and interviews, this case study of Kajo Keji reveals many of the challenges posed by NGO activity in Southern Sudan and other countries emerging from long-term instability. Given recurrent criticisms of NGOs in war-torn areas of Africa, agency operations must be appropriately geared to affected populations and scrutinized by governments, donors, recipients and the media.

## A Critique of NGO Operations

Once seen as unquestionably noble, humanitarian agencies have been subject to much criticism in the last 30 years.<sup>1</sup> This has been particularly evident in the Horn of Africa. Drawing on experience in Ethiopia, Hancock depicted agencies as bureaucracies more intent on keeping themselves going than helping the poor.<sup>2</sup> Noting that aid often allowed despots to maintain power, enrich themselves and escape responsibility, he criticized their tendency for big, wasteful projects using expensive experts who bypass local concerns and wisdom and do not speak local languages. He accused their personnel of being lazy, over-paid, under-educated and living in luxury amid their impoverished clients. Such criticisms have surfaced frequently. Based on research in Somalia, Maren described international aid agencies as under-scrutinized, self-perpetuating big businesses more concerned with winning government contracts than helping needy people.<sup>3</sup> He was equally scathing of the naiveté of expatriate personnel, dependence by journalists on agency reports and willingness of native elites to exploit crises. Often aid has subsidized western businesses, such as grain-trading companies, eager to unload surpluses. Questioning whether non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are becoming Africa's new colonialists, one observer noted that the intended recipients of charity are the only persons who can assess whether or not altruistic goals have been met.<sup>4</sup>

**Randall Fegley** is assistant professor of history and politics and coordinator of Global Studies at Pennsylvania State University's Berks Campus. Having lived in Sudan from 1980 to 1984, he specializes in African societies' recovery from mass trauma, especially in Sudan, Rwanda, Uganda and Equatorial Guinea. A life member of the Sudan Studies Association, he is currently that organization's president-elect.

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v11/v11i1a2.pdf>

Others have noted agency encroachment on state sovereignty.<sup>5</sup> Particularly relevant in the case of Sudan, NGO activities may impede local political processes that could allow beneficiaries of assistance to become masters of their own destinies. Critics note that agencies hamper the development of local consensus to aggregate needs and form policy.<sup>6</sup> Tvedt argues, ... NGOs contributed unintentionally to the erosion of the authority of a very weak state. ... The NGOs put up their own administration and authority systems thereby undermining the state institutions without establishing viable alternative structures.<sup>7</sup> Referring to the agencies as "inadvertent accomplices," Martin notes that international aid organizations have flooded into the Sudan, mostly via Kenya and Uganda into the rebel regions of the South, in response to the devastating consequence of "years of combat, concurrent droughts, floods, and other calamities." The "hundreds of millions of dollars" that these organizations have poured into the region have provided the combatants with an excuse to avoid considering the tremendous human costs of the war. Although "the two largest Southern rebel groups have each created fledgling civil service bureaucracies," these bureaucracies have no resources. Virtually none of the national government's newly-found oil bonanza goes to fight war and poverty. Martin doubts that either the rebels or the government "would divert resources to humanitarian needs if the aid agencies were to withdraw." But this does not obviate the fact that the very actions of the humanitarian community allows "both North and South to evade the question entirely."<sup>8</sup>

Mamphilly and Branch noted two categories of critiques leveled at foreign-funded, NGO-implemented humanitarian aid. The first focuses on political and social problems stemming from unmediated relations that NGOs often have with local populations. NGOs distribute aid according to their own institutional imperatives. No matter how far they try to involve the local population in participatory forms of aid provision, there will always be a gap between their imperatives and the imperatives that would emerge through democratic decision-making processes within the beneficiary community. Often such situations result in "high levels of waste and inefficiency" due to competition among NGOs. Negative results flow even when there is inter-NGO cooperation and beneficiary participation, "the population can be habituated to making appeals to unaccountable international bodies for assistance." Instead of addressing their own political authorities or developing local "self-sustaining organizations that draw support from a popular constituency." The result is "the evisceration of ... local political authority and ... 'civil society organizations' that have no constituencies." Once the inevitable NGO withdrawal occurs, local administration is incapable of "continuing these basic tasks."<sup>9</sup>

"The second category of critiques addresses situations where armed groups insert themselves between foreign resources and the local population and mediate that relationship, usually to their own advantage." There are numerous examples of military forces on both sides of the southern Sudan conflict seizing aid for their own purposes. One such purpose is the frequent "politicized distribution of aid" that then can drive "the further militarization of the SPLA [Sudan People's Liberation Army]," for "a politics of patronage" emerges that sustains the SPLA-local population relationship. This in turn "precludes the need for the SPLA to build an inclusive democratic constituency."<sup>10</sup>

The sheer size and political weight of NGOs, however, suggests they are unlikely to pay attention to those they serve. Relief is big business. World Bank figures showed that 12 percent of foreign aid to developing countries was channeled through NGOs in 1994. In 1996, the total

amount was \$7 billion worldwide. A Johns Hopkins University study found that the 2002 operating expenditures of NGOs in 37 nations totaled \$1.6 trillion, equaling the world's fifth largest economy.<sup>11</sup> In 2005, NGOs in Africa managed nearly \$3.5 billion in aid. Like governments or companies, they have vested political interests, as well as financial motives. Needing to attract funds to stay alive, they are not elected or subject to checks to assure their accountability or solvency. Yet they often have been in a position to mold governments and civil societies in southern Sudan and other places facing similar debilitating problems.

### **Civil Society in Southern Sudan**

Sudan is Africa's largest country in area and one of its most diverse culturally. A quarter the size of the USA, it has known little but war and deprivation since independence from joint British and Egyptian rule on January 1, 1956. For half a century, regimes changed, but the Arab Muslim ruling elite's attitudes have remained the same. The country's non-Muslim southern half was subjected to an unbroken pattern of economic exploitation and cultural destruction under both elected governments and military regimes.<sup>12</sup> Peace followed the 1972 Addis Ababa Accords, but broke down by May 1983, as the Nimeiry regime neglected the South and increasingly sought support from Islamists. Southern rebels coalesced under the leadership of Lt. Col. John Garang de Mabior, founder of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and its political arm, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). Nimeiry's ouster was followed by transitional military rule, a brief period of democratic government and finally the current Islamist-military regime of Omer El Beshir. Despite changes in Khartoum, fighting continued in the South.

Dominated by the Dinka, Southern Sudan's largest ethnic group, the highly centralized SPLM/A diverged from other Southern groups in not seeking independence. Instead it saw "the need to produce a new non-riverine solidarity based on the mobilization of groups in deprived areas throughout the entire country."<sup>13</sup> Its official documents advocated a united "New Sudan," based on pluralistic, democratic and secular principles transcending the problems of polarized racial, religious, and ethnic identities.<sup>14</sup> Painfully evident in this conflict of cultures is a deeper national struggle for identity, which Deng called a "war of visions."<sup>15</sup> In fact, Sudan is subject to multiple conflicts beyond a simplistic North-South division; Darfur being a prominent case in point.<sup>16</sup> Inspired though it may be, SPLM ideology proved divisive and was rejected by those wanting an independent South, particularly non-Dinka groups. Southern unity fractured along ethnic lines.

The SPLM/A's early administration proved problematic.<sup>17</sup> Combining military executive, judicial and legislative powers, a five-man high command conducted the war and ran "liberated" areas with a pyramid of political commissars, officers, and military judges. Based on old provincial boundaries, zones were divided into districts, each with an administrator, military commander, and judicial officer. The war provided a rationale for delaying public-empowered governance, and military needs eclipsed all concerns for civilian welfare.<sup>18</sup> Full of revolutionary zeal and seldom committed to consensus or tolerance, SPLA commanders, mostly young captains and often students who had interrupted their studies to take up arms, offered little encouragement for democracy and lacked administrative experience and local knowledge.

Their primary mandate was to mobilize resources for the war effort, including increasingly coercive conscriptions of young men, which provoked conflict with elders. Providing rations and portage, local populations resented their often bullying tactics.<sup>19</sup> Obstructive local chiefs were removed and sometimes corruptly replaced by commanders' relatives. Suspicion of SPLM intentions ran especially high in the southernmost region of Equatoria. Supporters of Southern succession, Equatorians suffered incursions by both sides. Johnson writes that Yei's inhabitants saw the SPLA as a Dinka "army of occupation."<sup>20</sup> Herzog noted,

Soldiers on leave from the front lines [were] not restricted to their barracks ... and make use of their arms to obtain whatever they like and to evade any sanctions civil authorities might impose... even worse [were] deserters and the troops chasing them, causing havoc in the civilian population with robbing, looting, raping, and killing. ... The absence of Rule of Law [was] felt very heavily and the SPLA [was] feared more by the civilian population than the enemy in the North.<sup>21</sup>

In the early 1990s, the SPLM's cause seemed hopeless. Infighting blunted its challenge to Khartoum. Those loyal to Garang, however, remained most powerful and responded to demands for change. On September 12, 1991, SPLM leaders passed resolutions separating military authority from civil administration.<sup>22</sup> Its First National Convention at Chukudum in April 1994 revised the movement's July 1983 manifesto to include democratic goals.<sup>23</sup> The New Sudan People's Liberation Act of 1994 clarified judicial and military roles. Civilians or retired officers were to run local administration. Subsequent conferences established standards, separated the SPLA and SPLM and reaffirmed the army's role as protector of both the population and administration. After October 1995, a rejuvenated SPLA launched major offensives, liberating ten towns, killing more than 10,000 government troops and seizing large quantities of military equipment. As a result of the 1994 formation of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) by the SPLM and seven mainly Northern opposition groups, new fronts opened in Upper Nile and Blue Nile provinces and in border areas with Eritrea.<sup>24</sup>

Conferences on humanitarian issues brought SPLA commanders, relief agencies and human rights groups together in late 1995. Over six hundred delegates from civilian bodies and more than sixty foreign observers formulated new modes of authority at a conference on civil society from April 30 to May 5, 1996. Finalized in March 1998, the "Vision and Programme of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement" emphasized reform. Its underlying premise was that Sudan's basic problem was that all governments since independence had pursued policies conflicting with the country's diversity. It proposed to destroy the oppressive "Old Sudan" and replace it with a free, democratic, just and secular state that would include "the right to and exercise of self-determination by and for the people of the New Sudan."<sup>25</sup> Noting Sudan's manifold problems, realization of these objectives was seen as "a monumental undertaking."<sup>26</sup> Accompanied by much wishful thinking, the SPLM's fifteen-point program of action included the establishment of the Civil Authority for New Sudan (CANS); the development of democracy, good governance, unity, peace and security; and the provision of social services.

The CANS consisted of a National Executive Council and four tiers, each with assemblies, executives and judiciaries. Initially, New Sudan had five regions, but aimed to cover the entire country as it was liberated. Decentralization was mandated, but few details were defined. Headed by a governor, each state was composed of counties run by commissioners. Counties

were divided into payams (districts) and bomas (villages) administered jointly by SPLM-appointed officials and locally chosen chiefs advised by councils of elders. But administrators at all levels ruled without clear plans to facilitate local governance.<sup>27</sup> Trained personnel were scant. This skeletal system had very limited revenue-raising capacity, stalled all significant development initiatives and slowed the establishment of bonds between local communities and the movement.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, some reforms were reversed in 2000 when SPLM leaders realized that they could not afford their economic costs and political consequences.<sup>29</sup> In their rhetoric, they remained committed to democratic government. However, local autonomy remained wishful thinking rather than reality. The SPLA often intervened in decision-making and local officials were mostly ex-officers whose personal ties and military ethos permeated "civil" authority.<sup>30</sup> This feeble system came to rely on NGOs, whose provision of services, training and material aid remained beyond the purview of the SPLM Secretariat of Local Government, which existed on paper, but had no personnel.<sup>31</sup>

In July 1997, an important meeting in Kejiko in Yei County sought to resolve differences between the churches, which sought to curb human right abuses, and the SPLM, which sought their support. Religious leaders accused SPLA fighters of mistreating civilians and churches. In turn, the SPLM accused the churches of passivity and obstruction and charged that the many clergy in exile had abandoned their flocks. Despite heated exchanges, the meeting ended in agreement.<sup>32</sup>

While expressing concern over many issues and attempting to make policy in many areas, the SPLM was unable to provide non-military services during the war. It even found settling disputes and policing areas under its control difficult. Most of southern Sudan's health, education, infrastructure, food and water operations were funded and run by foreign agencies. Describing the situation as "anarchic," one researcher asked, "Is New Sudan actually the first NGO-istan?"<sup>33</sup> Over an eight-year period, NGOs acquired new, often quasi-governmental roles, which profoundly influenced events. As the war dragged on, SPLM officials encouraged churches and other NGOs to get involved in health, education and other services normally under state control.<sup>34</sup> However, the major foreign NGOs went far beyond the provision of material aid and professional services. There are foreshadows of this in the early 1980s, even before the conflict in Southern Sudan restarted. During famines in the 1980s in Dinka country and Darfur, Keen and de Waal commented the failings of governments, western donors and international agencies and differences between the needs of victims on one hand and powerful elites, traders and agencies on the other.<sup>35</sup> Both also stressed the need to understand situations from the perspectives of local people who lacked political influence. Harrell-Bond also argued that agencies at that time were asserting quasi-governmental roles in Sudan.<sup>36</sup> Claiming even earlier involvement, Tvedt writes "the NGOs came to play a very important role already in the 1970s," calling southern Sudan "an early and natural place for NGO involvement."<sup>37</sup>

To insure security for their operations, the largest agencies influenced the bodies that emerged as the SPLM evolved from rebel army to political movement to governing elite. In 1992 and again in 1995, foreign NGOs set "ground rules" to avert looting and protect their personnel. Capable of withdrawing assistance and influencing world opinion, they found local partners and shaped the development of new structures.<sup>38</sup> As local NGOs beyond SPLM control proliferated, well-connected foreign agencies gained power. Hence, Norwegian People's Aid, to

use a prominent example, may be "non-governmental" in Norway, but in southern Sudan is intimately entwined with politics. This is not to suggest that NGOs have sinister agendas, but clearly the role of agencies changed in ways that deserve closer attention and broader discussion.

International agencies and churches also filled a vacuum left by the lack of SPLM authority in local peacemaking.<sup>39</sup> The most outstanding and perhaps most noble example was the February 1999 Wunlit Conference. Sponsored by the New Sudan Council of Churches and observed by many NGOs, this gathering ended longstanding conflicts between the Nuer and Dinka through mediation by traditional leaders, a common feature of local peace processes. Recognizing the explosive potential of ethnic division, the SPLM tried to address conflicts between the Dinka and other southern groups in dialogues in 2001 and 2002.<sup>40</sup> After Wunlit, much emphasis was placed on peace-making by civil society organizations and traditional leaders. However, the roles of chiefs should not be over emphasized as the manipulation of traditional authorities by political movements has often weakened their local legitimacy.<sup>41</sup>

[T]he term "civil society" itself is consciously non-specific. In Sudan, as elsewhere, it is a catch-all term that needs to be examined in terms of the political ethnography of Sudanese societies, North and South, and the webs of kinship that define them. Today's civic leader may be tomorrow's warlord, and vice versa. And today's traditional leader may be tomorrow's national politician. The interests of the representative of civil society may not map onto those of the traditional leader. Thus individuals may have ambiguous relations both with government authority and armed groups.<sup>42</sup>

A January 2004 civil administration workshop underlined the "need to implement the SPLM vision of democracy and good governance by expression in constitutional institutions that support rule of law, separation of powers, justice and equity" if credible local government was to be established.<sup>43</sup> Rethinking structures necessitated by war, it advocated increased numbers of elected posts, emphasis on counties, engagement of local communities, performance monitoring and rationalization of taxes at all levels. Many civil and traditional leaders expressed concerns with agency activities. In June and July 2004, SPLM authorities met with traditional leaders in Kapoeta County. Among the meeting's many recommendations was a mandate to "[c]reate robust mechanisms and laws that govern and regulate the activities of international non-governmental organisations with strong local authority and community monitoring component."<sup>44</sup>

SPLM control over NGOs improved to the point that the movement could mediate between foreign agencies and local populations. The formal instrument of this control is a "memorandum of understanding" that every agency signs and must abide by at risk of expulsion. If properly pursued, such a process could also avert the duplication, over-provision and/or neglect of services commonly seen in areas of dense NGO activity. For instance, Reuters reported that SPLM officials broadly understand the pitfalls of foreign aid and thus are often reluctant to accept it. They recognize the SPLM local administration needs foreign aid to forestall "popular dissatisfaction with continued poverty and lack of services" from costing them support. Yet, becoming dependent on such assistance might well "undermine the social and political coherence of the South and put the SPLM political project at the mercy of the machinations, or apathy, of donor governments and foreign philanthropists." They thus have

sought to steer a middle course whereby “the SPLM has put into place NGO programs that can be transferred to the local administration.” It also has taken steps to distribute NGO assistance under its own auspices to ensure that the local population looks to it rather than the NGOs for resources. “Thus, the SPLM can build its own local authority through foreign funding instead of losing legitimacy and capacity.”<sup>45</sup>

With the end of hostilities in 2005, relationships between local authorities and agencies continued to change. However, the numerous difficulties of a huge region utterly devastated by war and neglect had precluded what in most of the world would be the “normal” functioning of government.<sup>46</sup> In many countries, central governments have encroached on traditional sub-national roles in health, education, welfare, local security and transport. But decades of conflict led to a very different situation in southern Sudan where services were either absent or provided by agencies with stronger ties to the outside world than to local administrators, who have neither revenue-raising powers nor electoral mandates.

Issues of access to resources, mainly the form of foreign assistance and oil revenues, can only be resolved peacefully by processes of interest aggregation and consensus. The authorities must balance the need to distribute resources and opportunities equitably with encouragement for those already succeeding. Serious issues of sovereignty emerge if foreign agencies play major roles in such processes during peacetime. Local rivalries have emerged. If one community has a school or agricultural project, it builds resentment in others that don’t. This has been compounded by land disputes, which have grown to nightmare proportions.<sup>47</sup>

Southern Sudan’s revenue framework is very weak. County commissioners claim their powers to collect property, social security, animal and sales taxes and permit fees are not enough and want to tax NGO donations, which the SPLM government also wants.<sup>48</sup> The idea of “taxing” NGO relief supplies is not new. During the war, local authorities were able to acquire resources by this questionable method, which, if widely known, would discourage donations to agencies without reducing dependence on them.

Driven by donor and agency demands, humanitarian policies in Sudan require rethinking. In particular, operations are often based on controlling the movements of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and representing them as helpless and dependent.<sup>49</sup> Fears that those able to achieve economic stability would not return were unrealized, but repatriation has proved destabilizing.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, repatriation of all refugees remains a goal. Those able to acquire resources in exile are likely to return voluntarily when conditions are conducive.<sup>51</sup> However, the return of people dependent on a relief-based economy requires enormous commitment if rehabilitation is to succeed. Whatever emerges, administration at all levels would be wise to continue to work with both foreign and indigenous NGOs, many of whom have decades of experience facing the manifold difficulties of working in a devastated land. Such relationships will undoubtedly be difficult in a united Sudan, particularly between Islamist officials in Khartoum and southern Christian groups. With this in mind, the agencies and SPLM collaborated in the drafting of the “NGO Framework” in May 2005.

Meanwhile, Sudan’s Government of National Unity attempted to rein in agencies in Khartoum’s typically heavy-handed manner. On August 4, 2005, Beshir issued the “Temporary Decree For Regulating Voluntary Humanitarian Work”, compelling local organizations to register their status and declare their assets. Donations, particularly from abroad, were

monitored and restricted. Protests came immediately from the New Sudanese Indigenous NGOs Network, an umbrella group of 66 local agencies, almost all partners of foreign NGOs.<sup>52</sup> Eventually, the National Assembly rejected the decree and on February 21, 2006 passed the Organization of Voluntary and Humanitarian Work Act, which included human rights in its definition of “voluntary and humanitarian work,” and removed criminal penalties for NGOs operating without being registered.<sup>53</sup> However, the Humanitarian Aid Commission, whose registrar and commissioner have broad discretionary powers, must approve all projects seeking foreign funding. In May 2006, hundreds of agencies challenged the act’s constitutionality, claiming that it violated their freedom of association. The Constitutional Court denied the action due to the “absence of direct interest from the plaintiffs.” Then, three Northern Sudanese NGOs filed a case claiming that they suffered direct prejudice from the act.<sup>54</sup> The Constitutional Court accepted the case on June 27 in its first constitutional challenge under Sudan’s new Bill of Rights.<sup>55</sup> However, the act remained in force in 2008.<sup>56</sup>

The Beshir regime, the fledgling Southern government and many local authorities have pursued policies that both scrutinize NGO activities and profit from them. Given the power of agencies, such seemingly contradictory approaches are probably both necessary and wise for the foreseeable future. However, only democratic governance, coupled with the exploration of alternatives, will reduce dependence and encourage locally motivated development. Unfortunately, there is little evidence of any movement away from current norms. This state of affairs has been particularly evident in Kajo Keji, the southernmost county of Central Equatoria State, formerly known as Bahr el Jebel.

### **Kajo Keji**

Home of the Bari-speaking Kuku, Kajo Keji, is bounded to the west, north and east respectively by Yei, Juba and Magwi counties, and Uganda to the south.<sup>57</sup> Its five payams, Kangepo I, Kangepo II, Lire, Livolo, and Nyepo, are all served by foreign agencies. This community has borne the consequences of numerous conflicts: civil war (1955-72, 1983-2005), local disputes, and northern Uganda’s troubles. Their effects are very visible and limit socio-economic and political activity. An indicator of instability, population figures for the county range from 135,000 to 260,000.<sup>58</sup> In January 1990, Kajo Keji fell to the SPLA and remained under its control until June 11, 1994 when government forces recaptured it. On March 24, 1997, SPLA forces overran the county again. The frontline solidified 48 kilometers north of Kajo Keji town. These cataclysmic events led many to flee to Uganda’s Moyo and Adjumani Districts, even though fighting ceased in 2000. In 1996, Kajo Keji hosted over 70,000 IDPs in camps at Bamurye, Mangalatore, Kerewa and Limi. Long-term IDPs include Dinka and Nuer who arrived in the early 1990s, and Acholi, Lotuko, Lokoro and Madi from the east.<sup>59</sup> In 2001, 2,436 IDPs were repatriated to Bor County.<sup>60</sup> More followed after truces and then the January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Sudan and the SPLM. By January 2006, 27,748 remained.<sup>61</sup> However, repatriation faced the twin difficulties of lack of transport and landmines, which were scattered to hamper farming, fishing and transport.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, some IDPs remained in Kajo Keji for easier access to trade and education in Uganda. Tensions between the Kuku and Dinka soldiers and IDPs have been evident but

generally calm. Fearing landmines and renewed fighting, much of Kajo Keji's population chose to remain in exile rather than face limited opportunities at home. Suspicious of both Khartoum and the SPLA, returnees often preferred to settle in remote villages. As a result, Kajo Keji town remains sparsely populated.

Uganda's rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) brought new problems. Refugee camps around Adjumani suffered great losses of life and property in LRA raids in 2000. As attacks intensified, the Kuku began to flood home in April 2004.<sup>63</sup> Sudden mass migrations, coupled with LRA incursions into Sudan and weak local structures, caused food shortages and chaos. Disappointing conditions at home led some to return to Uganda, adding to the confusion. Fears of HIV/AIDS increased as refugees returned. Disputes over land, water and cattle escalated, as no land tenure (or even registration) system was in place. Hence, social, economic and environmental stress resulted from returnees on one hand and cautiously immobile IDPs on the other. Discord emerged when returning refugees were assisted by foreign donors and residents were declared ineligible for aid. Such factors will continue to affect stability for years to come.

Currently minimal, economic activity in Kajo Keji County is growing and has much potential. Out-migration and government bombing raids triggered the relocation of the central Mere Market to Wudu. There were no banks. One study concluded that the county could not even sustain a microfinance institution.<sup>64</sup> Proximity to Moyo in Uganda, where many Kuku operate businesses, encouraged circulation of the Ugandan shilling. More business could be conducted with surrounding Sudanese counties as connecting roads are made accessible.

Almost totally reliant on food aid in 1997, Kajo Keji can produce surpluses. Typically, spring and winter rains allow two cropping seasons. Though most areas are suitable for commercial agriculture, subsistence farming dominates. The World Food Program estimated that 25 percent of the population were agro-pastoralists and 75 percent were agriculturalists.<sup>65</sup> This composition has changed given increases in food production, improved access to markets and veterinary services, and refugee/IDP movements. Farmers raise maize, sorghum, groundnuts, millet, cassava, cowpeas, mangoes, and various vegetables, complemented by goats and cattle.<sup>66</sup> Approximately 25 kilograms of fish can be caught per day along the rivers Nile and Kaya, contributing up to 25 percent of total annual food intake.<sup>67</sup> Wild foods are available including game and shea butter nuts, often eaten during the "normal" hunger period between April and May. The contribution of wild foods is 30-90 kgs per household constituting 9-10 percent of annual food needs.<sup>68</sup> In bad years, other wild foods, including the bitter herb *melo ko dendu*, fill the hunger gap. With peace and outside assistance, the county's resident population became self sufficient in food during the 2000/01 harvests, warranting the elimination of food aid to residents.<sup>69</sup> Remembering troops from both sides confiscating produce, however, farmers seldom store much. These dated fears increase the likelihood of shortages. Bolstered by sales of modest surpluses and the introduction of ox-plows and other technologies, farmers had sufficient seed. The first 2002 season was characterized by erratic rains. Despite replantings, maize and peanut yields were low due to pests, diseases, and poor rainfall.<sup>70</sup> By July 2002, 20,734 metric tons of food needed to be distributed to hospitals and IDP camps. Second season harvests were better as rainfall stabilized. In 2004, disappointing rains coupled with the return of tens of thousands of refugees led to serious shortages and a return to aid dependence.

Water availability was also an issue. Kajo Keji gets more rain than most of Sudan. However, runoff and erosion are high and storage facilities are minimal. UNICEF data indicates that the County had a total of 155 water points - 98 bore holes and 57 hand dug wells.<sup>71</sup> More are needed to assure safe supplies and reduce burdens on women, whose many tasks include fetching water often from great distances. The situation is even more serious where refugees have returned. Ugandan reports in April 2005 noted that over 15,000 returnees shared fewer than 25 boreholes.<sup>72</sup>

Another problem facing Kajo Keji is its limited transport facilities. There are no railways. As most people live away from the Nile, river transport, which never extended farther south than Juba, is unimportant. Roads are poor. An all-weather, unpaved road linking Kajo Keji town to Moyo is rated as fair by NGOs. Recently a road between Kajo Keji and Juba was opened. Other roads are in a deteriorated state, some inaccessible due to landmines and many impassable during rainy seasons. Despite Canadian de-mining assistance, the probability of encounters with landmines has increased with refugee returns.<sup>73</sup> Significant numbers of passengers and goods bound for Kajo Keji fly to Moyo and then enter the county by road. Some NGOs flew into Kajo Keji, despite a government flight ban, imposed until late 2002. The county's productive capacity is limited due to the difficulties of getting materials in and products out. Negative effects on the marketing of cattle, shea butter, peanuts and other agricultural surpluses were already evident in the era between conflicts. In the early 1980s, southern members of the National Assembly complained about having to choose between attending sessions in Khartoum or maintaining contact with their constituents; few could do both. The poor state of transport has profound effects. Patients cannot be moved to hospitals. Health officials are hampered in dealing with ebola scares and meningitis outbreaks.<sup>74</sup> School attendance is low. Lack of communications forces both civil administrators and NGOs to use independent systems. Poor connections make accountability more difficult and encourage the misuse of resources. Inability to interact with the outside world promotes feelings of isolation. Though the UN and various NGOs have built some roads, it is government that must insure maintenance in the long run. However, if the county's productive capacity does not improve, better transport will only facilitate import penetration; a chicken and egg situation in which production is limited by lack of roads, but roads could create new problems. Existing only through Uganda, postal service is an essential that government needs to address. With cell phones and solar power, Kajo Keji may electrify and connect to the outside world without needing the poles and wires characterizing more developed countries. Internet and e-mail access, using cellular connections, are possible, but only for a tiny minority associated with the SPLA/M and agencies. Radio is important and could be put to greater use to inform the public.

Kajo Keji has one hospital, three primary health care centers and 25 primary health care units, run by trained health workers and traditional birth attendants. Efforts to improve maternal health and reduce child mortality, African sleeping sickness, malaria, and HIV/AIDS have seen some success. But tuberculosis, meningitis, diarrhea, respiratory tract infections, measles, visceral leishmaniasis, onchocerciasis, and syphilis remain pressing problems.<sup>75</sup> Psychological problems abound as a result of war trauma, migration, drug and alcohol addiction, and the stress of living amid landmines. Insecurity, dated studies, and poor transport and communications impair progress.

## Agency Involvement

In theory, all humanitarian activities in Kajo Keji are coordinated by the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SRRC), an arm of the SPLM, established as the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association in 1985 and renamed in 1998. Plagued by limited resources and the daunting scale of its tasks, this agency is charged with promoting reconstruction and development in SPLM-controlled areas, including the return and rehabilitation of refugees, slaves, and child soldiers. Its work involves a bewildering collection of UN agencies, foreign and local NGOs, and bi-lateral governmental, group and individual donors. Nevertheless, it maintains the best collection of contacts and files on NGOs operating locally.

United Nations activities in Kajo Keji have included WFP food relief, WHO immunization campaigns, and UNICEF support.<sup>76</sup> WHO maintains a disease surveillance team for Kajo Keji in Uganda. UNICEF-sponsored programs provided medical kits and demobilized 47 child soldiers, who were supported and reunited with their families in the County in 2002.<sup>77</sup> In 2004, UN agencies in southern Sudan began an \$89 million project, including building roads and 174 girls' schools.<sup>78</sup>

However, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is by far the most significant UN body in the area.<sup>79</sup> It has assisted tens of thousands of Kuku refugees and repatriates. Anticipating more returnees, its activities accelerated and included deployment of emergency response teams to implement reintegration projects in health, education, water, mine awareness, basic shelter/ infrastructure construction, protection, reconciliation and coexistence, community services, self-reliance and capacity-building; rehabilitation of 85 boreholes in Yei and Kajo Keji counties, rebuilding 26 schools in Luthaya, Yei and Kajo Keji; and support for primary health care and HIV awareness/ AIDS treatment programs.<sup>80</sup> Exact figures for Kajo Keji are not yet available but amount to millions of dollars. The UNHCR has had a presence in Kajo Keji since March 2005. Funded by American, Norwegian, Canadian, Danish, British, and other governmental sources, it opened an office with two local and three international staff members near the Wudu market in April 2005. Operating the projects it oversees, the UNHCR's partners include four foreign NGOs, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) for food security, Jesuit Refugee Services for education, the American Refugee Committee (ARC) for health and livelihood, and German Technical Cooperation for roads and livelihood; and two local NGOs, Sudan Health Association (SUHA) for medical facilities and Humanitarian Assistance for South Sudan (HASS) for primary education.

Coming from different countries with different approaches on how to operate and how much operational control they demand, these agencies frequently work from grant to grant, an undesirable state of affairs which is seldom seamless and can promote dangerous dependence without any guarantee of long-term commitment. As most of their expatriate employees do not speak Bari, they are limited and often need to choose between relying on local competencies and guaranteeing transparency.<sup>81</sup>

Since 1986, Norwegian People's Aid has been the foreign NGO operating most consistently in southern Sudan.<sup>82</sup> Based in Bamurye to be near IDP camps rather than central to the county as a whole, NPA targets IDPs and vulnerable local residents, with food aid, health care and support for local institutions.<sup>83</sup> Partnering with the SPLM in 1997, NPA began an agricultural

rehabilitation program in Kajo Keji county, which included agricultural extension, training, cooperative support, renovation of storage facilities, a shea butter project, and distribution of seeds and tools. However, poor planning and logistics impeded its first planting season and necessitated continued food assistance. This experience underlined the importance of coordination and local participation.<sup>84</sup> Begun in 1999, NPA's Maresha ox plow program trained 58 farmers by 2002 and provided micro-loans for the purchase of 300 pairs of oxen by 2006. In 2002, 6,669 livestock were treated for various diseases through NPA programs, which also established the county's first veterinary pharmacy. NPA-supported loans of sorghum, peanuts and other seeds enabled communities create a revolving fund. Farm incomes were augmented by purchasing seeds locally for use elsewhere in Sudan.

Maintaining an operational compound in Kajo Keji and logistical bases in Uganda since 1994, the American Refugee Committee has provided integrated programs in health care, water, sanitation, agriculture and capacity building assistance with USAID funding.<sup>85</sup> The ARC supports thirteen health care facilities in collaboration with the SUHA, a local NGO providing medical services in Ngopo payam where foreign agencies had been unable operate for security reasons. Emphasizing the strengthening of basic services to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees, it carried out road repair to make its operational areas more accessible. International Aid Services, a relief and development organization registered in Denmark, Germany, Norway and Sweden, runs programs in agriculture, education, health, water, and sanitation.<sup>86</sup> Working in Kajo Keji since September 1997, Médecins Sans Frontières provides basic health care at Mundari Civil Hospital, clinics and health centers to treat numerous diseases; provide food, water and sanitary facilities; and treat the severely malnourished.<sup>87</sup> From 2000 to 2004, it ran a successful program to combat African sleeping sickness.

Below these international NGOs are faith-based groups, including many Anglican bodies, Catholic Relief Services, Jesuit Refugee Service, and other religious charities with whom the Kuku have developed ties. Only those involved in functions normally falling within the scope of governmental activity are included in this study. In the past, foreign church bodies in southern Sudan encountered hostility from Khartoum. Their activities were curtailed by the 1962 Missionary Societies Act. Following a February 1964 decree, all foreign personnel of Christian organizations were expelled from Sudan. Many returned with the renewal of the north-south conflict in 1983. By then, indigenous churches had grown and strengthened and their relations with foreign groups were on a much more equal footing than those that had clearly been colonial remnants in 1964.

Given that most Kukus are affiliated with the Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS), entities within the Anglican Communion have made a major impact on developments in Kajo Keji. Chief among these is the Diocese of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (USA), which has a formal companion relationship with the ECS Diocese of Kajo Keji.<sup>88</sup> Between November 1999 and January 2007, Bethlehem provided over \$360,000 in aid to Kajo Keji, including emergency food, agricultural inputs and support for schools, clergy, orphanages, and various self-help and training projects. In 2006 the two partners concentrated their efforts on seven primary schools, instead of continuing survival level aid to 36 schools.<sup>89</sup> Since then, Bethlehem has raised over US\$ 2 million for its work. Women groups from Bethlehem and the Diocese of Winchester (UK) supported programs run by Kajo Keji's Mothers' Union. The Diocese of Salisbury (UK) has a

long relationship with the ECS and funded five primary health care centers, a school and other projects.<sup>90</sup> The Church Missionary Society provided administrative support. Grants from Episcopal Relief and Development, an agency of the Episcopal Church of the USA, went to carpentry and tailoring projects and the purchase of sewing machines for women and bicycles for displaced persons. Trinity Church Wall Street in New York and St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Nashville also supported various programs.

Several Roman Catholic agencies have also contributed to Kajo Keji's welfare. Catholic Relief Services provided aid for income-generating projects, but closed down its Kajo Keji operations in March 2003.<sup>91</sup> Dogged by transport and marketing difficulties, its limited success illustrated the need for a more integrated approach to providing assistance.<sup>92</sup> Currently, the most influential Catholic institution is the Daniel Comboni School in Lomin, the County's best funded educational institution. Providing nursery, primary and secondary instruction, it is run by the Catholic Diocese of Yei and funded and staffed by the Comboni Brothers and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), which has provided supplies and teacher-training since 1980. With a staff of nineteen in Kajo Keji, the JRS emphasizes IDP camps and major concentrations of returnees and gives special assistance to women.<sup>93</sup> In early 2005, the UNHCR allocated sixteen primary and three secondary schools for reconstruction to JRS, as an implementing partner and added ten more primaries in 2006.<sup>94</sup>

The London-based Crossroads Missions partnered with the Savannah Farmers Cooperative.<sup>95</sup> Concentrating on food production for local consumption to reverse aid dependency and develop model farms for replication throughout Sudan, Crossroads also funded school and hospital reconstruction and sent several containers of supplies to the county. The Bible Fellowship Missionary Society established model schools for approximately 3,700 children. The Sudan Pentecostal Church launched a nursery in Lire. Partnering with HASS, the African Children's Choir provided a clinic, maize mill, transport, uniforms, food and other supplies for some 2,000 pupils in seven schools.

A proliferation of indigenous NGOs accompanied the involvement of foreign agencies. Chief among these are the SUHA and HASS. Also important are church bodies, which engages in numerous activities in agriculture, development, education, health and food relief. But these established groups are only tips of an iceberg of a myriad of entities, whose foci and effectiveness vary enormously. As a SRRC assessment of local NGOs noted, "[a] number of dynamic individuals from southern Sudan, some who worked for international NGOs themselves, have taken initiatives to establish indigenous NGOs. These local NGOs appear to have dedication, local knowledge and basic skills to engage in program implementation, although a major concern remains regarding organizational capacity and long-term viability."<sup>96</sup>

One effective local group is the International Widows Association of South Sudanese Refugees In Uganda, founded by refugee widows who built orphanages in Adjumani and later Kajo Keji.<sup>97</sup> Based on widows caring for orphans regardless of blood ties, it has been effective at raising money from various sources. Another gender-based organization, South Sudan Women's Concern, supported by the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development since 1999, works to enable women's groups to earn incomes from the sale of surplus crops.<sup>98</sup>

No discussion of Kajo Keji would be complete without noting the multifaceted contributions of Kuku exiles around the world, including BBC journalist Alfred Taban, SPLM

official Stephen Wondu, the Rev. Canon Oliver Duku, the late World Bank official Dunstan Wai, doctors, church leaders, professors and businessmen. Maintaining close ties to their homeland, these individuals regularly contribute money, time and expertise to local efforts. A key factor in maintaining linkages is the PARANET e-mail list.<sup>99</sup> But exiles are frequently overwhelmed by numbers of requests from their families and communities in Sudan. Furthermore, they are concerned about effectiveness and transparency. Democratic governance and solid accountability processes are necessary to convince exiles to become full partners in their homeland's development. Though exile efforts face many obstacles and are often disjointed, important initiatives have originated in Diaspora communities, whose potential is great. As with NGOs, exile organizations have shown varying degrees of effectiveness and coordination.

Founded by Sudanese refugees in 2003, the Canadian nonprofit Southern Sudan Humanitarian Action Development Agency supports health, educational, agricultural, business and gender-empowerment projects. Partnering with the Sudanese Children Care Committee, South Sudan Women Association, South Sudan Widows Committee and the ECS, a southern Sudanese community association in the Netherlands, the Bura-Kimak Lokita Voluntary Association seeks to improve education, health care and agriculture; and support orphans, child soldiers and widows. Others include the Action for Development Network, Kajo Keji Relief Fund, Kuku Association in the Netherlands, SCARD and Tree Leaf Organization.

Operationally, individual agencies have had comparatively few failures. They have met pressing local needs, though often in a haphazard manner. However, the accumulated problems generated by the proliferation of agencies are great. Larger NGOs have the advantage of broader and longer experience with Kajo Keji and similar situations, whereas smaller and newer donors have limited frames of reference, tend to be too trusting and/or lack the means to guarantee transparency. Riehl noted that despite their problems, foreign aid interventions have encouraged the formation of indigenous agencies.<sup>100</sup> This is evident in Kajo Keji and throughout Sudan. But many local NGOs have narrow foci, sometimes restricted to a single boma. Their operations are often sketchy. Lack of accountability and duplication of efforts have led to some inefficiency and inequities. Numerous agencies support schools, tailor training, shea butter processing, and ox plow projects, but it is unclear how many are appropriate. Some observers have expressed concern about the number of schools. In the case of income-generating projects, already questionable markets could become over-saturated, given that profitability assessments have often been conjectural.

A greater issue is lack of coordination and even recognition among agencies. In 1989, the UN and Beshir regime agreed to allow a UN umbrella organization, Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) to provide emergency relief, including development and education programs, via formal connections among its components (ARC, IAS, MSF, NPA and related partners). In the years that followed, the regime persistently claimed that this agreement was violated by OLS sponsorship of some 200 SPLM-controlled schools, which Khartoum claimed were used as military training centers.<sup>101</sup> As a result, famine in the South was exacerbated by the regime blocking the flow of relief supplies.

Since the end of fighting, little has changed under the UNHCR. Recognition of agencies beyond the original OLS organizations is lacking and much needed.<sup>102</sup> Already significant, many smaller NGOs operating in the county could carry out larger portions of relief and

rehabilitation work. But their contacts with others in the field are minimal, partially because of their size and limited or indirect local presence. However, this explains the situation only to a point. Large NGOs are often reluctant to consult with or share information with other groups. Clearly some view parts of Sudan as organizational fiefdoms. Official reports often overlook non-OLS efforts. For example, a chart produced by the Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sudan in 2003 listed only eight agencies active in the county. Such attitudes and assumptions clearly promoted conflict between agencies.<sup>103</sup>

### Agencies in Conflict

Lack of recognition among uncoordinated agencies is illustrated by a controversy that erupted between NPA and the ECS Diocese of Kajo Keji during food shortages in 2004.<sup>104</sup> Throughout that April, refugees fled northern Uganda, following an LRA attack on a bus near Adjumani.<sup>105</sup> Shortly thereafter, the LRA raided a half dozen refugee camps. Some twenty people were killed and more were abducted. Thousands of traumatized refugees, most with no possessions as a result of LRA looting, flooded into Kajo Keji. The county experienced severe food shortages, subsequently verified by UNHRC reports and by BBC correspondent Alfred Taban. Originally from Kajo Keji, Taban returned to visit his homeland after 23 years and was shocked by the destruction he witnessed. He was even more dismayed by the desperate condition of people he met. Some who knew him as a child were too ashamed of their clothes to approach him. Residents had shared their food with returnees, many of whom were relatives. Surpluses were quickly depleted. An American donation of 800,000 Ugandan shillings was used by the ECS to buy salt to make eating leaves more palatable.

At first, the Kuku and their compatriots in the Diaspora tried to deal with the situation by themselves. To mobilize exile communities, the Kajo Keji Emergency Response Committee (KKERC) organized coordinators throughout North America, Europe, Australia and Africa.<sup>106</sup> Its officers included Chairman Manas Könyi Aliphayo (Canada), Secretary General Monica Pitta Sabuni (USA), Information Secretary Sarah Duku (Ireland) and Finance Secretary Samuel Dilla (USA). By July, KKERC's approach changed. They began to build networks with NGOs and other partners globally to raise international awareness of the situation. As collaboration increased, Zamba Duku, Executive Director of Sudan Christian Action For Rural Development encouraged the involvement of his Canadian partner, Bruised Reeds Ministries. KKERC sponsored Taban's trip to Kajo Keji to expose the situation to the world. Taban contributed most of his expenses, plus brought \$1400 in donations from displaced Kuku in Khartoum. With varying degrees of success, KKERC contacted Anglican bodies, NPA, World Vision, Red Cross, Christian Reform World Relief Committee (CRWRC), UNICEF, USAID and ACT International. Kuku exiles in Ireland raised €10,000 on one Sunday alone. Anglican Churches in Canada; Stitching Aid and Training in the Netherlands and numerous individuals responded to KKERC appeals. Two other exile groups, the South Sudan Kuku Association of North America and East and Central Africa Environmental Institute, joined KKERC's efforts. Kajo Keji's relationship with the US Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem proved particularly significant.<sup>107</sup>

Connie Fegley, chair of Bethlehem's World Mission Committee, learned of the crisis through e-mail messages on July 23, 2004. In a phone call, Bishop Manasseh of Kajo Keji,

claimed the number of returnees to be closer to 50,000 and noted that refugees who returned before the influx and resident IDPs put the figure of those in need at over 100,000. Bishop Paul Marshall of Bethlehem immediately mounted a fund-raising campaign. Within a month, over US\$47,600 was raised and transferred for relief operations in Bethlehem's companion diocese. By the year's end, donations exceeded US\$80,000. Meanwhile, Bruised Reeds Ministries shipped 50 metric tons of food.

KADRA (Kajojeji Development and Rehabilitation Agency), a wing of the ECS Diocese, was the implementing partner for KKERC, CRWRC, Bethlehem and exile communities. Its relief coordinator, the Rev. Charles Laku, and a staff, which included an accountant, food supervisor, storekeeper, food monitors, and distribution clerks, oversaw the operation. Villages were organized in clusters, each comprising a number of family heads. Clusters were headed by elected leaders, who passed distribution information from the food supervisor to the people and then worked with distribution clerks to give the prescribed rations to entitled families.

With KKERC's encouragement, both NPA and CRWRC took another look at the situation.<sup>108</sup> In a report issued after the crisis, Taban noted "NPA appeared from the beginning a little bit skeptical about the reported hunger... when [they] saw that Kukus in the Diaspora and the friends of Kajojeji, especially the Diocese of Bethlehem had started to send in relief food,... [they] said [they] too wanted to help."<sup>109</sup> CRWRC's response was positive and timely. As a member agency of the Canadian Food Grains Bank, they immediately assessed the situation and provided \$10,000 for food, seeds and sorghum, peanuts, cassava and sesame cuttings, purchased in Uganda and funneled through CRWRC's Kampala office. However, CRWRC expressed concern about KADRA's coordination with key agencies. Linda Beyer, who conducted CRWRC's assessment, noted, "My continued concern is that you have a group of leaders ready to take action and I have emphasized repeatedly that training is the immediate action and that the relief must be coordinated through the SRRC."<sup>110</sup>

Throughout August, tens of thousands of dollars were transferred to the Diocese of Kajo Keji, whose leaders purchased and transported food from Uganda. North American donations increased following news on August 12 of an incident in Liwolo where children unable to control their hunger ate poisonous wild cassava and, on discovering their bodies, their father committed suicide by eating the same.<sup>111</sup> ECS/KADRA assistance arrived in Kajo Keji before aid from other agencies.

On September 2, the first KADRA food distribution took place at Mondikolok. Thousands came to receive rations. Relief was available for newly arrived returnees, but not for the long-term residents who had shared their food reserves. Laku described the atmosphere as "bitter but not violent."<sup>112</sup> The next day at Kansuk, near the frontline, tension rose as SPLA soldiers threatened to disrupt distribution if they were excluded from receiving food. Intervention by the County Commissioner and army commander sent the soldiers back to their barracks. Complaints by residents who were refused food also arose. By the time of distributions at Kiri on 4 September, KADRA had received a message from the Commissioner, who after consultations with NPA, called the SRRC, KADRA and NPA to meet with him on September 13. Meanwhile, distribution continued at Jalimo (September 6) and Liwolo (September 7). By September 9, 14,224 people had received food from KADRA. These distributions gave one kilogram of maize, a half kilo of beans and fifteen kilos of salt and some vegetable oil per

person, quantities enough for only a day or two. A second distribution gave each person seven times these quantities.

The September 13 meeting, chaired by Kajo Keji's County Commissioner Michael Yokwe, sought to promote collaboration between NPA and ECS/KADRA.<sup>113</sup> Local administrators were concerned about the distribution's security implications. This occasion exposed much about NPA's attitude towards non-OLS agencies. Out of 17,295 returnees from Uganda, NPA representatives targeted 13,709 as most vulnerable and in need of assistance. Based on its recent experience, KADRA argued that over 133,000 people were in urgent need, including returning victims of the LRA, voluntary returnees who arrived before April 2004, drought victims and host families whose reserves were depleted by returnees. The cost of basic monthly food supplies for that number of people was estimated to be over US\$2.5m. KKERC's international coordinator noted, "At the moment, there is no NGO attempting to address this problem apart from Diocese of Bethlehem and Kuku communities with their limited resources."<sup>114</sup> NPA, which had been providing aid only to hospitals and IDPs, insisted that it be the only organization distributing food, and that Kuku groups handle only non-food items such as hoes. KADRA objected and a heated four-hour debate ensued with NPA threatening to withdraw from Kajo Keji if KADRA continued its distributions. SRRC regional coordinator Lexion William suggested two options: divide the county's payams between the two agencies or have KADRA distribute relief to those beyond the NPA targets. The second option was clearly flawed as separating targeted and non-targeted groups was impossible. In the end, the gathering resolved that KADRA serve Ngepo and Lire payams (4,432 in need of assistance by NPA's standards) and NPA serve the other three payams (13,907 out of a now revised figure of 17,493.)

Looking to the future, KKERC established a cassava propagation farm. Cassava cuttings funded by CRWRC were distributed to five church groups and an orphanage on 14 September. Seeds and tools followed.<sup>115</sup> Between September 2004 and February 2005, CRWRC and the Canadian Food Grain Bank provided 212 metric tons of food and seeds, worth US\$110,810. Noting that children were among the most malnourished and that some 30 primary schools were ECS-assisted, Laku suggested that the Diocese of Bethlehem fund a program to provide school breakfasts and lunches. He further noted the need "to discuss with NPA to do the same in the areas of their operation."<sup>116</sup>

KADRA's problems continued. One of Laku's messages to ESC partners acknowledged that communications difficulties were severe and explored possible solutions. Distribution in Lire on October 7 was hampered when NPA sent food there and wanted it distributed first. NPA food was eventually removed. Laku reported, "... those who received the food rations were very happy... While those who were not entitled were very unhappy and cursing and insulting the Church as a dividing Church rather than uniting one."<sup>117</sup> Compounded by transport difficulties and delays, the ECS was placed in the impossible position of trying to feed vast numbers of people who were not recognized as needy, but who had shared their food and now were increasingly critical of the church. On October 9, the SRRC called a meeting of community leaders in Lire and Mondikolok to evaluate distributions. As a bloc, the leaders noted that bitter divisions had developed and felt that everybody should be entitled to rations. The SRRC made it clear that distribution targeted only those forcefully displaced from Uganda. The areas served by NPA and KADRA should be served on equal basis. These sentiments were

echoed in Ngepo payam, whose leaders had registered all their people as needy, pushing figures for the targeted population even higher. But community members testified that some of the registered were in fact dead.<sup>118</sup>

Speaking with a range of people in Kampala, Moyo and Kajo Keji, Alfred Taban revisited his homeland in October 2004 at KKERC's request and issued an insightful report on the situation. Although he dismissed, with first-hand evidence, those who questioned the ECS's competence to run relief operations, he expressed doubts about its efficiency. Its members, mostly clergy, were educated, but few had handled this kind of work before. They lacked vehicles and other resources. Furthermore, their leaders tended to reside much of the time in Moyo, Adjumani or Kampala and not in Kajo Keji. The tasks at hand required a full time presence. Taban criticized Laku. Besides heading KADRA, he was also headmaster of Kajo Keji Senior Secondary School and involved in a cattle-breeding program among other things. Not surprisingly, those in the field complained of poor coordination. Despite its shortcomings, the ECS had built a network, domestically and internationally, which was mobilized quickly. Ultimately, Taban felt it should "be provided with the means to do its job." He noted that "transparency and accountability [was] essential for the continuation of the project," recommended detailed financial reports once a week and encouraged coordination between those in Kajo Keji, Uganda and the Diaspora. Feeling that desperation had led to a falsification of figures, he proposed a review of the system of collecting statistics. Indeed, Laku noted in a message dated September 19, "We have discovered a lot of irregularities in the registration of new arrivals from Adjumani refugee camps."<sup>119</sup> Taban further stressed the need to maintain good ties with all NGOs, including NPA, though many disagreed with some of their policies. To avoid being confrontational, he felt that the NPA numbers should be accepted, even though they were "ridiculously low." He suggested "spend[ing] more money on seeds, especially improved cassava stems from Uganda and items such as hoes for the next season."<sup>120</sup>

Better harvests in 2005 alleviated the situation. However, bitter feelings lingered on all sides. NPA had flexed its muscles while the ECS's reputation was tarnished, despite its commendable and timely efforts. In the end, the local agency, KADRA, was actually perceived by local authorities as interfering. Much questionable activity surrounded the food distribution. Demanding meetings, insisting that its data be seen as authoritative and determining policies and procedures, a foreign agency with vast resources clearly assumed the role of a political elite. Local needs and expertise were ignored in favor of agency priorities. The "needy" were defined without regard to local collective loyalties. Serious difficulties of efficiency, accountability and equity followed.

### **Facing Difficult Issues**

Essential in providing food, health, education, water and sanitation, foreign NGOs have a wealth of useful experience and data. As sources of hope for places like Sudan, they bear tremendous responsibilities. Both scholarly literature and press coverage, however, have moved away from assuming that agencies always have the best motives and methods. This attention may, by itself, provoke changes. Sudan needs as much help as it can get, though not under any terms. Current emphases on funding tied to "good governance," controlling corruption, etc.,

needs to be applied to donors as well as recipients. Agencies need to clarify and, in many cases, purify their intentions. This necessitates partnering with the communities they serve, in the sense of recognizing as many local concerns and solutions as is practical. To do this, at minimum, their personnel must be able to live as the locals and speak their languages. Donors and the press need to be more critical. Agencies, governments, recipients and all other stakeholders must be recognized, brought together, coordinated, informed and held to account. In the case of Kajo Keji, NPA and the ECS could have shared a great deal with each other. Instead, jurisdictional disputes and bruised egos resulted.

To encourage governmental authorities to assume their full range of duties, outside assistance should provide a few important inputs in a limited range of well-monitored sectors, not everything for everyone as the scope of NGO activities in Kajo Keji and many other places suggests. Some problems, such as landmines and psychological trauma, require foreign expertise. Other equally thorny issues, such as conflict resolution and operational control over development projects, have grown out of an almost total lack of state presence in broad areas of public life. Allowing this situation to continue is unwise. While dependence is not an issue in education and health, it could be problematic if roads are built without an eye to future maintenance. Local people will not be encouraged to plow profits back into income-generating projects that continue to rely on external inputs. Whose income is to be generated and how equitable wealth is distributed need to be decided in Sudan, not in Oslo or Bethlehem. Aid recipients may be learning more about how to manipulate agencies than how to develop their country. In Kajo Keji's case, aid did not discourage food production, as in other situations, but none of the NGOs, local or foreign, encouraged a much needed return to storage. Beyond the much debated issues of who should feed how many is the question of whether foreign interests anywhere should dictate who is or is not suffering.

Nations throughout Africa, recently Chad, Ethiopia and Gabon, have sought to limit the "political" roles of agencies.<sup>121</sup> However, sweeping actions by regimes can have profoundly negative effects. Critics of NGO activities, particularly among Sudan's emerging authorities, must recognize the important roles played by agencies, avoid disrupting essential services, and facilitate greater coordination as significant changes in power relationships and policies become unavoidable. Using a tiny portion of its revenue from petroleum royalties, southern Sudan's leaders are in a position to coordinate and control agency activity. However, the Government of South Sudan has accomplished little in terms of local development since 2005. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement has proved to be an uneasy settlement flawed by ignoring the war's root causes and delayed by distrust and political maneuvering. But there is little evidence that the SPLM could effectively govern an independent South and reduce reliance on foreign interests. Corruption, inefficiency, misplaced priorities, and discord are rampant. Since the events of 2004, Kajo Keji county has seen much change. Better schools, improved roads and increased economic activity are evident, but as a result of NGO or private, not governmental, initiatives. Some question why Kajo Keji, as opposed to Aweil or Genaina, should benefit to such a degree. Given its current peace, proximity to Uganda, and prominent past and present citizens, it is an obvious starting point for the reconstruction of southern Sudan. But such development must be as self-reliant, efficient and fair as possible, and needs to reverberate elsewhere quickly.

Despite their shortcomings and given the degree to which they have replaced government, agencies are enmeshed in Sudan's current survival and future welfare. Furthermore, no currently viable alternatives exist to replace the admittedly imperfect system of "sub-contracting" relief assistance and reconstruction to NGOs. Changing this state of affairs too quickly would invite further disaster in places already prostrated by past catastrophes. Change, however, cannot be delayed for long.

## Notes

1. In addition to those cited, other critiques of NGO activities are Barnett and Weiss; Barrow and Jennings; Browne; Feher; Jordan and van Tuijl; Marriage; Minear; Moyo; and Rieff.
2. Hancock.
3. Maren.
4. Nienaber.
5. Mills.
6. Three articles in *New African* articulated ongoing criticisms of NGOs - R. Sankore, "What are the NGOs Doing?"; F. Manji and C. O'Coill, "NGOs: A Tainted History;" M. Onyanyo, "NGOs: Pseudo Governments or Surrogates of Western Powers?" *New African*, August/September 2005, No. 443.
7. T. Tvedt, "The Collapse of the State in Southern Sudan after the Addis Ababa Agreement: A Study of Internal Causes and the Role of the NGOs," in Harir and Tvedt, p. 91.
8. Martin. pp. 126-27.
9. Mampilly and Branch. p. 17-18.
10. Ibid.
11. Faroohar.
12. This includes not only the Southern Region, but also southern Blue Nile State, the Nuba Mountains, Abyei and most of Southern Darfur. Other good works include Alier; Beshir; Beswick; Collins; Machar Teny-Dhurgon; Spaulding and Beswick; and Wai.
13. SPLM, [www.splmtoday.com](http://www.splmtoday.com)
14. Lesch, also SPLM, [www.splmtoday.com/](http://www.splmtoday.com/)
15. Deng.
16. Johnson.
17. Atem.
18. Lokuji. pp. 16-29.
19. Human Rights Watch.
20. Johnson, "The Sudan People's Liberation Army and the Problem of Factionalism," in Clapham. p. 70.
21. Herzog, quoted in Atem.
22. Atem.
23. Rolandsen. pp. 81-123, also SPLM, [www.splmtoday.com](http://www.splmtoday.com)
24. A pro-SPLM view of the movement's history in this period appears in Madut-Arop.

25. Awolich. p. 3
26. Ibid.
27. Lokuji.
28. Young.
29. International Peace Research Institute.
30. Johnson, "The Sudan People's Liberation Army and the Problem of Factionalism," p. 67.
31. Lokuji.
32. New Sudan Council of Churches.
33. Riehl, pp. 4, 8.
34. Diocesan Development Committee, p. 2.
35. Keen, also de Waal's numerous works.
36. Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees*.
37. Tvedt, p. 89.
38. Rolandsen, p. 129-33.
39. UN, *Sudan Peace Fund: A Summary of Grassroots Peace Work in South Sudan* (2004).
40. Mampilly and Branch, p. 6.
41. Bradbury, Ryle, Medley and Sansculotte-Greenidge.
42. Ibid., pp. 14-15.
43. "Local Government Workshop in Rumbek Outlines Critical Issues of Policy," *South Sudan Post*. January 2004.
44. SPLM, *Kamuto Declaration*.
45. Mampilly and Branch, p. 19.
46. Excellent works on these issues are Abdel Salam and de Waal; and de Waal and Ajawin.
47. "Land Disputes Fuel Tensions in War-Torn South Sudan". Reuters (19 August 2007) posted on Sudan.Net.
48. "Kiir and Machar Disagree on Subdividing Southern Sudan" [www.southsudan.net/home1/home2/kiirandmachar.html](http://www.southsudan.net/home1/home2/kiirandmachar.html).
49. Chambers, pp. 243-63; Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees*; Karadawi, pp. 537-47; Leopold, pp. 205-225; and Voutira.
50. Harrell-Bond, "Pitch the Tents," pp. 19, 26.
51. Sepulveda.
52. Jambo.
53. UN Mission in Sudan, *CPA Monitor* ([www.unmis.org](http://www.unmis.org)).
54. Womens' Awareness Raising GroupRed Sea, Sudan Social Development Organisation, and Amel Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture.
55. Constitutional Court (case no.35/2006)
56. "Foreign Organizations or Intelligence Networks" Sudanese Media Centre ([www.smc.sd](http://www.smc.sd))
57. Kajo Keji's name is spelled numerous ways (Kajokeji, Kajo Kaji, Kajo-Keji, etc.) I have employed the most common usage.
58. These figures are 2000 and 2007 SRRC figures. Intermediate figures are 147,421 (Doerring 2003), 150,000 (WHO 2002) and 177,367 (WHO 2001).

59. NPA, *Food Security Project*. (2003) and conversation with NPA Field Monitor Ladislaus Ougaro in Fegley, *Summary of 29 Meetings and Visits in the Diocese of Kajo Keji*.
60. NPA, *Planning Document*. (2002).
61. Conversation with NPA Field Monitor Ladislaus Ougaro.
62. Ibid.
63. Goudstikker.
64. Doerring, et al.
65. World Food Program, *Kajokeji County ANA Report*.
66. Moulton provides an overview of agriculture in Kajo Keji.
67. World Food Program, *Kajokeji County ANA Report*.
68. Ibid.
69. Interview with Diress Mengistu-NPA in Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sudan, *Report on Kajokeji County*.
70. NPA, *Half-Year Report on Food Security Activities in the Project Locations*. (2002)
71. Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sudan, *Report on Kajokeji County*. p. 15.
72. Amazia.
73. See the *LM Report 2004* and the Canadian International Development Agency's proposal *Strengthening the Capacity of Southern Sudan in Land Mine Awareness and Victim Assistance*.
74. World Health Organisation, *Disease Surveillance and Ewarn Report*.
75. Marial.
76. UN Sudan - [www.unsudanig.org](http://www.unsudanig.org).
77. Richer and UNICEF, *Donor Report*.
78. McLaughlin, A., "Sudan's Refugees Wait and Hope".
79. UNHCR - [www.unhcr.ch/](http://www.unhcr.ch/).
80. UNHCR, *Operational Briefing on South Sudan*, April 2005; "Access to Water a Basic Right for Refugees, Says UNHCR", March 2005; *Refugees, Prizing Education, Defer Return to Sudan* and *UNHCR Briefing Notes*, May 2005.
81. The degree to which information (dates, amounts, project details, difficulties, accountability, etc.) was available varied greatly. Agencies responded in almost direct proportion to their size. Larger agencies were less likely to give details, beyond that available in their promotional materials and web sites. The UNHCR and USAID were exceptions, providing reams of material, in which determining what specifically had gone to Kajo Keji was sometimes problematic. Smaller NGOs gave much detail, often narrow or localized in focus.
82. NPA - [www.npaid.org](http://www.npaid.org).
83. Ibid., and conversations with Michael Wani Geriga (Acting Field Coordinator), Ladislaus Ougaro (Field Monitor) and Dwoki Mary (Acting Compound Manager) in Fegley, *Summary of 29 Meetings and Visits in the Diocese of Kajo Keji*.
84. NPA, *NPA's Agricultural Program, Kajo Keji and Yei River Counties, New Sudan: Evaluation Report* and O'Toole Salinas, and D'Silva, p. 25-26.
85. ARC – [www.arcrelief.org](http://www.arcrelief.org). See also Vincent, Masikini, and Nantale.
86. IAS - [www.ias.nu](http://www.ias.nu).

87. MSF - [www.msf.org](http://www.msf.org).
88. The author's direct involvement with this relationship from 2000 to 2007 and visits to Kajo Keji in 2002, 2006, and 2007 facilitated access to numerous contacts and documents.
89. Fegley, *Summary of 29 Meetings and Visits in the Diocese of Kajo Keji*.
90. Interview with Bishop Manasseh of the Diocese of Kajo Keji in October 2000. Also *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (14/3/2002) on the school appeal.
91. CRS - [www.catholicrelief.org](http://www.catholicrelief.org).
92. O'Toole Salinas and D'Silva, p. 29-30.
93. JRS - [www.jesref.org/](http://www.jesref.org/).
94. Conversation with JRS local administrator Charles Mogga in Fegley, *Summary of 29 Meetings and Visits in the Diocese of Kajo Keji*.
95. Crossroads Missions - [www.crossroads.ca/missions/sudan.htm](http://www.crossroads.ca/missions/sudan.htm).
96. SRRRA Database and Monitoring Unit (June 2000).
97. IWASSRU - [www.lahash.net](http://www.lahash.net) and [www.agorphanager.com](http://www.agorphanager.com).
98. CAFOD - [www.cafod.org.uk](http://www.cafod.org.uk).
99. Appearing to be an electronic media term, like Internet, PARANET is actually from the Kuku "parennet" (a meeting place of elders).
100. Riehl.
101. Foreign Organizations or Intelligence Networks" Sudanese Media Centre.
102. O'Toole Salinas, and D'Silva, p. 25-26.
103. Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sudan, *Report on Kajo Keji County*. Table 6.
104. This account is based on an archive of extensive e-mail correspondence dated from 22 July to 20 October 2004 from KADRA Managing Director Charles Laku Losio, KKERC International Coordinator Manas Könyi Aliphayo, Connie Fegley of the Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem; Bruce Campbell-Janz of the CRWRC and Chester Venhuizen of Bruised Reeds Ministries. It includes a BBC *Focus on Africa* interview with Alfred Taban (April 2004); a letter from Manasseh B. Dawidi, ECS Bishop of Kajo-Keji, to Mark Spina of Episcopal Relief and Development (9 August 2004) and "My Journey to Kajo Keji on October 6 and October 7, 2004," an e-mail report by Alfred Taban (20 October 2004).
105. Goudstikker.
106. Könyi Aliphayo, *KKERC Emergency Relief Operation Annual Report: March 2004-July 2005*.
107. Ibid.
108. Könyi Aliphayo, e-mail message 28 July 2004.
109. Taban, e-mail report, 20 October 2004.
110. Campbell-Janz, e-mail message, 30 August 2004.
111. Könyi Aliphayo, e-mail message, 12 August 2004.
112. Laku, e-mail message, 4 September 2004.
113. Laku, e-mail message, 14 September 2004 and Taban, e-mail report, 20 October 2004.
114. Könyi Aliphayo, e-mail message, 17 September 2004.

115. Laku, e-mail message, 14 September 2004.
116. Laku, e-mail message, 19 September 2004.
117. Laku, e-mail message 13 October 2004.
118. Laku, e-mail message 13 October 2004.
119. Laku, e-mail message, 19 September 2004.
120. Taban, e-mail report, 20 October 2004.
121. "Chad plans stricter checks on NGOs" AFP: 'political' NGOs" BBC News: 10 January 2008, and "Ethiopia imposes aid agency curbs" BBC News: 6 January 2009.

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Contacts within the ECS Diocese of Kajo Keji included the Rt. Rev. Manasseh B. Dawidi (Bishop of Kajo Keji), Rev. Wilson Lomugun (Diocesan Secretary 2000-2005), Rev. Emmanuel Murye (Diocesan Secretary 2005-6), Rev. Simon Peter Kenyi (Diocesan Development Coordinator), Rev. Charles Laku (Education Coordinator 2000-2005), Rev. Canon Henry Leju (Principal of Canon Benaiah Poggo Memorial College), Rev. Tom Ezbon, Rev. Fred Taban, Rev. Simon Kenyi, Moses

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# Social Organization and Social Status in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Rukwa, Tanzania

TONY WATERS

**Abstract:** Nineteenth century histories of Tanzania typically focus on "tribal" histories, customs, and military action. To a certain extent, this is expected. The story of how interior Tanzania came in contact with the Indian Ocean World is an exceedingly violent one. However, there are different ways of looking at interior history which highlight factors besides "tribal" histories. The story told here of Rukwa Region highlights alliances, status hierarchy, and fighting during the second half of the twentieth century. Such institutions emerged out of an "ecology of fear" which resulted in the re-organization of peoples, trade networks, and the emergence of a strong separation between common people and powerful rulers from different status groups even though they may have spoken the same language and had the same "tribal" affiliation. The fears generated by the clash of such institutions often shaped local responses to rapid social change. This essay highlights what this re-organization meant for what is roughly Rukwa Region of western Tanzania in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Focus is on the peoples of the Fipa Plateau, and Rukwa Plains. Traditionally, these people are referred to as the Fipa, Pimbwe, Bende, Kimbu, and Konongo people. The Gongwe, a group previously not described in the anthropological or linguistic literature is also discussed.

## Introduction

Tanzanian history in part emerged from the accounts of nineteenth century explorers, and the needs of the colonial and post-colonial states. As such, history of Rukwa in western Tanzania, emerges from the needs of these literate intruders. Thus in the 1870s, explorers like Burton, Stanley, Livingstone, and Thomson told the story of conflict that hounded their movement across a social environment dominated by violent and charismatic figures. Each chief, they wrote, sought an advantage in the newly arrived world markets of ivory and slaves. German colonialists and missionaries arriving after the 1880s, told stories emphasizing the cruelty of chiefs to the local people as they sought to legitimize their own rule, and identify administrative units which could be adapted to colonial domination, taxable trade, and church building. The British arriving in Rukwa in 1920, took up where the Germans left off. Intent on imposing indirect rule in a fashion which would facilitate trade, they organized their east

**Tony Waters** is a professor of sociology at California State University, Chico. In 2003-2004 he was a Fulbright Scholar at The University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. He has written extensively about Tanzania, refugees, economic development, and public education. Among his books are *The Persistence of Subsistence Agriculture: Life Beneath the Level of the Marketplace* (Lexington Books 2007), *When Killing is a Crime* (Lynne Rienner 2007), *Bureaucratizing the Good Samaritan* (Westview 2001), and *Crime and Immigrant Youth* (Sage 1999). He lived and worked in rural Tanzania between 1984-1987, and 1994-1996.

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v11/v11i1a3.pdf>

African peoples as "tribes," each having a language, and a chiefly lineage through whom the colonial power could rule.

Finally after 1961, the independent Tanganyika (later Tanzania) government looked to pre-colonial history to re-establish the legitimacy of African rule in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In this context, nineteenth century African leaders like Chief Mirambo of the Nyamwezi, are presented as figures resisting colonial intrusion. More problematic for post-colonial government and historiography has been the question of what to do about the "tribal" classification inherited from the British. "Tribal" identities run counter to nationalist conceptions of a Tanzania.

This paper discusses Rukwa's history in the context of what I call "the ecology of fear" created by the reorganization of society in the context of the intrusion from the Indian Ocean world. This is done by evaluating the interests, capabilities, and reorganizations undertaken by the various "status groups" found in Rukwa during this time.

### *The New Nineteenth Century Trading System and the Ecology of Fear*

Rukwa—or for that matter Tanzania in general—is not only understood as a retelling of tribal histories, but as a story of how subsistence societies organized and reorganized themselves relative to the outside world. As Iliffe notes, "Early nineteenth-century Tanganyika was not inhabited by discrete compact, and identifiable tribes, each with a distinct territory, language, culture, and political system," although the "need to describe makes the use of such collective names inescapable, even though they distort and oversimplify a vastly more complex reality."<sup>1</sup> This period is important, too, since as Iliffe notes further, it was during "the nineteenth century [that] Tanganyika's inland peoples made contact with the outside world through a long-distance trading system based on Zanzibar," and as a result, "Tanganyika experienced a transformation more intense than any other region of tropical Africa at that time."<sup>2</sup>

It is my thesis that reorganization in Rukwa happened in the context of an ecology of fear featuring frequent raiding, trade in new products like guns, slaves, and ivory, and the decimation of human populations by violence, disease, and famine. This "ecology of fear" is written into the modern landscape in the form of parks and conservation areas established by the modern Tanzanian government, in places first abandoned by humans fleeing violence in the nineteenth century. The ecology of fear typically pushed people living in the region to rely on apparently older forms of social organization, as they were confronted with new challenges created by intruders whether from southern Africa, or the Indian Ocean Coast. Notably, this happened not only in Rukwa, but in other regions of Tanzania as well.<sup>3</sup>

### *Social Status as an Analytical Category and the "Terrible Dilemma" of Peasants*

Keeping in mind that, as Iliffe noted, collective tribal names are both imprecise, but also inescapable, I would like to experiment using Max Weber's term "status group" to describe social relations in nineteenth century Tanzania.<sup>4</sup> Status groups are normally communities rooted in shared honor, i.e. a shared style of life. Status groups can be dominant or subordinated in a wider social system. Weber developed this term in the context of his understandings of

how a wide range of societies in Asia, North America, and Europe developed and changed in ancient and modern times. This essay will, I believe, make it clear that thinking about Africa in this fashion is also useful.

According to Weber, status groups (*Stände*) are rooted in an effective claim to esteem vis a vis others. Status groups share a style of life, formal education, putative hereditary lineage, and occupational status, among a range of other conditions, which in turn result in group-based action.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes claims result in a group of people who together assert rights to privileges such as trading monopolies, or even sovereignty over territory. Status groups seek to have privileges/honors become hereditary, and seek legal guarantees. In the context of nineteenth century Tanzania, salient positively privileged status groups includes chiefly lineages, inhabitants of a particular locality, clans, followers of a charismatic leader, rainmakers, blacksmiths, mystics and religious teachers, and shared national/tribal identity. Weber goes on to note, however, that such privileges imply status groups which are negatively privileged and in the African context include a variety of outsiders: forest people, hunter-gatherers, refugees, potters, and other outcasts. Status for negatively privileged is still expressed by pride in a particular style of life, putative hereditary lineages, occupational rights, etc., and a disdain for the trickery of the dominant group. The advantage of Weber's approach is that it reflects beliefs about stratification rooted in a range of unequal relationships, occupational monopolies, and so forth, not just tribal identity.<sup>6</sup>

As I think will become clear here, reframing pre-colonial society as one composed of status groups is particularly useful when evaluating social change in pre-colonial Tanzania.<sup>7</sup> Among the higher ranking status groups asserting monopolies over powerful symbols were the chiefly lineages who dominated through charismatic means; groups of traders who developed unique economic relations with local leaders; and European missionaries who inserted themselves into leadership. Beneath such high status groups were the sedentary farming, pastoral, warrior, and even slave status groups who while often victimized by the more powerful, still maneuvered in the same social environment.<sup>8</sup>

This paper re-evaluates what happened in what is (roughly) today's Rukwa Region.<sup>9</sup> What is striking from this analysis is that across "ethnic groups," "tribes," "occupational stratification," and status groups there were consistent caste-like relationships. The early Arab and European intruders arriving in the nineteenth century necessarily integrated themselves into this pre-existing status system, responding and reacting to a complex social world, even as their presence changed it. The stories Europeans wrote of nineteenth and twentieth century Rukwa thus are ones of violent chiefs, and violent intruders. But the vast majority of people were not the perpetrators of violence, but subsistence farmers growing the grains which not only sustained themselves, but also the chiefs and their retainers who ruled through their own armies and courts, making the accumulation and trade in ivory possible.<sup>10</sup> In this respect Rukwa was not unusual; it was the agricultural production of the peasants that underpinned the world of marauding chiefs, their armies, and their courts. This is because settled subsistence farming with its granaries and ripening fields of crops, by its very nature, makes farmers vulnerable to appropriation. Chirot calls this situation the "terrible dilemma" in which agricultural peoples are forced to make a choice between sacrificing individual freedom and control of the production of their labor on the one hand and ceding control to aristocratic castes for the security from raids

that emerges from a powerful protector who also in return levies military drafts and appropriates foodstores on the other.<sup>11</sup> The implicit exchange is that the fruits of their agricultural labor are exchanged for the protection provided by armies in an otherwise anarchic world. This was very much the world of nineteenth century Rukwa.<sup>12</sup>

### *Geography*

Rukwa Region is in western Tanzania and occupies four ecological zones. First, there is a coastal strip along Lake Tanganyika (elevation 768 meters). Secondly the Fipa Plateau at approximately 1500 meters is the center of the Region, and currently the most densely populated area. To the west and at the foot of an escarpment, is the Rukwa Plain at 900 meters. The Plain begins at the saline Lake Rukwa which drains an area to the north extending to what is now Katavi National Park. Lake Rukwa itself is a geographical anomaly; fluctuating water levels are recorded during historical times.<sup>13</sup> North of Katavi National Park is a fourth area, a vast *miombo* forest.

In the nineteenth century on the Fipa Plateau where there was higher rainfall, a cultural complex organized around horticulture and pastoralism developed.<sup>14</sup> In the Rukwa Plain, where rainfall is noticeably less, human ecology was focused by a mixture of grain cultivation (millet and maize), small animal pastoralism, hunting, and gathering. Today, there are large ungulates, including the world's largest herd of cape buffalo, in the area which is protected as Katavi National Park. Only in 1970 were cattle introduced by Sukuma-speaking pastoralists migrating from the north.<sup>15</sup> Beans, which require more rainfall, are not generally grown in the Rukwa Valley. The combination of horticulture, hunting, and gathering occurred also further to the north in the *miombo* forests.

### *Disease and Population Ecology in the Nineteenth Century*

The "diseases of civilization" like smallpox, measles and typhoid arrived in Rukwa during the nineteenth century, causing epidemics with high mortality well into the twentieth century. Rinderpest, a disease of cloven-hoofed animals also decimated herds of cattle on the Fipa Plateau in the 1890s, as well as wild buffalo and other cloven hoofed animals on the Rukwa Plain. The rinderpest epidemics contributed to human famine in the 1890s, particularly in areas dependent on pastoralism.

Population maps published in 1907 indicated that densities were highest along the Lake Tanganyika littoral, and in the Rukwa Plains.<sup>16</sup> Densities on the Fipa Plateau (which today are the most densely populated), and in the forested interior were low, perhaps the result of the rinderpest induced famine in the 1890s, and the violence and epidemics of previous decades. By the late twentieth century the density patterns reversed, with higher densities on the Fipa Plateau, while lowlands were given over to unpopulated game reserves.

### *Traditional Tribal and Linguistic Divisions of Rukwa*

Rukwa Region is at the intersection of three Bantu language groups: Nyamwezi-Sukuma from the northeast (including Nyamewezi, Konongo and Kimbu languages), Bende from across

Lake Tanganyika (including Bende, Tongwe, and Holoholo), and Mwika/Fipa which has its origins in Zambia (including Fipa, Pimbwe, and Rungwa).<sup>17</sup> In addition, Gongwe is a language which has lexical similarities to Pimbwe, and many loan words from Bende.<sup>18</sup>

Today, patterned multi-lingualism between the sub-groups, including widespread use of Swahili, is common. For example, Pimbwe are also likely to speak Fipa or Konongo.<sup>19</sup> Status identity, today as in the past, is a function of where a person is living, identification with a particular leader, and at-home language use although an all-embracing Tanzanian identity is today very important. Frequent inter-marriage and multi-lingualism meant that particular individuals may assert membership in more than one ethnic group. Linguist Yuko Abe has undertaken preliminary lexical studies which reflect these relationships (see Table 1).

Bende speaking groups are found in the northern part of Rukwa, and include Bende, Tongwe, and Holoholo speaking people.<sup>20</sup> This is the most sparsely settled part of the Region, and the only place never organized into formal chiefdoms and incipient states.<sup>21</sup> Nor did the Bende build defensive palisaded villages. As a defensive strategy they retreated into the *miombo* forest, abandoning planted fields to the raiders.<sup>22</sup>

A Gongwe-speaking population persists today in parts of Mpanda District, and maintains a royal graveyard which is at the site of the old royal village, in what is now Katavi National Park. The Gongwe are not mentioned in the language databases of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, nor in the ethnographic literature. However, they are mentioned in British colonial documents describing the dissolution of the Gongwe court in 1927-1928.<sup>23</sup> Joseph Thomson mentioned them in 1880, and they appear on German maps.<sup>24</sup> As with other groups living today in Rukwa, the Gongwe practice dryland maize cultivation, small animal pastoralism, hunting, and gathering.<sup>25</sup> They have a tradition of chieftainship.<sup>26</sup>

### 19th Century Status Groups: Rulers, Soldiers, Traders, and Missionaries

So far, I used the traditional tribal and linguistic divisions to describe Rukwa because they are the status labels used in the traditional ethnographic literature, especially British colonial records. Indeed, it was along such status distinctions that opportunities to rule (and be ruled) were distributed by the British between 1920 and 1961.<sup>27</sup> However, in Rukwa other status distinctions were important; and when they are used, a more nuanced description of nineteenth century Tanzanian social worlds emerges.

In this spirit, I highlight status groups found in western Tanzania which patterned strongly feelings of loyalty, and made the pursuit of political and military power coherent. Notably these status groups went beyond simple feelings of kinship based on land and tribe, and included aristocracies, language groups, and occupational groups. Criteria included groups with educational, professional, linguistic, ritual, and kin-based criteria for membership. Each status group transcended loyalties rooted solely in economic or kin-based interests.

In nineteenth century Rukwa, relevant statuses included child soldiers/pages known as *ruga-ruga* and who were typically kept close to the person of the chief, and in European terms might be thought of as being the equivalent of pages or retainers in an aristocratic court.<sup>28</sup> As for the leadership itself, chiefship was rooted in aristocratic ranks which spread across geographical boundaries of "tribes," and were often rooted in claims of foreign origin, which, as

Tambila notes, were "a ploy to acquire a greater measure of legitimacy" in order to rule effectively.<sup>29</sup> In Rukwa, the putative origins of such groups were the chiefly clans of the Tutsi with assumed origins in the regions near Rwanda and Burundi, or Nyamwezi clans from near Tabora.<sup>30</sup> Swahili speaking "Arab" traders formed a status group. The Catholic order of the White Fathers, which arrived in the 1880s, also in effect brought a status category for themselves from Europe, which, as is described here, developed in a fashion similar to other local aristocratic ranks.

### *Ruga-ruga*

The *ruga-ruga* were boys who were separated from their families at a young age, and raised to be the personal retainers/soldiers for a chief.<sup>31</sup> They were raised in chiefly courts to be loyal to their commander. The status was acquired as a result of initiation rituals, not birth.<sup>32</sup> Shorter describes these boys as . wild young men, a heterogeneous collection of war captives, deserters from caravans, runaway slaves, and others. without roots or family ties, and they owed no allegiance other than to their chief or leader.

He also notes that:

Nearly every Nyamwezi chief had [*ruga-ruga*] during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. [they were] standing armies of young, unmarried professional soldiers, especially trained to fight and terrorize their enemies. they often wore mutilated parts of the bodies of their enemies as ornaments, and their name is said to derive from this fact. Many of them wore belts made of human entrails and necklaces of human teeth. The *ruga-ruga* were encouraged to smoke Indian hemp to make them fearless and excitable. Their weapons were bows and arrows, spears, and muzzle-loading guns.<sup>33</sup>

### *Nyamwezi and Tutsi Ruling Castes*<sup>34</sup>

The term Nyamwezi applies to a variety of status groups which are found in Tanzania today, and in the past. Today, the term refers speakers of a language living in the Tabora area. In the nineteenth century, the term was also applied to low status occupational status group, including the porters who carried goods from the interior to Bagamoyo on the Indian Ocean coast on behalf of Arab traders. Also, nineteenth century explorer accounts of Rukwa describe these chiefs of the Pimbwe, Kimbu, and Konongo as being "Nyamwezi." Indeed, Bennett even notes that there was a Nyamwezi chief in what is now Katanga Region of the southern Congo.<sup>35</sup> Well-known chiefs in Rukwa identified as Nyamwezi included Mirambo of the Nyamwezi, Simba of the Konongo, Nyungu ya Mawe of the Kimbu, and Kasogera of the Pimbwe.<sup>36</sup>

The term Tutsi today refers to the traditional ruling castes of Burundi and Rwanda.<sup>37</sup> There was also a Tutsi ruling class among the Waha and Wahangaza of Tanzania.<sup>38</sup> And as Willis points out, the Tutsi chiefly caste in Fipa has an origin myth indicating that they migrated from the north from the area of what is now Rwanda/Tanzania/Uganda.<sup>39</sup> Each share cultural characteristics including a focus on cattle herding, chieftainship traditions, and royal regalia. As Willis notes, however, it is not clear whether this is the result of an actual migration from the north, or cultural diffusion.<sup>40</sup> For the purposes of this paper, though, this does not matter. The

point is that there is a chiefly caste in Rukwa that has putative origins in migration and symbolically identifies with other leadership castes ranging from Uganda, to the Fipa Plateau. The Tuutsi status groups of Rukwa monopolized the symbols of leadership before the nineteenth century.<sup>41</sup>

The chiefly castes of Rukwa—both the Nyamwezi and Tuutsi—controlled routes passing through their territories by the 1860s. This became more lucrative as the Arab-generated trade in ivory, guns, and cloth increased.<sup>42</sup> Control meant that chiefs and their *ruga-ruga* monopolized trading rights and demanded payments from the caravans in the form of guns, goods, and other supplies with which they could strengthen their own military position. Implicit to this ideal was the sale of the supplies that the caravans needed to feed and care for porters, slaves, and others. In this context, chiefly succession in Rukwa was negotiated in the context of alliances (and enmities) which spread across western Tanzania.<sup>43</sup>

#### *Arab Traders as a Status Group in Rukwa*

Zanzibari Arab traders were resident in the chiefly courts of the Fipa Plateau, Gongwe, and Simba at the time Europeans arrived in the 1850s-1870s.<sup>44</sup> They were involved with the practical governance of the area via the ruling chiefs. In many respects they served a function similar to that of merchant minorities such as Chinese in Southeast Asia, Lebanese in West Africa, or Jews in parts of Europe.<sup>45</sup> In this context, they often became the financiers and advisors to royal courts. For this reason perhaps, European explorers accustomed to observing the phenomenon elsewhere in the world, described the Arab courtiers as being "ministers" or "prime ministers" at the fortress at Karema, Simba's, and the Fipa Plateau. Whether this formally corresponds with such a modern bureaucratic category is improbable. After all, too often Arabs had their own *ruga-ruga* to guard the caravans. What is clear is that Arab traders by the nineteenth century established themselves as a separate status group with legitimated monopolies over various aspects of trade and governance in the area of Rukwa. Tambila regards the success of Arab newcomers as . proof of the fact that expanded trade opened possibilities to more people than established chiefs alone. But this access was also a source of instability because the rising class of merchant/hunter warlords with their *ruga-rugas* and hangers-on were potential power sources.<sup>46</sup>

#### *European White Fathers as a Status Group in Rukwa*

The Catholic "Order of Africa" (known as the "White Fathers" due to the color of their cassocks) established a mission station at Karema on the shore of Lake Tanganyika in 1885 after purchasing it from King Leopold's International African Association (IAA). The immediate goal of the White Fathers, many of whom were French, and all of whom were ritually initiated into a religious order, was to establish a mission station to spread the Christian gospel.

In the context of a dangerous world though, the mission station at Karema was far more than a church: it also provided a home for escaped and redeemed slaves, proselytisation, and the maintenance of a secure place for visiting Europeans. Necessarily, the priests fortified the station against military attack. Guns inherited from the departed IAA proved particularly useful for the White Fathers' "small military" when seeking compliance from nearby Bende villages,

whether it was for protecting territory, housing redeemed and escaped slaves, attacking uncooperative villagers, or mounting defenses against potential raiders.<sup>47</sup> The White Fathers found recruits for their "military" among the escaped slaves they sought to protect, refugees, and famine victims, as indeed the Nyamwezi chieftains in the region also did. In the process, the mission at Karema became a "state unto itself," and began to negotiate with neighbors in much the same fashion as the other chiefly figure in the region.<sup>48</sup> For example, when the White Fathers negotiated with Chief Msuulwa of Nkansi/Fipa, they were admitted to his court on "equal status with Arabs and other Muslims." Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the White Fathers turned the tables, though, and began demanding political homage from the leaders of the Fipa Plateau.<sup>49</sup>

In 1893, the German colonial military arrived, which enhanced the role of the White Fathers in Rukwa. Understaffed German authorities delegated many of the responsibilities for governance, most importantly that of judging crimes, to the French-speaking White Fathers. The White Fathers in turn used this authority to further their own goals for the elimination of witchcraft (especially trial by poison ordeal), proselytization, agricultural improvement, and the establishment of churches and schools.

As Smythe in particular points out, the White Fathers were the most consistent foreign presence in a remote region where the outside political powers changed frequently.<sup>50</sup> Between 1870 and 1970, political shifts included that of indigenous chiefs, to German military officers, British colonial officers, and finally the independent Tanzanian government. The presence of foreign White Fathers did not dissipate until the 1980s. While few European White Fathers remain today, the church they established remains strong and influential.

### **Pre-Colonial Rukwa: Ngoni Raiders, Arab Traders, and "Little Wars"**

The first Ngoni warriors invaded southern Tanzania in the late 1830s, setting the stage for an extremely violent nineteenth century. The Ngoni are typically described as having an origin in southern Africa. Using infantry techniques developed by Zulu warriors, they made their way into what is now Tanzania in the 1830s from bases in Malawi. As Koponen notes, though, presumably as with other marauders in nineteenth century Tanzania, the Ngoni (also called *Watuta*) were warriors who had origins in many places.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, Koponen believes that only a few hundred of the 16,000-20,000 invading Ngoni in the early nineteenth century actually originated in South Africa. As with *ruga-ruga*, most Ngoni were refugees, former slaves, conquered peoples, adventurers and others who had joined for any number of reasons as the invaders pushed northward.<sup>52</sup>

Using superior infantry formations, especially stabbing swords, the Ngoni entered Rukwa in the early 1840s, deposed the chiefs of the Fipa Plateau, and took the available cattle back to "Ungoni" to the south, probably Malawi.<sup>53</sup> The Ngoni invasion into Tanzania probably went as far north as Biharamulo near the southern shore of Lake Victoria over the next decade, but then receded. The Ngoni returned to Rukwa a second time in the 1850s; the English explorer Richard Burton passed through Tabora and northern Rukwa in 1858 and described the devastation such attacks left: "The route before us lay through a howling wilderness, once populous and fertile, but now laid waste by the fierce *Watuta* [Ngoni]."<sup>54</sup> Shorter makes the argument that the Ngoni

activity stimulated surviving Africans to organize more systematically a defensive and offensive military, perhaps giving birth to *ruga-ruga* traditions.<sup>55</sup> He further asserts that it was at this time that surviving chiefdoms began to re-organize themselves into pallisaded fortresses to protect themselves against further plunder.

The next intruders into the region were Zanzibari Arab traders who reached Unyanyembe/Tabora in Central Tanzania by the 1830s and Ujiji shortly thereafter in their search for slaves and ivory. The purpose and organization of the Arab traders created a fundamentally different status group; they were not interested in plunder, but in the protection, staffing, and provisioning of trading caravans which would walk from central Africa (today's Tanzania and Congo) to Zanzibar on the Indian Ocean Coast. Trade was focused by world demands for ivory and for slaves for plantations on the Indian Ocean littoral. Trade goods purchased included guns, beads (which Burton and Cameron described as being used as currency), and cloth.<sup>56</sup> Guns in particular re-oriented power relations.

Trading caravans in nineteenth century Africa were difficult and expensive to organize, because few areas were secure from raids by locals. Travel was by caravan which carried not only trade goods, but the arms and provisions needed to feed the porters, protect ivory, and prevent slaves from escaping.<sup>57</sup> Explorers paid tributary passage fees to chiefs who controlling stretches of the road. Two safe spots for the caravans were the fortified cities at Tabora/Kazeh, and Ujiji, which soon became notorious as slave depots during the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>58</sup>

Oral and written accounts indicate that by the 1850s, the chiefs of southern Rukwa, occasionally purchased slaves, traded foodstuffs to caravans, and most importantly, traded ivory for guns.<sup>59</sup> Arab traders settled in the region semi-permanently as hunters and traders, typically while acknowledging the sovereignty of a local chief. The good news for Rukwa was that there was no indication that peoples were systematically victimized by slave raiders in the manner that the Congo was; Zanzibari Arab presence in the region was instead focused on the trade in ivory, a function of the large elephant herds in the Rukwa Valley.<sup>60</sup>

#### *The "Little Wars" Shift Status Arrangements (1860-1898)*

Locals refer to the period between about 1860 and 1898—i.e. between the time of the Ngoni invasions, and the arrival of the German colonial army—as that of the "little wars" between chiefs. Shetler writing about the Serengeti where similar events occurred calls it the "Time of Disasters" when violence and famine dominated relationships, and a wilderness was created by human depopulation.<sup>61</sup> The accounts of locals as well as explorer journals from Rukwa reflect this view well. Richard Burton's 1858 travel journals focused on the violence he found in Rukwa, most of it stemming from the invasion of the Ngoni. Stanley's descriptions of Rukwa in 1870 also focused on the violence he observed. He also saw plentiful signs of buffalo, elephant, and rhinoceros, reflecting perhaps an abundance of forest abandoned by human horticulturalists terrorized during the previous decade.<sup>62</sup>

In response, fortified towns were built which served both defensive and offensive military purposes. These fortresses as is the case of horticultural empires elsewhere, were towns within walls which protected the power of the chief, including wealth in the form of ivory and foodstuffs. Privileged residents typically included the chief sorcerer, administrative chief, keeper

of the royal regalia, the chief's wives, and the dwellings of the *ruga-ruga*.<sup>63</sup> The queen mother typically also had an honored dwelling, reflecting a common division of authority in much of central Africa.<sup>64</sup> Typically such fortresses also had a dry moat, and a palisade of logs. At least one of the moats described by Shorter was apparently filled with sharpened poisoned stakes.<sup>65</sup>

Such fortresses were a place for loyal vassals to retreat in the event of attack. But they were also a place for powerful chiefs to consolidate power by providing a location to concentrate soldiers, protect foodstores, store ivory, and hold court. Isolation of the chief from the common people added to the mystery and majesty of the chiefly position, and were symbolic elements used to assert authority.<sup>66</sup>

During the "little wars" alliances emerged and enmities developed between local chiefs.<sup>67</sup> Venturing unprotected into the forest to hunt animals, tend crops, or establish homesteads put men at risk. The net result in Rukwa was the emergence of frontier areas in which human population was sparse due to the dangers from enemies. The most important of these areas was probably between the Pimbwe, Gongwe, and Konongo in what is now Katavi National Park. Each group recalls accounts of attacks by the other. Perhaps the most vivid was an account of how Chief Kasogera's mother was impaled on a post after being skinned alive by Gongwe hunters, presumably in the late nineteenth century.<sup>68</sup>

A type of fluid power developed in the context of chiefs, Arabs traders, European intruders, and little wars is illustrated well by a document created by the elephant hunter Swahili Matumula from the Indian Ocean coast, with a representative of King Leopold of the Belgians, at the inland compound owned by the Nyamwezi/Konongo chief Simba in 1877. The agreement is a transfer of sovereignty for Karema, a lakeport traditionally occupied by the Bende-speaking clans, but which became a slave depot for the Swahili from Kilwa, Matumula, a few years previously "by right of conquest." The agreement reveals a great deal about the status stratification between the locals of the region, who were only recently "conquered" by Matumula's *ruga-ruga*, the role of powerful Arab traders (most of whom are nameless in the explorers' writings), and the European representative of King Leopold of the Belgians. Most importantly it was negotiated in the presence of Simba, the patron of Matumula.<sup>69</sup> But also what is not written is significant. Mirambo, who also asserted sovereignty over the area if not by right of conquest, on the basis of his reputation for ferocity, is missing from the agreement:

I Matumula a native of Kilwa [on the Indian Ocean Coast], landowner by right of conquest for five years past of Karema Territory. I give to the Sultan of the Belgians and to his subjects, the part they will choose, on the said Territory belonging to me, where they may build and cultivate.

I deny myself and refuse to my successors the right to send them away in future or to molest them. If they are attacked I shall defend them by force of arms and if they give way we shall die together.

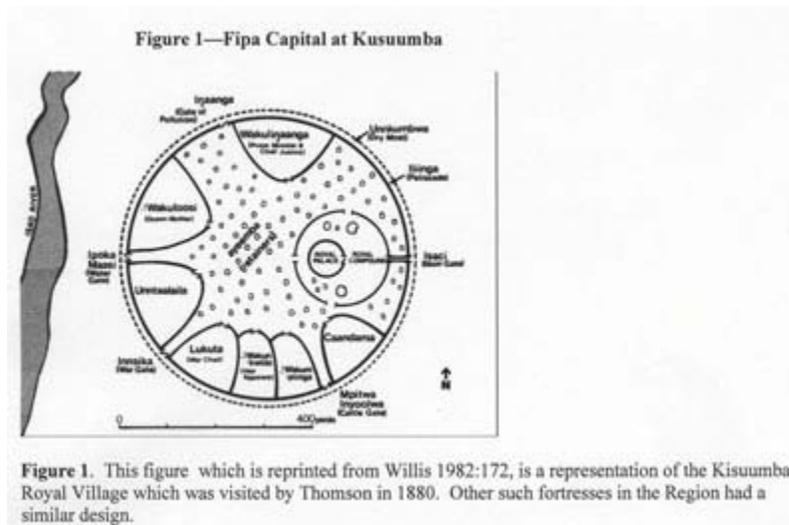
The Sultan of the Belgians [i.e. King Leopold] and his subject will have an absolute sovereignty over that part of the Territory given away, the boundary of which will extend one mile in radius around the spot on which they will build their first settlement.

This act has been drawn up in the presence of Matumula, Cambier, a subject of the sultan of Belgians, Alijmasi and Mournie, written at Simba's on Friday the Fifth day of Ramadhan in the year 1298 [1877 AD] of the Heijira.<sup>70</sup>

This agreement reflects a mix of European, Arab, and African concepts of sovereignty, as well as bureaucratic rule. The Belgian was Joseph Cambier who negotiated on behalf of King Leopold of the Belgians, who was establishing the private companies which would bring devastation to the Congo after the Berlin Treaty in 1884.<sup>71</sup> As for Matumula, he apparently considered himself a vassal of the Nyamwezi Simba, rather than the other Nyamwezi Chief Mirambo, who was an enemy of both.

### *The Fortresses of Late Nineteenth Century Rukwa*

Pallisaded fortresses, or "royal villages," dominated social organization in Rukwa and nearby areas during the nineteenth century (see cartographic essay). Such fortresses had dry moats, and wooden pallisades requiring the mobilization of large numbers of people to construct and maintain. In the case of the fortresses at both Pimbwe (in the Rukwa Valley) and Kisuumba (on the Fipa Plateau) (See Figure 1), they were apparently about four to five hundred meters across. The chief Simba's fortress to the north was, according to Thomson, larger, and the most impressive he saw in Africa. During the violent period when the maintenance of such fortresses focused social organization, the farming population clustered ever nearer, abandoning more distant fields as indefensible. When the power of the marauding brigands, chiefs, and others dissipated in the early twentieth century, the farming population retreated back into the more remote areas.<sup>72</sup>



The fortified villages themselves typically lasted only a few decades before either indigenous raiders, or campaigning outsiders breached the walls. Nevertheless the fortresses were particularly important in the nineteenth and early twentieth century as farming peoples dealt with the changes associated with the invasion of Ngoni from the south, and the arrival of the first Zanzibari-Arab trading caravans bringing ivory, slaves, cloth, and firearms after the 1830s and 1840s.

Cameron in 1873 described a fortress built by who he called "Kimbu refugees" as a strong stockade in which the gates closed and guns and spears protruding through the stockade by which it was surrounded. The huts were flat-roofed and built in the form of long parallelograms, the whole being surrounded by a heavy stockade with only two entrances. Over each of these was a sort of crow's nest, where the defenders of the gate took up their position and were furnished with a supply of large stones to be used on the attacking party.<sup>73</sup>

This demand for military-like organization and engineering required large work parties, which in turn required leadership rooted in a capacity to command obedience through dispatch of *ruga-ruga*, control of the rains, and spiritual life.

#### *Rukwa's Relations with Mirambo and Beyond*

As the diffusion of political traditions with roots in Rwanda, Burundi, and Tabora demonstrate, Rukwa was never isolated from outside influence. There are in fact cultural clines and political traditions stretching across central Africa. In the nineteenth century, the best known political force in the region was the chief Mirambo, scion of a Nyamwezi clan from west of Tabora. Mirambo commanded an army of *ruga-ruga* who between the 1860s and his death in 1884, operated in an area between Lakes Victoria and Tanganyika.<sup>74</sup> Mirambo did this by negotiating alliances against the Arab traders of Tabora, with the Europeans who arrived in the 1870s, and 1880s, as well as chiefs ranging from the Fipa Plateau to Mwanza.<sup>75</sup>

Mirambo of course was not the only chief seeking fortune in the context of *ruga-ruga*, aristocratic ruling castes, Arab traders, and European explorers, although for a short time he was perhaps the most successful at doing so. Others in Rukwa who maneuvered within this system included Nyamwezi personalities like Nyungu ya Mawe (in Kimbu) and Kasogera (in Pimbwe); various Tuutsi chiefs on the Fipa Plateau; the Arab merchant minority; European White Fathers; and King Leopold's IAA. Chiefs in Rukwa had at least indirect relations with groups in today's Congo, Zambia, Burundi, Central Tanzania, and ultimately the Indian Ocean World and Europe. Their feudalistic system—which also had elements of anarchy—was not eclipsed until the German colonialists asserted bureaucratic control in the early 1900s. In many ways, the system persisting today in Rukwa reflects this history.

#### *European Traders Arrive: the International Africa Association, the Lakeport of Karema, and the Rigidification of New Status Relations*

The first of the pallisaded forts Stanley encountered was the small "Konongo" fortress called Mrera which he wrote controlled three or four villages. There were nine bleached human skulls at the entrance to this encampment, the result of feuds Stanley wrote, between Konongo and Wazavira.<sup>76</sup> They were armed with muskets, presumably obtained from the coastal trade system.<sup>77</sup> The next day, though, Stanley remarks upon the desolation of the villages that they passed through. The chief "Simba" he wrote had desolated these villages, and the inhabitants fled, leaving gardens for Stanley's caravan to plunder.

Joseph Cambier of the IAA was the next journal-keeping European to arrive in Rukwa, in 1877. As with previous visitors, he observed more warfare, and pointed out that the Nyamwezi

Chief Mirambo was dispatching *ruga-ruga* to demand villages of Rukwa pay him tribute. Cambier proceeded to purchase the fortress at Karema from Matumula as described above, displeasing Mirambo who claimed the right to tributary payments from the region, despite its distance from Tabora. Bende homesteads outside Karema were attacked by Mirambo's *ruga-ruga*, raising anxiety within the IAA fortress.

It was in this violent context that King Leopold's IAA sent four Indian elephants to Karema for use in the Congo territories. Only one lonely elephant actually made it to Karema, and as a result, two Englishmen in Leopold's employ, Carter and Cadenhead, returned to the Indian Ocean Coast.<sup>78</sup> To avoid fighting between Mirambo and the Arabs around Tabora, they took a more southerly route through Kasogera's fortress at Pimbwe. Mirambo, allied with Simba, had in the meantime raided onto the Fipa Plateau, and swung back to attack the fortress at Maji Moto as well.

Allied with Mfundo, a former chief of Pimbwe/Maji Moto, Mirambo organized an attack on Kasogera's chiefly compound.<sup>79</sup> Kasogera in turn forced Carter, Cadenhead, and their armed caravan into the compound to assist in the defense of the fortress. But when the combined forces of Simba and Mirambo attacked, Kasogera's forces retreated. Only Carter and Cadenhead remained, and were killed by Simba/Mirambo's soldiers.<sup>80</sup>

#### *The Court at Fipa-Nkansi and the Arrival of Europeans*

The Fipa Plateau also experienced a period of wars in the 1870s and 1880s which created new alignments. The "kingdom" itself was split in two, Lyangalile and Nkansi, under the command of chiefs Kapuufi and Kimalaunga respectively. Kimalaunga became especially well-known for his capacity to deliver violence as he and his *ruga-ruga* sought a part of the ivory trade which emerged in the Rukwa Valley. He also apparently raided Lyangalile for cattle on a regular basis. In doing this, he displaced the nomadic Nyika, a group long in conflict with horticulturalists and pastoralists on the Fipa Plateau, and established alliances with groups of Nyamwezi.<sup>81</sup> According to the Nkansi chronicle as cited by Willis, in the early 1870s:

Kimalaunga set himself up as ruler of the Lyangalile part of Rukwa and the people declared themselves for him. Kapuufi sent for help to Kiyungi, king of the Nyamwezi [in Tabora]. The king [Kiyungi] sent many soldiers under a man called Mwaana Katwe. But this force was defeated by Kimalaunga and fled back home. Kapuufi then sent elephant tusks as a peace offering to Kimalaunga, but he responded by killing the bearers. Soon after this the Nyika rose against Kimalaunga and defeated him. The Nyika routed Kimalaunga again in great battle in which he brought Kwa, Kuulwe, Wanda, and Konongo to his aid, but without avail.<sup>82</sup>

As described above, the young English explorer Joseph Thomson arrived in Rukwa in 1880 during the maneuvering between the local chiefs including Simba (Konongo/Nyamwezi), Mirambo (Nyamwezi), Nyungu ya Mawe (Kimbu/Nyamwezi) Kasogera (Mpimbwe/Nyamwezi), Kapuufi (Fipa/Tuutsi), and Kimalaunga (Fipa/Independent). More so than earlier explorers, Thomson had an eye for ethnographic detail, leaving more complete descriptions of the fortresses as he maneuvered his expedition in the region. On the Fipa Plateau, he described the compound of chief Kapuufi. Thomson's approach to the chiefly

compound was negotiated by Arab intermediaries from Kapuufi's court at Kisuumba/Nkansi, who only invited him into the royal village after the caravan spent a cold night on the plain outside the village:

Early in the morning, after breakfast a royal messenger arrived, with the intelligence that his master was ready to give me an audience. Proceeding to the town, with my usual guard for state occasions, we passed a fine herd of cattle. Entering the town by the strongly fortified gate, we found ourselves a perfect labyrinth of inner bomas, or pallisaded quarters. Crossing over a variety of dunghills and filthy cesspools, which indicated that the cattle passed the night within the royal precincts, we reached Kapuufi's [sic] palace. It differed from the other *bomas* only in size.<sup>83</sup>

Thomson goes on to describe the women of Kapuufi's court who he reports were all "plump and fat," but he said showed no signs of idleness.<sup>84</sup> He observed the weaving of cloth (presumably from locally grown cotton), pounding of skins, and preparation of food.<sup>85</sup> Willis emphasizes that the people of the Fipa Plateau at that time were prosperous, and able to support large herds of cattle—which of course was what attracted Kimalauunga's raiders in the first place.

Thomson then visited the Gongwe "village" in the Rukwa valley a few days later. At the time that he visited in May 1880, he reported that Gongwe was an independent village, and owed feudal tribute only to the Arab governor of Unyanyembe (Tabora) not the neighboring chiefs like Kasogera, Kapuufi, or for that matter any of the "Nyamwezi" chiefs in the area like Nyungu ya Mawe, Simba, or Mirambo. Thomson using a variety of status-based terms described the population as being a mixed one of Wangwana (free men), Wapimbwe, Wakhonongo, and Wanyamwezi, rather than as an independent chiefdom.<sup>86</sup>

But most impressive to Thomson was Simba's town where he arrived a few days later. He described it as covering an area that was three-quarters of a square mile, and had large squares created by the construction of houses which had their doors facing inwards. Inside and outside the squares were "ordinary native houses."<sup>87</sup>

Simba personally met Thomson. This is the only written description that is left of this important leader, although it is apparent that he did occasionally meet with other Europeans like Cambier. Thomson was particularly impressed with the low quality of Simba's dress, and the fact that he moved within his village with a certain level of anonymity. Simba told Thomson that he was a classificatory brother of the Nyamwezi chieftains Mnywa Sele (Nyamwezi Governor of Tabora), and the Kimbu chief Nyungu ya Mawe (Kimbu/Nyamwezi).<sup>88</sup>

Irrespective of Simba's power, by 1880 Mirambo sought to re-establish influence in Rukwa; indeed, this was not to be the end of Mirambo's depredations. Using the Carter and Cadenhead affair as a pretense to turn the tables on his erstwhile ally Simba, Mirambo infiltrated soldiers posing as refugees into Simba's village. These soldiers in turn opened a breach in the wall, which was used to sack the compound.<sup>89</sup> And so the town Thomson only a few months earlier described as "the largest I have seen in Africa" became a forgotten ruin, known not even to the local historians I queried in 2004.

Simba disappears from European accounts after 1880, and Nyungu ya Mawe and Mirambo died in 1884. The point of this is to emphasize that Rukwa bled severely since at least the time the Ngoni first arrived in the 1840s until the 1880s. The violence was intensified by the fact that

no one group, leader, clan, tribe, or status group dominated politically or militarily. Rather, every putative chief sought political advantage by commanding followers who risked annihilation in their violent world, be they African, Arab, or European. In this respect, the weak European mission and trading settlements of about 1890 were not that different than the traders like Matumula (the elephant hunter), or other chiefs like Mirambo, Simba, Kasogera, Nyungu ya Mawe, or Kapuufi, all of whom sought some level of hegemony using violence. There was no peace for decades, as each sought advantage from inside walled-villages. Nor was there an easy peace for the intruders; every mission, hunting camp, explorer station, or trading post was built with an eye to military advantage. This was a logical response in a chaotic world in which refugees, freed slaves, and *ruga-ruga* bands were all common.<sup>90</sup>

### **Pax Germanica, Pax Brittanica, and Pax Tanzanica in a Remote Corner of the World**

#### *The Imposition of German Rule*

It was in the context of the ongoing "little wars" that the German Empire first arrived in Rukwa in 1893 as a military force. In remote Rukwa, colonial hegemony meant acknowledgement of German sovereignty by accepting flags, payment of in-kind taxes to the German military government, providing soldiers to the new power, and for the chiefs, wearing German uniforms. In short, from the perspective of the subsistence farmer paying tribute, relationships to the new German power was similar to what had happened in Rukwa under the various marauding chiefs.

Demonstrations of brutality were also part of the German strategy. In Rukwa, the Germans attacked the weaker points, especially the unfortified Bende in their scattered villages, who typically responded by abandoning fields, and retreating into the forest.<sup>91</sup> Sakalilo Village, the fortress of the renegade Chief Kimalaunga near the shores of Lake Rukwa, was destroyed by German troops armed with Maxim guns and cannon in 1893.<sup>92</sup> Exhausted by their own fighting, and in awe of German firepower, the more powerful chiefs grudgingly gave in to the imposition of German rule. Chiefs of Fipa Plateau, Pimbwe and elsewhere, offered fealty to the representatives of the German emperor, provided labor to build roads, sent soldiers, and submitted serious disputes to German arbitration. Those who did not do so, were subject to whipping, fines, imprisonment, and execution.<sup>93</sup> For example, Kimalaunga who had terrorized the Fipa Plateau for a decade or more during the "little wars," and was widely believed to have super-natural powers, was finally imprisoned by the Germans, and then shot dead while "trying to escape" in 1899. The Germans tried to use his death to symbolic advantage:

He was [then] removed from his chains and his head cut off. The next morning the Wafipa were called to bury the body but they refused, expecting to see the body at any moment turn into a lion and attack them. The other prisoners were then made, much against their will, to dig a grave and bury the corpse.<sup>94</sup>

A second chief on the Fipa Plateau, Yuulamaasi of Lyangalile was also arrested by the Germans for stealing cattle, but was simply fined and released. He too died shortly thereafter, however, and was succeeded by Kuundawanantu, who after a few years of cooperation with the Germans fled to the bush to resist and to re-establish the traditional rights of chiefs. The

Germans responded by holding his family members hostage, and mounting an aggressive search. After fleeing northward, Kuundawanantu surrendered, two to three months later. The Germans, after ordering the attendance of all chiefs from the Fipa Plateau, publicly hanged him. Willis considers this to be the actual end of any independent states on the Fipa Plateau.<sup>95</sup> German power was harsh and brutal, but its ubiquity also freed the people of the incessant warfare between the chiefly castes.

For the historian, the arrival of the Germans introduced the advantage—or perhaps crutch—of written records. Nevertheless, examining the nature of the conflicts emerging between the traditional rulers, the occupying Germans, and after 1916 the British, provides insight into what happened and how African leaders responded. Shorter writes particularly effectively about how active the German and British used their power to pick chiefs of the Kimbu in neighboring Mbeya.<sup>96</sup> The same happened across Rukwa as lineage-focused British administrators sought rulers who were both legitimate and compliant, and who could rule their "tribes."<sup>97</sup>

In the slow assertion of control, the Bende clans provided the greatest challenge. They were victims (successively) of armies raised by Simba, Mirambo, Fipa, White Fathers, and Germans. The Bende clans never responded by creating their own fortresses, however, but rather by retreating further into the bush, and with non-cooperation. This confounded the British who, thirty years after the arrival of German colonial power, still found it difficult to collect taxes from the Bende clans.<sup>98</sup>

Perhaps illustrative of difficulties in political incorporation are the clashes three Pimbwe leaders, Kalulu, Ngomayarufu, and Nsokolo had with the European colonialists over boundaries and ritual rights between about 1900 and 1940. Each resisted and cooperated with the Germans or British in attempts to maintain their own chiefly authority. But, their story illustrates how the chiefs' political power dissipated between about 1900 and the 1940s.

### *The Decline of the Pimbwe Chiefs in the Early Twentieth Century*

The pallsided fortress of the Pimbwe was built around a hot spring known today by the Swahili name "Maji Moto." Pimbwe tradition traces the origin of the settlement using a king-list that has approximately 23 chiefs.<sup>99</sup> Kalulu of Pimbwe, a young boy, became chief at the cusp of the German intrusion, probably in the early 1890s.<sup>100</sup> Succession though was handled as a regional affair requiring the approval of the Tuutsi chief at Nkansi on the Fipa Plateau. The Tuutsi chief in turn referred the case to the newly arrived Germans at Bismarckburg. As the scion of an older branch (Mfundo) of the Pimbwe royal family that pre-dated the Nyamwezi Kasogera, Kalulu was awarded the formal chiefship over another claimant, Kasogera's grandson Ngomayarufu. So while Kalulu prevailed at the hearing, the Germans also ordered the Chief of Nkansi to divide the country between the two claimants.<sup>101</sup> Ngomayarufu objected to this and was sentenced to two months imprisonment, and his claim to the throne discarded, at least temporarily.

Kalulu quickly became well-known for his aggressiveness towards the colonial powers, and used his command of *ruga-ruga* and trade routes to assert authority. Nevertheless, his fortunes were reduced "some years later" (presumably in the late 1890s) when he refused a

German requisition of soldiers for a punitive expedition against the Bende to the north. Ngomayarufu complied with the request, and was rewarded by the Germans with the assignment of ten villages slightly to the east of Kalulu, probably about 1900.<sup>102</sup>

As for Kalulu he was subsequently arrested after . he was told by a witchdoctor named Mwana Kalembe that he must never shave his head without rubbing it over first with a human heart. Kalulu sent out two of his *ruga-ruga* who killed Wamikamba (Jumbe of Mikamba) and then cut out his heart. Word of this reached Kasanga [Bismarburg]. Kalulu was arrested, sentenced to a long term of imprisonment and to fifty lashes in two installments of twenty-five. The *ruga-ruga* were beaten. After his release Kalulu returned to Pimbwe, and only left when the White Fathers established a mission there.<sup>103</sup>

Other records indicate that the White Fathers established their mission at Pimbwe/Maji Moto in 1907, which is the first datable event since the departure of Thomson in 1880. The White Fathers built their mission station inside the Pimbwe/Maji Moto village walls, but soon had a falling out with Kalulu after a sacred stone was destroyed, a grove of trees around the royal graves was cut down, and the villagers restricted from using the hot spring. As a result

Kalulu took objection to the presence of the mission and gave it out that he would cause the spring to dry up. (The Mission admits this and says Kalulu was ordered by the Germans to move to a village four hours away). Kalulu had certain rites carried out by the witch-doctor Mwana Kalembe. The following year (1910) there was an earthquake and the spring dried up. Kalulu said he would return when the mission had left, which they were soon forced to do. Two years later there was another earthquake, the spring was re-opened and Kalulu returned to [P]imbwe [where he reasserted control of the villages to the east of Ngomayarufu].<sup>104</sup>

The British occupied German Bismarburg on the shore of Lake Tanganyika in 1916 during World War I, which included Pimbwe/Maji Moto in its jurisdiction. Ever the schemer, Ngomayarufu requested permission from the British to build a new village. Kalulu quickly reported the fact that the new village was in his territory, and the British promised to send "the bwana" to investigate the claim.<sup>105</sup> The District Officer did not arrive, and Kalulu responded by ordering the new village burned. In response, the British deposed Kalulu, fined him, deported him from the area, and installed a more compliant Ngomayarufu as chief of the entire country. Ngomayarufu subsequently died in 1923, precipitating yet another succession crisis by a young alcoholic "half-wit" Zunda, who was reportedly addicted to marijuana (*bhang*). Zunda displeased the British, who received repeated complaints from the villagers about his drinking and other "immoral habits." The British were relieved then when he suddenly died in 1928; it was rumored that his death was by poisoning.<sup>106</sup>

As for the palisaded fortresses, the last were abandoned in 1927 under British programs to re-settle villagers into sleeping sickness settlements.<sup>107</sup> By this time, the pretense to chiefly rule dissipated further as the British staffed their district offices with European colonial officers. While chiefs were still occasionally borne on palanquins by courtiers, more and more they became creatures of British rule, subservient to the District Officers sitting in distant District headquarters. A final Pimbwe revolt of sorts occurred in 1944 when Chief Nsokolo, his court officers, and *ruga-ruga* prepared a stew using a sacrificed boy mixed with sheep meat, which in turn was fed to the villagers at a feast. Human sacrifice had long been assumed to be a

common means for the Pimbwe royal lineage to gain mystical power, and Nsokolo and his sorcerer felt that this was an appropriate way to regain power they felt was slipping away. Villagers weary of such behavior, reported the incident to the British District Commissioner, who arrested Nsokolo and his court. They were then transferred to the jail in Kasanga, and eventually sent to Tabora to be tried and hung.<sup>108</sup> At least in 2001 and 2004 when I conducted interviews, the villagers remembered the execution with a great deal of approval—the rule of ancient chiefs was viewed as part of a cruel past and was little lamented.<sup>109</sup>

*The Twentieth Century Demise of the Chieflly Rule, and Chieflly Caste*

Marking the demise of an old phenomenon like the construction of pallsided fortresses, chiefly rule, and chiefly caste is inherently difficult. Nevertheless, the archival and oral records provide some indication of how this happened in Rukwa.

The "little wars" which apparently began in the context of first Ngoni raids, and the penetration of Arab traders, probably ended in the 1890s in the context of declining ivory trade caused by the depletion of elephant, declining human populations as a result of famine, violence, and disease, and the establishment of the German military station at Bismarckburg. Most importantly, the alliance of German military and French White Fathers produced a level of political stability rooted in their capacity to assert what Max Weber calls the monopoly over the legitimated use of violence in a particular territory. Violent though this monopoly was, the rapid destruction of villages and execution of dissident chiefs, whether in Rukwa, or in more distant Iringa, during the Maji Maji rebellion (1904-1906), precipitated acquiescence of chiefs to German sovereignty. At least in the general picture, *ruga-ruga* were controlled.<sup>110</sup>

This "stability" of course eventually evolved into domination from British centers of power after they acquired sovereignty in Tanganyika in 1920. But, not until 1927 did the British have enough authority that they could order the concentration of the population of the Rukwa Valley into new village sites under policies emphasizing public health (especially sleeping sickness control), road construction, agricultural production, and wildlife conservation. Conservation became particularly important in Rukwa as an emerging system of parks and reserves in which wildlife and forests were established, and farming excluded.<sup>111</sup> As for the remaining Gongwe, whose traditional settlements were located in the heart of the new conservation area, they were dispossessed of their rights to conduct court trials by the British, and dispersed. The Pimbwe court was moved away from the fortress at Maji Moto, where it was dominated by the exiled Kalulu's followers, to Usevia where the successors of Ngomayarufu, including Nsokolo, taxed, collected, and judged on behalf of the British authorities. The remaining chiefly courts of the Fipa Plateau meanwhile followed the British to the administrative capital of Sumbawanga, abandoning the chief Kapuufi's fortress-village that Thomson described at Kisumba-Nkansi. Pallsided villages were no longer protected from bush fires, and the remnants of the walls and gates were destroyed by fire and the elements. When Aylward Shorter surveyed Kimbu for such sites in the 1960s, all that generally remained were the remnants of ditches.<sup>112</sup> Only in one place did he find a structure which, it was claimed, was the remnants of a gate.

The symbols of powerful independent chieftainships such as the *ruga-ruga*, right to conduct trials, installation ceremonies, etc., of course continued for some time after the disappearance of actual local rule. But the symbols were just that—symbolic in the context of a more powerful British colonial government. If there was any pretense of independent royal prerogative in the region, this ended with the hanging Chief Nsokolo and his courtiers in 1944. In turn, bureaucratic control was consolidated by the British, and passed to an independent Tanganyika in 1961. Chiefs at that time were given the option of cooperating with the new government, or confining themselves to ritual activity. While a few like Chief Nsalamba of the Konongo were elected to the first Parliament of independent Tanganyika, this in fact provided only a minor token of the local ritual authority their grandfathers previously had.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Rukwa is still remote from the bustling markets of the Indian Ocean world and the services offered by the central government.<sup>113</sup> Farmers are still by and large embedded in a subsistence lifestyle in which they grow what they eat, build their own houses, and have large numbers of children. Only minor vestiges of *ruga-ruga* and chiefly rule remain. So while lives focused by subsistence agriculture are similar, Rukwa is notably more peaceful than during the nineteenth century when every petty chief maintained *ruga-ruga*, epidemic disease stalked the land, and the human population declined as a result. Instead, since about 1950, the population has expanded rapidly, pushing farmers back into areas abandoned by fearful villagers in the nineteenth century. Just how peaceful the area has become is highlighted by Willis' 1989 article "The Peace Puzzle" about the twentieth century Fipa Plateau.<sup>114</sup> As he notes, the Fipa became a society with exemplary traditions of dispute resolution, despite the violence of the nineteenth century. In the context of a social order—externally imposed though it may be—norms for the peaceful resolution of disputes emerged among a people who only decades before were viciously attacked by neighbors and mounted raids of their own.

The enforcement of the peace by the state has created its own paradox, though. Peace means that human farming populations can expand back into the forest abandoned by their fearful ancestors. In the meantime, however, the forests took on a new value to the independent government in Dar Es Salaam—as game parks which have value not only locally, but in the global marketplace where conservation is a potential source of revenue for a cash-strapped government.<sup>115</sup> In this context, fear of arrest for poaching or farming restricts access to fertile lands, even in times of famine.<sup>116</sup> So in twenty-first century Rukwa, a population which could not occupy forest fringes due to the ecology of fear in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, now cannot do so because the powerful national government which guarantees the peace also conserves the forests.

Just how tenuous this arrangement is can be seen by the resurgence of vigilante movements in Tanzania during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Called *sungu sungu*, in Rukwa (and elsewhere), such self-help justice organizations reflect the weaknesses that government institutions have in such areas, particularly in terms of policing. Such village justice systems, contain elements of "trials by ordeal" and emerge out of the desire for order in a society threatened by anarchy.<sup>117</sup> *Sungu sungu* share the same emphasis on internal solidarity, secret ritual, and righteousness that chiefs in nineteenth century Rukwa exploited. Fortunately, in modern Tanzania the state is not so weak that such freelance militia can terrorize as widely

today as they did in nineteenth century Rukwa, or for that matter in twenty-first century eastern Congo. But *sungu sungu* still raise the ugly possibility of the anarchy of the nineteenth century.

### **A Contingent History of Twenty-First Century Western Tanzania**

A point of this article is to expand the historical understandings of western Tanzania beyond traditional tribal, political, and military histories which have been the focus of a number of excellent tribe-specific ethnographies such as those of Shorter (1972), Willis (1981), Tambila (1981), and Smythe (2006). In doing this, the article has emphasized the status based relationships which structured the extraordinary violence, the ecological context, and the social psychology of fear in a rapidly changing society. It did so in the context of dominant leadership status groups which crossed tribal boundaries. Such a context made it possible for the Swahili Matumura's right to sell "the country" of Karema to the Belgians in 1877, and later the important role that White Fathers played in the political governance of late nineteenth century Rukwa. These roles emerged in the context of cross-cutting leadership traditions, not tribe-specific ideologies.

Nineteenth century social change in Rukwa occurred in the context of pre-existing traditions of leadership, military activity, and tributary relationships. What was observed was that in each of the more densely populated areas, traditions of chieftainship through the rule of putative outsiders emerged. This created a social space for population movements as new status groups became more salient, including those of a merchant minority, soldiers, missionaries, peasants, and even refugees. In the absence of any central power, outsiders, whether African, Arab, or European, asserted the trappings of the independent leadership caste by creating fortresses, controlling weapons, collecting tribute, protecting followers, attacking enemies, and controlling trade. From this position they entered into negotiations with established chiefs. None though imposed a *tabula rasa* on the societies that they eventually dominated.

Underlying this was an implied fear, whether of neighbors, Ngoni, European, or long distance raiders. This "ecology of fear" is of course common among farming societies such as those in nineteenth century Tanzania and elsewhere who, as LeBlanc wrote, lived with a constant threat of attack from the morning raid, picking off a person who leaves the village, or inviting enemies to a feast where they are simply slaughtered.<sup>118</sup> In the historical record of Rukwa, such violence was common, and frequent. Stealth and trickery were routine, including Simba's mistake of admitting putative refugees to his compound in 1880, Mirambo's shifting alliances, White Father raids on the Bende, the impalement of Kasogera's mother, the German sacking of Kimalauunga's capital Sakalilo, and Nsokolo's bizarre cannibalistic feast of 1944. The evidence of routine violence is evident in what early explorers like Burton, Stanley, and Livingstone observed in abandoned villages, and especially skulls on pikes. As much as traditional geographical constraints like weather on settlement patterns, this fear provided the parameters in which nineteenth and early twentieth century history unfolded.

If there was an organizing tradition to political leadership in the pre-colonial Rukwa, it was found in caste-like leadership status categories, rather than traditional tribal units rigidified by the British. The leadership complex across the region was often composed of putative

outsiders—be they Tuutsi, Nyamwezi, Arab, or European. Control of local population was also through a separate subordinated status groups of young people, be they called royal pages, *ruga-ruga*, Nyamwezi porters, slaves, converts, or freed slaves. Common peasants were at constant risk of attack and needed the promise of refuge in one of the well-defended fortresses; undoubtedly their "ethnic" or "tribal" loyalties shifted accordingly. For this reason it is more appropriate to think of their status as being a peasant, who because of their social status, risked becoming a refugee, slave, or Catholic convert, rather than a Fipa, Pimbwe, Gongwe, or Bende. The social system of Rukwa was ultimately rooted in a need to protect crops, land, and livestock. This meant peasants were faced with what Chirot described as "the terrible dilemma" between individual freedom and security.<sup>119</sup> In the case of Rukwa this "ecology of fear" patterned human interaction in a way that determined the limits of social activity, as surely as rainfall and crop selection do.<sup>120</sup>

Much can be surmised about what the introduction of nineteenth century trade meant for the ecology of the Rukwa region in the twenty-first century. The introduction of the ivory and gun trade made possible—necessary—the maintenance of pallsided fortresses in the more heavily populated areas. The increasing supply of meat brought about by guns may well have led to a demographic expansion in the mid-nineteenth century. There was a nastier side, however, that of the emergence of the military rivalries in which predatory groups flourished. But this success in terms of population growth, even in the absence of slave raiding, was short-lived, probably only a matter of decades. What is more, the elimination of horticultural humans and probably elephants in the late nineteenth century led to the re-expansion of the forest fringe. It also may well have led to the expansion of the large herds of animals, particularly cape buffalo, now found in the Rukwa River Valley. An open question for further investigation is what key species were in the region in the past? Has Katavi National Park always been dominated by buffalo, or is this domination a by-product of the ecology of fear of the nineteenth century?

### **Cartographic Essay<sup>121</sup>**

The five cartographic representations reflect political and social changes that occurred in Rukwa Region between about 1880 and 2000.

Map 1 is of German East Africa and reflects political boundaries, settlements, and the caravan routes which were of relevance to Rukwa in about 1912. The central railway from Dar Es Salaam to Kigoma was under construction by the German colonial power at that time.



Map 2 reflects the approximate boundaries of the different chiefdoms/linguistic groups present about 1880. As described in the text, Ujiji and Tabora were Arab trade depots. The station at Gongwe paid tribute directly to Tabora. Karema was a station of the Belgian International African Association, Simba was a Nyamwezi chief with hegemony over what is now considered the Konongo area, and there were two Fipa chiefdoms (Lyangalile and Nkansi). The Nyamwezi area to the north was dominated by Chief Mirambo, while the Kimbu area was dominated by the Nyamwezi Chief Nyungu ya Mawe. Sakalilo was the fortification of the Fipa Chief Kimalaunga. The Bende area was occupied by dispersed clans who spoke Bende dialects.



Map 3 reflects activity in the region in 1904-1905, and is in part based on the first systematic cartography done in Rukwa.<sup>122</sup> The German established the region as the military district of Bismarckburg, with headquarters at Kasanga/Bismarckburg on the shore of Lake Tanganyika. Lake Rukwa was inexplicably beginning to dry up, and the human population was probably

declining rapidly as a result of disease, famine, and violence. The Germans and the Fipa court established the town of Sumbawanga which in turn was to become the population center for Rukwa Region. Uruwira and Karema were two of several Catholic Mission stations maintained by the White Fathers.



Map 4 reflects Rukwa Region in 1930-1948 when the British reorganized their new colonial possession. Rukwa was part of the Western Region of Tanganyika Territory, with headquarters in Tabora. Sumbawanga became the population center, and a network of gravel roads was established. Pimbwe/Maji Moto was abandoned in 1927, and the Pimbwe court moved to Usevia. Gongwe was dispersed at the same time. In the late 1940s, a railway spur to the new town of Mpanda was established in order to take advantage of the gold mine established there. Lake Rukwa's levels had risen since 1905.



Map 5 is a representation of Rukwa Region in approximately 2000. Three areas were established as either a Game Reserve (Ugalla) or National Parks (Katavi and Mahale Mountains). In these areas, settlement was prohibited by the central government. The population centers were in Sumbawanga, Namanyere, and Mpanda. Maji Moto village was re-established on the old site of Pimbwe. Two new major population concentrations established in Rukwa were the Burundian refugee settlements established at Katumba and Mishamo in 1973 and 1978 respectively. The road networks (not shown) reflected this organization.



## Notes

1. Illife 1979:8.
2. Illife 1979:40.
3. For example, Shettler (2007) describes similar nineteenth century violence and abandonment in what is now Serengeti National Park.
4. Weber 1946:305-306.
5. Ibid.
6. In Tanzania, distinctions were in turn maintained through rituals symbolized, as Iliffe (1979:38) describes, by symbols of authority such as horns, drums, chiefly regalia, royal retinues, and in some places umbrellas (see also Shorter1972:101 for a description of the royal regalia of the Kimbu).
7. Such an approach could also perhaps be used with Uganda.Reid (2002) uses the term "class" to describe pre-colonial status distinctions. However, as Weber (1946:146-147) points out, the term "class" presupposes the presence of a market economy, while "status group" does not.
8. Weber explicitly refers to the dispossessed as a negatively privileged status group, albeit one marked by a lack of privileges.See Weber 1946:190-191

9. Rukwa Region as a political sub-division of modern Tanzania is a late twentieth century appellation. Earlier in the twentieth century the region was made up of the political sub-divisions of what was earlier Bismarckburg and Ujiji (German times until 1916), Western/Tabora Region of British Tanganyika, Mbeya, Kigoma, and Tabora Regions (British Tanganyika), etc. Rukwa Region as an administrative region of independent Tanzania was not gazetted until the early 1970s with a Regional headquarters at Sumbawanga.
10. Writing this paper has forced me to choose terms for royalty. In the literature, the word "king" is often applied to larger polities, and "chief" to smaller ones. However, usage is in fact inconsistent and in many respects creates artificial distinctions between polities which are more similar than different. In this paper, I have opted to use the word "chief" as a rough translation of the Swahili words "*mtemi*" (which is related to the verb "to cut") and "*mwene*," a term specific to interior chiefs in a number of polities of the Great Lakes Region which may or may not use Swahili. All of the polities discussed here interacted directly or indirectly, and the fortunes of particular chiefs and polities fluctuated quickly—a polity which was small one decade could become large the next, and vice versa.
11. Chirot 1994:128.
12. See Schoennbrunn 2006 for a discussion of violence and vulnerability in East Africa before 1800 CE.
13. In 1939, lake levels returned to historical levels (see Kjekshus 1977:77 and Dean 1967:45).
14. Willis 1979:30-31.
15. Paciotti and Borgerhoff Mulder 2004.
16. see Koponen 1994:586-587.
17. The place name Pimbwe in Tanzanian common usage is known as Mpimbwe, and the people of the area are the Wapimbwe. In this paper, I have chosen to use the term "Pimbwe" throughout. For Rungwa, see Willis 1981, and Walsh and Swilla 2001:279.
18. According to Pimbwe sources, the chief of the Pimbwe married a Ukonongo woman from a specific clan. The throne passed to a son of this woman. (Interviews with Daniel Kasike and Chief Nsalamba, July 2004).
19. Sources: Kibaoni Interviews 2001, Abe personal communication, and interviews with Mtemi Beda July 2001, and Gongwe elders July 2001.
20. Bende, Tongwe, and Holoholo are all considered variations of Bende languages. Tongwe is still used for villages near Kigoma on the shore of Lake Tanganyika. Holoholo is considered to be an archaic term, although it is used in British colonial records to describe particular villages in the northern part of Mpanda District, and southern part of Kigoma. A Bende Dictionary was recently published (Abe 2006).
21. Tambila 1981.
22. Interviews with Chief Beda, July 2001.
23. See Lamb 1929.
24. See Moisel 1905.
25. Interviews with Gongwe elders in Sitalike Village, July 21, 2001, and trip to Gongwe village site, July 24, 2001.

26. The chief list for the Gongwe as described to me in July 2001 is as follows: Before the arrival of the Arabs (about 1850): Kongwe, Miombe, Vibe, Sishambuka. After the Arab times: Shambwe, Tende I, Sunga I, Kakamba, Sigulu (about 1900), Lukandamila, Tende II, Sunga II, and Kakamba II (Tende Sigulu). Sunga II died about 1999, and the Gongwe were given permission to bury him in the traditional royal graveyard, which is now inside Katavi National Park. Kakamba II (Tende Sigulu) in 2001 lived in Mpanda where he was active in local town politics. Source: Interview with Kakamba II (Tende Sigulu) in July 2001.
27. However, as Benedict Anderson (1991) pointed out, they are also the imaginings of a European belief system that equated territory, mother tongue, and political leaders as being congruous and redundant distinctions. This may have been a convenient short-cut for Europeans dividing up the Ottoman, Russian, Austrian-Hungarian, and German Empires after World War I. But the assumption that territory, mother tongue, and political identity are inherently related is not necessarily good social science when assessing the rule of organizing society in Europe or Africa.
28. Smythe (2006:15, 152) describes "*ruga-ruga*" as being a word that Europeans used it to describe the "King's" soldiers. What is clear, is that the capacity to draft and command *ruga-ruga* was key to the power of anyone who wanted to participate in nineteenth century trade. Those who did not command such a military force were unable to protect trade stores. In contemporary twenty-first century terms, the *ruga-ruga* were child soldiers. Meaning they were boys taken at a young age from their parents, and raised to have primary loyalty to their *ruga-ruga* brothers, and their commander. Such young men, raised by their brother *ruga-ruga*, were lethal tools in the hand of a charismatic leader.
29. Tambila 1981:59.
30. Willis (1981:45-48) also discusses older aristocratic statuses, such as the Twa who ruled Ufipa in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.
31. See Shorter 1972:276-279 and 1969:11.
32. A Catholic missionary establishing a station in the Fipa highlands in 1911 claimed that villagers were attracted to the station not out of commitment to the Catholic faith, but because close association with the missionaries made it much less likely that the king's soldiers would take their goats (see Smythe 2006:15).
33. Shorter 1972:59.
34. The term "caste" is used specifically here to describe groups whose ideals assumed a superior ranking, and excluded marriage with groups regarded as inferior (see Weber 1946). The term is used here even though the discussion is not of India. Nevertheless, as Weber notes, while the phenomenon is strongest in India, the term can be used to describe similar social phenomena elsewhere.
35. Bennett 1971:28; kin charts typically identify each of these chiefs as having their origins in one clan of Nyamwezi (Nyayembe) who had their traditional home in Unyayembe (Shorter 1969:9).
36. See e.g. Shorter 1969:7-11, and Bennett 1971:33-36.
37. The term "caste" of course comes from India, and has long been used in sociology and anthropology to describe endogamous status groups which have occupational

monopolies within a system of social stratification. Weber (1946) explicitly used this word to describe this system in both India and Europe. Despite the dated nature of the word, I think that it is still the best word to describe the relationships between leadership groups in nineteenth century Rukwa, and the masses of horticultural peasants.

38. Waters 1995.
39. Willis 1981:29-32; the Nyamwezi of Tabora also had relations with the Tutsi who lived on the Malagarasi Plains herding cattle (Bennett 1971:5).
40. Willis 1981:34.
41. It was probably in this context that the Tutsi King Kapere of Ufipa married the Tutsi Queen Theresa of the Waha (Kigoma Region) in the 1950s. For a more complete discussion of the term Tutsi, see Waters 1996. Bennett writes that the Nyamwezi also had relationships with Tutsi living in the Malagarasi Plains as cattle herders in the nineteenth century. As with the term "Nyamwezi", the term various forms of the word "Tutsi" have many meanings across central Africa. Lemarchand (1993) elaborates this in his description of Burundian caste relations. Waters (1995 and 2003) discusses how the term "Tutsi" was used in a variety of circumstances, including in western Tanzania, in Burundi, Tanzanian refugee camps for Rwandans in the 1980s, and urban Burundian refugees in Dar es Salaam in the 1990s.
42. Tambila 1981:82.
43. Besides control of trade routes, chieftainship in Rukwa included a capacity to try miscreants accused of witchcraft and other crimes by poison ordeal which involved taking a poison—if the miscreant vomited, he was assumed to be innocent, and if he died, he was assumed to be guilty. An alternative to this was to place the fruit of the *umwaafitree* in a pot of boiling water. If the accused was able to retrieve the fruit without burning his hand, he was innocent. If the hand was burned, he was guilty (Willis 1966:21).
44. Iliffe (1979:41) indicates that the Arab traders may have penetrated as far as Ukimbu by the 1825. They were present as an independent community under the protection of the Buganda King (Uganda) in the 1870s (Reid 2002:27-28).
45. See Hamilton and Waters 1996, Weber 1946, Schuetz 1944.
46. Tambila 1981:87.
47. Smythe 2006:5, Tambila 1981:96-98, 100-102.
48. Smythe 2006:6.
49. See Smythe 2006:5-7.
50. Smythe 2006:1.
51. Koponen 1988:77.
52. See also Burton 1858:75-77
53. Willis 1981:78-81.
54. Burton 1861:34.
55. Willis 1981:80, Shorter 1972:276.
56. A number of the blue beads described by Burton (1858:398) were recovered from an archaeological excavation in Kibaoni Village at the northern end of the Rukwa Valley in

2004. The excavation was done inside a small fortress which had been occupied in the nineteenth century by officers of the Pimbwe chiefdom (see O'Brien, Waters, and Mapunda 2004).
57. See Waters 2007a:163-164.
  58. The explorer David Livingstone was "found" by Henry Stanley in Ujiji in 1869. Livingstone, who was always steadfast in his opposition to the slave trade, was staying in Ujiji where ironically he was hosted by the Omani Arab and Swahili slave traders who were receiving ivory and slave shipments from the Congo across Lake Tanganyika. See also Livingstone (1874).
  59. Slavery was legal in mainland Tanzania until the British abolished the institution after World War I. Villagers in Kibaoni Village reported that the last redeemed slave in their village had died in about 1997.
  60. Today, of course, there are substantial elephant herds in what is now Katavi National Park. It is not known what the status of such herds were in the mid-nineteenth century when the area which is now the park was occupied by humans who cultivated grains, and hunted. See Situt et al., (2003) for a description of human/elephant ecology.
  61. See Shettler 2007:135.
  62. Stanley: [1913(1969)]:357-58.
  63. Interviews with Daniel Kasike, Msago Omari, and others about the compound of Maji Moto, 2001 and 2004.
  64. See Willis 1981:70.
  65. Shorter 1972:118; I heard a similar story about sharpened stakes being placed at the bottom of the dry moat in Pimbwe in 2001. Shorter's account refers to "snakes" instead of "stakes." I assume (along with one of the reviewers of Shorter's book) that this is a typo.
  66. Tambila 1981:54; oral descriptions of the compound at Pimbwe/Maji Moto indicate that there was a similar design.
  67. See LeBlanc 2003 for a general discussion of this phenomenon. Also Shettler 2007:135-166.
  68. Interview Daniel Kasike, 2004.
  69. Simba a *nom de guerre* of an important Konongo/Nyamwezi chief, meaning "lion" in Swahili. The same figure, who guaranteed the sale of Karema in 1878 to the International African Association of King Leopold, is known as being a scion of the Nyamwezi royal family who left the Tabora area, and organized the Konongo into a substantial walled town, probably in the 1860s (see Stanley 1913 (1969), Thomson 1889 (1968), Shorter, 1972:245 and 1969:8-9; Bennett 1972, Tambila 1981). The Scottish explorer David Livingstone (1874:233-237) passed along the lakeshore in 1872 and noted not the depredations of the Ngoni, but the villages burned by a chief "Simba" who lived inland from Lake Tanganyika. Konongo and Pimbwe informants when asked about Simba in 2004 did not know of him. Instead they attributed the attack on Pimbwe to Mirambo.
  70. Quoted in Tambila 1981:85.
  71. See Hochschild 1999.
  72. Koponen 1994:588-589, and Shettler 2007:144-146.
  73. Cameron 1877, 1, 128, 129-130; Stanley's (1872:257) description of such fortresses was similar, though focused more on military utility: "Their bomas [walls] are so well made

that one would require cannon to effect an entrance, if the villages were at all defended. They are skillful also in constructing traps for elephants and buffaloes. A stray lion or leopard is sometimes caught by them."

74. Bennett 1971.
75. Mirambo's European acquaintances were impressed with his capacity to command— Stanley compared Mirambo to Napoleon— although it is unclear that the hegemony he exercised was greater or lesser than his contemporaries like Nyungu ya Mawe, Simba, or others. However, Mirambo's approaches to political dominance are better known to Europeans, and for this reason, he makes a stronger impression on the written record. As a source, he provides an important context for understanding the more remote and lesser known chiefs such as those in Rukwa.
76. Stanley 1913<sup>1968</sup>:358.
77. Stanley refers repeatedly to the threat posed by the Wazavira. There are no other references by other writers to this group so far as I can see. Presumably they were eliminated as a threat between the time that Stanley passed in 1871, and the arrival of other explorers some two to ten years later. It is not clear whether the term applies to a clan, secret society, tribe, or brigand group. However, they did seemingly inspire terror in the anarchic societies Stanley found.
78. The final lonely elephant lasted only a few months in Karema before it too died.
79. Kasogera was described by my informants as Pimbwe (Interviews of Daniel Kasike, and Zakaria S. Kalulu July 2001). Quoting Carter's diary, Bennett describes him as Nyamwezi, as does Shorter 1972, p. 270 *n.* 11.

Lamb (1929) describing the accession of Kasogera indicates that he was probably a commoner, and/or caravan leader. All sources agree that he was outside the normal line of Pimbwe succession. His reign was particularly violent. After defeating the Konongo, probably in the 1860s, Kasogera was deposed by Mfundo. Kasogera in turn went to live in Sakalilo with the Fipa Chief Kimalaunga. Mfundo reigned cruelly for seven or eight years before in turn being deposed by Kasogera, who then returned to Pimbwe. Mfundo responded by seeking refuge with Chief Mirambo in Unyanyembe, and he accompanied Mirambo in 1880 when he invaded Fipa, Pimbwe, and Simba's polity. Despite Mirambo's success at Pimbwe, Mfundo refused to stay, and Kasogera retained the chiefship and immediately purged potential challengers, putting a number to death.

80. See Bennett 1972:111-129, and Lamb 1929.
81. The Nyika (or Nyiha) lived on the Fipa plateau at the time that the Fipa first arrived before the eighteenth century. The chronicles of the Fipa collected by Willis (1981:49-52 and 62-64) describe them as nomadic hunters and gatherers who fought with the horticultural and pastoral Fipa until the nineteenth century. A population of Nyika lives today in Mbozi District of Mbeya Region.
82. Milansi Chronicle quoted in Willis 1981:92.
83. Thomson 1880<sup>1968</sup>:218-219.

84. Fatness in women was considered a sign of beauty in several other places. Thomson (1880<sup>1968</sup>:221) mentions Karagwe. More recently, Mushikwabo and Kramer (2006) describe the phenomenon in the pre-colonial Rwandan court.
85. Thomson 1880<sup>1968</sup>:221.
86. Thomson (1880<sup>1968</sup>):231; villagers born in Gongwe who were from Sitalike showed us the remains of the ditch and wall of a Gongwe village in 2001 and 2004.
87. Thomson 1880<sup>1968</sup>:233.
88. Willis (1981:93), writing from a Fipa perspective, describes the alliances that Simba created as being "a predatory, slave-raiding state in Ukonongo," although it is not clear that his capacity for slave trading was particularly notable in the context of greater depredations by Zanzibari Arabs in the Congo.
89. Bennett 1972:134-135, and Shorter 1971:117-120
90. Shorter (1972) also describes the slow demise of the fortresses in Kimbu during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The stockades of the Pimbwe, according to one report, also had by 1897 changed character, and were of the type to repel animals, rather than protect from human enemies (Kjekshus 1996:77).
91. Tambila 1981 and Kjekshus 1977<sup>1996</sup>.
92. In the Rukwa Valley there was also an ecological change as Lake Rukwa inexplicably dried up (as did other lakes of East Africa at the time, see Calvin 2002:157-158). As a result, between 1905 and 1929 in particular, vast herds of animals moved into the Rukwa Valley which became a grassland. See Kjekshus 1996:76-77. For the German assault, see Willis 1981:206, and Shorter 1972:267-268. The German commander apparently attacked on the basis of a tip-off from an Arab trader. This tip-off was related to Willis decades later with some glee by the Fipa story-teller who resented Kimalaunga's marauding more than the duplicity of the Arab, or the brutality of the Germans (Willis 1981:206).
93. Interviews with Daniel Kasike.
94. Quoted in Willis 1981:211.
95. Willis 1981:211-214, see also Shorter 1972:267-269.
96. Shorter 1972:321-363.
97. British archival records on microfilm and the Tanzania National Archives are replete with kinship charts which were used to assess decisions they made about inheritance of "chiefdoms," and other offices they needed to administer the colony. British ideology about the legitimacy of kinship in determining chiefs reflected a need to promote compliant tax collectors to serve the colonial state.
98. See Kigoma District Annual Report 1927, quoted in Waters 2007a:173.
99. Willis (1966:54) lists twenty three chiefs in his list, and apparently used Lamb (1929) as a source. Other lists provided by oral informants in 2001 were shorter reflecting both memory compression, and variations in accounts from different lineages. Presumably, the ancestors of the Pimbwe lived at Maji Moto at least since the eighteenth century, if not earlier. Pottery shards apparent in ditch walls up to 100 cm. below the current surface would indicate horticulturalists were there at least several hundred years. The remains of the dry moat were measured at 315 m. on the north-south axis, and 488 meters on the east-west axis in 2004.

100. Kalulu was probably born in the early 1880s. The death of Kasogera led to a succession crisis in the late 1880s due to the fact that potential claimants had been purged following the sacking of Pimbwe by Mirambo/Simba and their ally Mfundo in 1880. As described in the text, Kalulu was from the house of the deposed Chief Mfundo. Kalulu was chief of the Pimbwe until the 1920s when he was arrested and exiled by the British for failing to show them deference in a legal dispute. He pressed his claim to the chiefship for at least ten years after this. According to his grandson Isaac Lyoba Kalulu, Chief Kalulu died in 1968. Other sources include Daniel Kasike and Chief Nslamba. All commented on the role of using human hearts as a way to preserve power.
101. The Pimbwe at this point recognized the authority of the Fipa at Nkansi over them. On the other hand, there was also a tradition that the Pimbwe chief must always marry a Konongo bride. Sons of this marriage were eligible for the chieftainship upon the death of the chief (Interviews with Daniel Kasike, 2001).
102. See Moisel 1905.
103. Lamb 1929.
104. Ibid.
105. The southern part of Bismarckburg Region came under British occupation beginning in 1916. The northern part of Bismarckburg was under Belgian occupation from Kigoma between 1916 and 1920. In 1920, the Belgians retreated from western Tanganyika and handed sovereignty over to the British who were to administer the area as part of its League of Nations Protectorate. Belgium received what is now Burundi and Rwanda as a Protectorate. Sources: Various oral interviews in 2001.
106. Lamb 1929, and interviews with Daniel Kasike 2001.
107. Multiple oral sources, 2001 and 2004. Especially Daniel Kasike, Zakaria Lyoba Kalulu, and Msago Omari.
108. Interview with Daniel Kasike and Msago Omari 2001, see also Willis 1966:54n, Lamb 1929.
109. Likewise though, there is little nostalgia for British rule; interviewees without exception were Tanzanian nationalists.
110. As Shorter (1972:337) heard his interviewees in the 1960s remark, "after the white men stopped the Kimbu-Nyamwezi wars, the only people to make war again in Ukimbu were the white men themselves."
111. Interviews with Chief Nsalamba, Mtemi Beda, Daniel Kasike, and others 2001, and 2004.
112. Shorter 1972:117-120.
113. Waters 2007a:193-198.
114. Willis 1989:30.
115. Neumann (1998), and Brockington (2002) have written critical evaluations of how park policies in Tanzania have expropriated traditional land rights from indigenous peoples. Shetler (2007) has written about the interaction between human ecology, and the development of parks in northern Tanzania.
116. Waters 2007a:197.

117. See Paciotti and Hadley's (2005) description of trials conducted by Sukuma *sungu sungu* in the villages of Mpimbwe sub-division in the early part of the twenty-first century. Abrahams (1989) also discusses the *sungu sungu* in the Nyamwezi areas around Tabora.
118. LeBlanc 2003:147.
119. Chariot 1994:128.
120. The effect of human violence on ecology is apparent when the presence of the massive herds of Katavi National Park are considered. Katavi today is what in the nineteenth century was a frontier area in which few of the Konongo, Pimbwe, Gongwe, or Bende could establish themselves and instead abandoning the land. This abandonment created the ecological conditions necessary for the large herbivores to flourish, particularly as human populations declined in the context of repeated onslaughts of disease and violence.
121. Sources include : Moisel 1904-1905, Willis 1981:57 163, 166, Koponen 1988:82, 198, Kjekshus (1977)1996:11, 123. Cartography by Janna Waligorski.
122. Moisel 1905.
123. See O'Brien, Waters, and Mapunda 2004.

#### **Notes on Sources: Interviews in Mpanda District, 2001 and 2004**

Mpanda District was visited in June-July 2001, and July 2004 for research purposes under the auspices of COSTECH. A short week long visit was made to Kibaoni (Rukwa) in February 2004 for logistic purposes. The 2001 trip was focused by oral history. The 2004 trip was focused by archaeology, the results of which are reported elsewhere.

Formal research interviews for which notes were taken are below. Research assistants in Kibaoni were Mr. Michael Sungula (2001 and 2004), and Mr. Renatus Kaanzyemu (2001). Mr. Omari Msago played a very important informal role in the development of research protocols, and facilitation of interviews during both trips.

In Mpanda town, Mr. Gadiel Sindamenya was a collaborator, and we wrote a Swahili papers "Historia na Kabila ya Wagongwe", and "A History of the Bende" together on the basis of our interviews. These were distributed locally as photocopies. The assistance and collaboration of these four men are gratefully noted.

Data and impressions were also gathered in informal settings involving many participants on trips to the sites of former fortresses at Maji Moto, and Gongwe. The dates of the trips are listed below.

#### **Formal Interviews**

Chief Nsalamba, June 15, 2001, June 19, 2001, June 25, 1991, July 25, 1991, July 6, 2004 (all in Mpanda)

Mtemi Beda, July 4 and July 9, 2001 (Mpanda)

Batromeo Chundu, June 30, 2001 (Kibaoni)

Beda Shauritanga, June 29, 2001 (Kibaoni)

Brazio Kasumbi, June 29, 2001 (Kibaoni)

Chief Nsalamba and Phillip Mbogo July 26, 2001 (Mpanda)

Clement Mkalala, June 26, 2001 (Kibaoni)

Daniel Kasike, June 20, 2001, June 29, 2001, July 7, 2004, July 14-15 (Kibaoni and Maji Moto)

Adolph Kikwala and Emily Kapama, July 11, 2001 (Maji Moto)

Malko Katala, June 20, 2001 (Kibaoni)

Moris Mapelani, July 2001 (Kibaoni)

Mzee Maruko Katala June 20, 2001 (Kibaoni)

Mzee Zakaria S. Kalulu, July 26, 2001 (Mpanda)

Mzee Zakariah-Founder of the AICT church. June 18, 2001 (Mpanda)

Victory Kalelembe June 22, 2001 (Kibaoni)

Pius Magazi June 21, 2001 (Kibaoni)

Trip to Maji Moto, July 11, 2001 (Kibaoni)

July 14 and 15, 2004: Tour of house of Tadeo Ngomayarufu (Usevya) and Maji Moto (Daniel Kasike)

Emily Kapana and Mzee Adolph Pigachai Kikwala

Petro Kanyege (Kibaoni), June 30, 2001

Mzee Isaac Lyoba Kalulu in Mpanda, June 18, 2001

About July 18, 2001, Chief Kakamba II (Tende Sigulu) of the Gongwe People (Mpanda Town).

**July 20, 2001-Sitalike Village Office**

Lazaro Katabi-Igongwe

Luka Milunga-Igongwe

Paulo Mbulu-Sibwesa

Abel Tende-Igongwe

Bazilio Eduard-Igongwe

Ramadhani Mohamed-Igongwe

**July 24, 2001**-Visit to Sigulu's Ngoma, Katavi National Park with Gongwe Villagers from Sitalike.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong (ed.). *Themes in West Africa's History*. Athens: Ohio University Press. 2006.**

*Themes in West Africa's History* is an impressive book. The thirteen well-organized essays essentially represent various aspects of West African history from the pre-colonial to the contemporary periods. These essays are key learning tools towards an overall understanding West African history. Additionally, the authors' interdisciplinary approach as well as their focus on new themes make the book totally different from conventional history books on West Africa. The book's objective is to discuss "various disciplinary approaches to West African history, providing overviews of the literature on major topics, and breaking new ground through the incorporation of original research." The contributors accomplish this objective through thorough research and lucid presentations.

Divided into three parts, the book examines new themes that are often not well taught due to a lack of research and knowledge. Part I chapters are inter-connected with the focus on the prehistory, ecology, culture, language, and oral traditions of West Africa. Part II discusses topics on environment, the slave trade, class and caste systems, religious interactions, diseases, poverty, and urbanization. Finally, Part III considers some contemporary issues such as the political economy of West Africa, structural adjustment, military intervention in politics, ethnic conflicts, and the intermingling of religion and culture, especially Pentecostalism and Islam. All are basic ideas for a better understanding of the overall history of West Africa. The themes are well connected and the smooth transition from one theme to another is one of the book's strengths. Another strong area is that the essays are rich in sources and detailed notes. This is evidence of comprehensive research on each of the themes discussed. Aside from the references, each chapter contains recommended sources for further reading that provide an opportunity for further investigation.

Unlike eastern and southern Africa, where hominid fossil finds have proven the ancientness of humans in Africa, such discoveries are lacking for West Africa. Artifacts of material culture, however, provide convincing archaeological evidence of human life and activities in West Africa over the last 10,000 years. Climatic changes have occurred, but food production in the savanna and forest regions has consistently supported a steadily growing population. The development of the Neolithic revolution that brought

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v11/v11i1reviews.pdf>

about a change from subsistence economy to cultivation of crops, the growth of commerce, and the favorable environmental and living conditions gave rise to urbanization as well as socio-political interactions within the region. All of these factors contributed to the emergence of great empires in West Africa. As an important and integral part of the history of West Africa, it would be necessary to refer to the empires and how the geography of the region contributed to their rise and growth.

Oral traditions pervade West African culture and history. While the focus in this book is on the different dimensions of oral traditions among the Manding peoples, it is important to show that oral traditions existed in other West African cultural settings. For example, the *ba-gesere* in Borgu and the *arokin* in Yorubaland perform the same functions of palace historians in their respective societies. As well, the pride of “the power of the brain” and the reliance on memory (since writing was not developed in West African civilization) was commonplace throughout the region. Thus, there is tremendous historical knowledge to be gained in oral tradition. Readers should be fully aware of the prevalence of such historical traditions in West Africa.

The colonial period brought about some significant political, economic, and social changes in West Africa. This period and the profound changes that accompanied it cannot be overlooked. Not much was written about this period, which provides a useful link between the pre-colonial and contemporary times. Because West African states inherited a weak economic base from their colonial masters, they have been struggling economically since independence. The mono-economic style in which the British and French made Africans specialize in producing specific cash crops turned out to be a negative economic legacy. Lacking industrial and technological capability to tap mineral resources, Africans have been forced to depend largely on their former colonial powers for economic support. West African states are importers rather than exporters. Hence, they have resorted to taking loans from international financial institutions (IFIs) to revamp their economy. Instead of improving, the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) has actually sapped their economies. Through this neocolonial economic experience, poverty has become a major problem. As the book suggests, however, West African countries must cultivate the culture of a sustainable economy through meaningful and relevant projects. The weak economy West African states are experiencing is closely linked with the growth of diseases and poor health conditions. As governments endeavor to address economic problems, they must also provide better health services for the people who constitute the workforce.

The book is unique, interesting, and illuminating. It overflows with anthropological, cultural, and historical information. Contemporary issues such as ethnic conflicts and the growing influence of religion on politics add flavor to the richness and uniqueness of the book. The writing is clear, understandable, and concise. Emmanuel Akyeampong has done an excellent job putting together a volume that provides high quality analysis. The authors have done a commendable job explaining

some difficult concepts which in turn makes the book comprehensible to ordinary readers. This book will be very helpful and enlightening to general readers, undergraduate and graduate students of West African history and anthropology.

Julius O. Adekunle  
*Monmouth University*

**Mark Bradbury. *Becoming Somaliland*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press/Progressio, 2008.**

In recent years, the news from the Horn of Africa reported in the US media has rarely been positive; piracy, possible terrorism, and dangerous conditions for foreign aid workers seem to be the typical topics. Thus, the publication of Mark Bradbury's recent book on the Somaliland question is cause for cautious optimism. Bradbury, who has worked in London and Somalia/Somaliland since 1988 with organizations including ActionAid Somalia, has extensive experience with the region and has written a helpful book that traces the history of Somaliland from the nineteenth century and even earlier to the present day. The author clearly recognizes the controversial nature of the Somaliland question, noting the "diplomatic limbo" (p. 256) Somaliland has experienced over the past sixteen years resulting in part from the fact its sovereignty is not recognized by any foreign country. Indeed, certainly a number of Somalis hold on to the hope that one day a unified Somalia can be achieved from the five regions where Somalis live that were divided apart in the nineteenth century— then known as the British Somaliland Protectorate, Italian Somalia, Cote Francais des Somaliens (Djibouti), the Northern Frontier District of Kenya, and the Abyssinian Empire of Menelik II (p. 24).

At any rate, regardless of the reader's views on the Somaliland question, this book is an essential read for those interested in the sociocultural and political background of the region and the case for nationhood (For a critical view of the Somaliland question, read Roble, 2007). In addition to describing Somaliland's history, the author does detail a number of success stories in modern Somaliland, particularly with regard to issues of self-determination, self-reliance, and infrastructure development (such as the restoration of utilities and the creation of phone and world-wide web systems). While noting important differences between the north and south of the Somali region, Bradbury hints that there are valuable lessons to be learned from Somaliland that may point the way to a solution to the troubles that have plagued the south. In particular, he emphasizes the importance of self-determinism, the need for governing structures to

reflect local and historical systems in culturally sensitive ways, and the risks of relying too deeply upon foreign aid.

In 1991, the leadership of the Somali National Movement (SNM) and northern clan elders announced the withdrawal of a new state, the Republic of Somaliland, from what had been a union since 1960 of the colonial territories of Italian Somalia and British Somaliland Protectorate. Bradbury, however, traces the history of the region back much earlier. For instance, far from separatism being a phenomenon known only to the late twentieth century civil war and later, in the 1930s, chauvinistic sentiments were strong after the British defeat of Sayyid Md. Abdulla Hassan and his Dervish army. Of course, more proximal causes of the present situation include the Ethiopian war of the 1970s and the actions of the Barre regime towards the north and the resulting resentments and hostilities among certain clan groups and lineages, especially the Isaaq. Today about three million live in Somaliland, and many more if one includes those outside of Somaliland in the Diaspora.

An understanding of the various clans and groups in Somaliland and Somalia is absolutely essential to an understanding of the region. While focusing primarily on the numeric and political majority in Somaliland, the Isaaq, Bradbury offers numerous charts and tables and narrative concerning the changing and evolving alliances and hostilities between such other clans as the Darood (Dhulbahante and Warsengeli), Gadabursi, 'Iise, Hawiye and other minorities such as the Gaboye, Somali-Arabs, Jibrahil, and Gugure. Bradbury shows sensitivity to the diversity within the Isaaq clan family as well, noting the changing representation from groups including the Habar Aawl (Sa'ad Muse and 'Iise Muse), Garhajis, and Habar Ja'lo. A strength of the book is Bradbury's understanding that coming to terms with Somaliland requires a keen sensitivity to both colonial/contemporary political systems and traditional cultural systems including xeer, diya paying groups, and the clan system in general. Additionally, he rightly notes that in their focus on kinship, some scholars have neglected the importance of Islam.

While Bradbury does not offer a separate chapter on women's issues, he does offer sensitive insights into the evolving nature of women's roles throughout his book. For instance, women are the major recipients of remittances in Somaliland, a fact that greatly increases their economic role (p. 250). Furthermore, women featured prominently in the refugee camp experience, and due to the dearth of men, by necessity they engaged in business and other employment outside the home. Politically women played important roles in the peacemaking process and as gatherers of intelligence. As Bradbury notes, "a woman's dual kinship ties to her paternal clan and to affinal relatives in her husband's clan would enable her to act as an ambassador and channel of communication between warring parties and to cross from one territory to another" (p. 104). While progress towards equality has been made, there is much room for further gains. For instance, in 2002, while the Harmood party pledged to appoint a woman as

deputy chairperson and to guarantee that fifty percent of the candidates were women, such promises were not kept. Nevertheless since 2002, there have been three women in the cabinet and two as district councilors (p. 207). As another sign of change, Edna Adan, a former wife of President Egal, was an advocate against female genital mutilation (p. 156).

In sum, whether Somaliland will realize its dream of *nabad iyo caano* (peace and milk) or disintegrate into *'ol iyo abaar* (conflict and drought) remains an unanswered question. Among the important factors will be the stance of the developing cohort who were born post-1988, a generation who has never known a united Somalia. Will these young people staunchly embrace independence, yearn for a unified state, or, in some as yet unforeseen way, creatively add to a project in progress?

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Omar Ahmed and Grant J. Rich  
*University of Alaska Southeast*

**Christopher Rowan. *The Politics of Water in Africa: The European Union's Role in Development AID Partnership*. London: International Library of African Studies 24--Tauris Academic Studies, 2009.**

The author makes it clear where he stands: "I suggest that the discourse of partnership is used to put a glossy veneer on a relationship that is less about partnership and more about a hegemonic partner using its financial power to dictate terms to aid recipients" (p. 1). This volume then proceeds to examine how the European Union (EU) falls short of stated objectives to engage in partnership with developing countries, especially the ACP Group (the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, associated with the industrialized group, the G8). The author starts with a document from the Stockholm International Water Institute entitled *Water and Development in the Developing Countries—A Study Commissioned by the European Parliament* (SIWI Report 10, 2000) and builds his case for non-partnership.

Chapter 1 (What of Water?) identifies water as a human right, drawing upon international pronouncements regarding this resource. Water is, of course, highly symbolic, charged with social importance given its role in human health, in creating

community, and promoting personal dignity. Yet (as the author does not emphasize) it is also a commodity, requiring water resource management, investment, institutions, and incentives. It is helpful to see someone survey the evolution of documents, statements, and rhetoric surrounding the topic, since such background information provides a context for examining interactions between the EU and developing countries. The author, however, does not explore links between the actual amount of aid and water sector performance across countries—a natural question for anyone interested in going beyond process to the actual impact of “partnerships.”

Chapter 2 (Friends or Foes?) proceeds to summarize the literature on the EU and Africa, focusing on the extent to which different scholars and observers saw the relationship as reflecting uneven power: Rowan finds that public documents identified principles that were not followed in practice. Other organizations, such as Wateraid, Oxfam, and Eurostep (nongovernmental development organizations) are referred to supporting principles which the EU did not always practice. Then the author reviews political theories of partnership from Hobbes (leviathan and a one-sided partnership), Locke (balanced relationship), Rousseau (emphasizing a covenantal association), and some African leaders (Nkrumah, Nyerere, and others).

Chapter 3 (Development or Dictatorship?) contrasts neoliberal globalization (and hegemony) with “partnership.” It would have helped to have a table listing key agreements (such as the Cotonou Agreement, Benin, 2000) to give the reader a clear sense of both the sequence of pronouncements and an encapsulation of key features—helping others understand the evolution of public documents.

Chapter 4 (The Partnerships) was the most interesting for this reviewer. The “partnerships” between Lesotho and Brussels and Mozambique and Brussels are explored, respectively, through ten and five interviews. In addition, Appendix 1 provides further details regarding each interview. Of course, such a sample size implies that the conclusions will be somewhat impressionistic, though the author seems to draw reasonable inferences from these meetings. What seemed lacking again were figures that identified the different stakeholder groups, including those who were not represented in the sample. It would help to have the institutional frameworks laid out clearly for readers.

The remaining chapters critique EU rhetoric, suggest next steps to overcome the asymmetric relationship, review the Cotonou Agreement, and provide concluding observations. One looks in vain for data on trends in water coverage in a number of countries and a test of the impact of EU support on sector performance in different countries. In a sense, the book is not really about all of Africa since it draws conclusions from two specific settings. A broader brush might have revealed more complex patterns. For example, had GTZ (the German aid agency, Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit) aid in Uganda been one of the case studies, the author might have drawn other lessons about how water managers and political leaders responded to

externally-driven initiatives. References to the numerous studies appearing in policy journals about sector performance in other African nations would have added much to the book (see Mugisha and Brown, "From Despair to Promise: A Comparative Analysis of WSS Reforms in East African Cities," *Water Policy*, forthcoming).

Furthermore, other initiatives might have been given more attention by the author. It would have been useful to include more references to studies and projects funded by the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP), a multi-donor partnership created in 1978 and administered by the World Bank. This technical assistance program has developed strategies for obtaining affordable access to safe water and sanitation services. Similarly, the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education (Delft) has extensive experience in capacity-building in Africa. Inclusion of such programs would have made the book more useful for those evaluating relationships between EU nations and Africa.

Ultimately, this reviewer read the book through an "economic" lens—which means that I may have missed contributions to debates within political science, public administration, and international relations. Nevertheless, those seeking insight on water in Africa will want to cast a wider net. For example, Matthias Krause's 2009 book *The Political Economy of Water and Sanitation* (Routledge Studies in Development and Society) captures better the issues of equity and efficiency facing policy-makers and service providers in developing countries. Krause's fourteen-page bibliography provides a much more complete set of resources than Rowan's five page listing of references, though the latter book is more tightly focused. In conclusion, Rowan provides some fresh perspectives regarding the evolution of EU policy, drawing upon documents and a set of interesting interviews.

Sanford V. Berg  
*University of Florida*

**Robert J. Thornton. *Unimagined Community: Sex, Networks, and AIDS in Uganda and South Africa*. London: The Regents of the University of California, 2008.**

In the age of increasingly self-congratulatory and highly moralizing international HIV/AIDS interventions such as Bush's PEPFAR (The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Reduction), Robert J. Thornton's *Unimagined Communities* offers fresh anthropological insight into the conundrums of AIDS epidemiology. Thornton's research for this book started with a contradictory observation: why did HIV prevalence fall in Uganda while this poor country's fertility rate continued to climb, while at the same time, HIV prevalence has risen dramatically in South Africa, one of the continent's wealthiest countries with the lowest fertility rate? Scientific explanations and behavior

change approaches to HIV prevention like ABC (abstinence, be faithful, use condoms) did not satisfy Thornton. So, he set out to explain the contrasting trends in Uganda and South Africa from a different angle: sexual networks. “My principal finding,” Thornton writes, “is that change in HIV prevalence is primarily determined by the difference in the configuration of large-scale sexual networks rather than the cumulative effect of behavior change, a necessary but not sufficient condition” (p. 1).

Thornton achieves his principal finding by contrasting the late twentieth-century histories of the two countries as well as examining social attitudes toward sex, disease, land, mobility, and status that characterize the rise and fall of HIV prevalence in Uganda and South Africa. Because of the secretive nature of sex as a social relationship, the vast networks of people linked by sexual activity remain ‘unimagined communities’ (to contrast with Benedict Anderson’s notion of the nation as an imagined community) in which “...the sexual network is never imagined and never represented by those who do in fact participate in it” (p. xx). Thus sexually-transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS can easily flourish. The good news: understanding that sexual networks rather than individual behavior are what drive HIV prevalence can change the course of the AIDS epidemic. The bad news: prevention and treatment programs designed to do so have thus far failed horribly—and possibly contributed to the rapid transmission of the disease—by focusing instead on highly charged moral discourses of individual behavior. Further, Thornton’s explanation AIDS reduction in Uganda intimates that this may have been more an accident of historical events than a result of a conscious effort on the part of the government and the citizenry. He suggests, in fact, that the political instability in Uganda in the 70s and 80s may have contributed to the decline of HIV rates in the early 90s by limiting the scope of sexual networks to highly localized environments. That fact makes Uganda’s success in reversing its HIV prevalence rate much less replicable in places such as South Africa with very different social landscapes.

Still, Thornton’s intriguing theory reminds us, importantly, that AIDS is a complex socially transmitted disease whose spread is reliant on historical and cultural factors as much as epidemiology. In the process, he exposes political motives of various prevention and treatment aid projects that have, at best, contributed only a small part to AIDS relief, while at worst exacerbating the problem. It is thus important that this book comes out at this historical moment. Between the neoconservative Bush era of AIDS intervention and the Pope’s statements on the ineffectiveness of condoms during his 2009 visit to Africa, Thornton’s claims that moralizing solutions have gotten us nowhere in the fight against AIDS only gain more contemporary salience.

The book’s only notable drawback is that it sometimes lacks systematically gathered ethnographic evidence (many of Thornton’s ethnographic examples are anecdotal). Instead, Thornton makes rather sweeping statements about widespread cultural beliefs. More ethnographic evidence could have provided richer detail to

illustrate points as it bolstered arguments to help substantiate Thornton's claims, rather than running the risk of essentializing very diverse attitudes and beliefs. As it stands, however, *Unimagined Community* provides both reasonable explanations for why HIV reduction programs have failed and practical prevention solutions based on a well developed sexual network theory. Scholars and practitioners would do well to familiarize themselves with Thornton's anthropological approach to understanding HIV transmission.

Kristen Cheney  
*University of Dayton*

**Cheikh Anta Babou. *Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadou Bamba and the Founding of the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853-1913*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007.**

Amadou Bamba M'Backe, founder of the Muslim Sufi brotherhood known as the Muridiyya, was born in western Senegal in 1850, at the beginning of concerted French colonization of the region. By the time of his death in 1927, when the French had consolidated their control, Bamba had established a widespread following and a reputation, both among colonial administrators and local leaders, as perhaps the single most powerful force in Senegalese religious and political history. Bamba's life story, as well as his complex, fluid, and ambiguous relations with secular authorities, have been well-documented and examined in both contemporary and historical accounts, creating a cottage industry within West African studies. An abundant hagiographical literature exists on Bamba, and his followers continue to write and speak about his life, practices, and ideas. Because of the lasting and visible influence of Amadu Bamba and the Murids in colonial and independent Senegal, as well as the rather distinct and, some would argue, unorthodox practices of the Muridiyya, scholars from various disciplines have mined the extensive and readily available relevant archives, oral sources, and secondary literature.

To justify another narrative historical account of the life of Amadu Bamba and the early years of the brotherhood, Babou sets out to examine not only the conventional sources, but previously neglected internal documents, including works in Wolof and Arabic, as well as oral interviews the author conducted with Murid members. The author notes that previous studies have focused primarily on state building and the question of whether Bamba qualifies as a resistor or collaborator with colonial authorities. Babou stresses his intention to focus more on the domestic and internal dynamics and development of Bamba's ideas and practices, most notably on Islamic education. Like many younger scholars, especially when their first book is a revised

dissertation, Babou proposes to revolutionize the field, and to shed startlingly new insights which will require the rethinking and rewriting of the historiography. As is often the case, the author makes some contributions to the literature, but he promises far more than he can deliver. Despite these qualifications, Babou does make some contributions to the literature and our understanding of the meaning of “jihad,” a word that deserves clarification and refinement in today’s world.

Babou draws well and selectively on the extensive secondary literature in English and French as well as the familiar archival materials that others have investigated rather thoroughly. This work, however, only cites a few of the available archival French sources without revealing any new documents, or offering any new insights into that data. While the author conducted some interviews in Wolof in Senegal, he could have interviewed a much larger pool of informants and integrated their accounts more assertively into the narrative. The interviews were undertaken in a rather confined area of the Murid heartland and in relatively truncated periods of fieldwork. More archival and oral research in Senegal would have considerably enhanced the author’s intention to tap into underused and new materials and to break new ground. The book does make a solid start at exploring the memories of some Murid members, but much more could have been done with this avenue of investigation. Babou could have utilized their actual words in the text to give a more compelling voice to the narrative and to argue his case for Amadou Bamba as an original and astute thinker and practitioner, especially in the area of Muslim education.

The author does a commendable and original job of tracing Bamba’s lineage back several centuries and considering the cleric’s familiar and intellectual predecessors. Previous biographies have given scant attention to Bamba’s ancestors and have often skimmed over his early years, particularly Bamba’s Islamic education. Babou makes a convincing case for analyzing the formative influences of Amadou Bamba’s life and thinking and how the Muridiyya emerged and built upon a long and revered tradition and did not spring out of nowhere. Another strength involves the careful narrative of Bamba’s various moves throughout western Senegal and the individuals, including religious figures and traditional Wolof leaders, with whom he interacted on a daily basis. These encounters foreshadow the manner in which Bamba would interface with the French colonial authorities, a topic that has engaged numerous scholars and followers. Babou correctly asserts that the inconsistent and reactionary reaction of the French to Amadou Bamba arose from colonial reliance on traditional Wolof chiefs unalterably opposed to the cleric out of fear for their own authority. The author also rightly insists that the outdated and discredited notion of collaborator vs. resistor does not adequately describe the dynamic, ambiguous, and at times apparently conflicting relationship, on both sides, between the Murid founder and the colonial authorities. Yet, whereas the author succinctly reviews the recent literature, he fails to provide any new insights or nuances based on his own research and fieldwork. Likewise, throughout the

book, Babou competently summarizes and synthesizes the secondary literature while lacking a certain degree of originality or creativity.

The book, although disappointing in regards to providing a fresh analysis of Amadu Bamba's relationships with the colonial authorities and insufficient insights into his thinking and the practice of Islamic education, should appeal to scholars interested in the Murid brotherhood and recent Senegalese religious and political history and society. It might serve as a useful case study for use in advanced undergraduate and graduate courses in the history of Islam in Africa.

Andrew F. Clark

*University of North Carolina - Wilmington*

**Marissa J. Moorman. *Intonations: A Social History of Music and Nation in Luanda, Angola from 1945 to Recent Times*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.**

*Intonations* takes the reader deep into the heart of the urban shantytowns (*musseques*) of Luanda to reconstruct the forging of the Angolan nation in this unique crucible. Through the prism of popular music, Moorman examines the intertwined processes of nation and nationalism across the colonial–post-colonial divide in order to contest the dominant narrative of Angolan independence that privileges the activities of guerrilla movements and political exiles in neighboring states. By shifting the angle back into the colony-cum-country and focusing on domestic events and developments and, in particular, the culture of popular music in Luanda's *musseques*, Moorman compellingly argues that musical instruments, intimate dances and infectious rhythms were every bit as important to the process of nation as were the weapons of war, guerilla maneuvers and political slogans that heretofore have dominated the history and historiography of Angolan independence.

The vivid reconstructions of Luanda's *musseques* and the ways that Moorman brings these spaces and their denizens alive are arguably *Intonations'* greatest contributions. Often conceived of in both historical and contemporary imaginations as a teeming, sprawling, unruly space with blurry – if even distinguishable – geographical or social borders, Moorman draws upon colonial social science research and a collection of rich oral testimony to help the reader make sense of this seemingly impenetrable area. Not only does she unpack the physical space, rendering the *musseques* into series of interconnected, yet saliently distinct neighborhoods, but Moorman also reconstructs the web of social relations both across and within these (sub-)spaces and the ways these changed over time. In the process, the book illuminates class and gender divisions, but

also the ways that residents disregarded them, especially as the music began to thump and the dancing correspondingly intensified.

Moorman's examination of popular music also helps draw attention to the somewhat inadvertent, yet irrefutably important, ways in which it contributed to the development of nationalism in colonial Angola and, by contrast, the heavy-handed manner in which the post-independent Angolan government employed it. While scholars elsewhere have identified music (namely, songs) as a form of resistance that typically expressed anti-colonial sentiments, Moorman's understandings of the roles of popular music in Angolan history are both more subtle and complex. Through her examination of the social relations related to the production and consumption of music, *Intonations* demonstrates how men and women forged a sense of national identity, or "Angolanness," in the late colonial era. As both musicians and their audiences began to imagine an Angola on their own terms during this "golden age of music," they were engaged in a psychological and expressive process of "cultural sovereignty" that was also inescapably political. Thus, rather than portraying the production and consumption of popular music as feeding or reflecting a narrowly defined political nationalism, Moorman explores a cultural process that helped unite people in an imagined, and ultimately independent, nation. It would be difficult to imagine a more political act.

For all of its myriad contributions, *Intonations* does require some extrapolative leaps of faith, both within the musseques and, perhaps more problematically, emanating outwards from the capital to the rest of Angola. In both cases it is difficult to assess how broadly popular music culture penetrated individuals' consciousness and imagination. Within the musseques, the popular music process undeniably shaped the sentiments of the reasonably small numbers of young club-goers and musicians—the vast majority of Moorman's informants—but it is not clear exactly how demographically transcendent this phenomenon was. Elderly, or even middle-aged, musseque residents are largely absent from the text, while women also remain largely silenced, figuring mainly as anonymous audience members and musicians' girlfriends. Yet, because the book's central argument operates at the collective level, greater access and insight into these constitutive sub-populations is arguably essential. Further, even if these groups did participate in "the forging of the nation," surely they did not experience it in a uniform way? If so, this would suggest a singular (reductive) process of "Angolanness." Instead, we must assume that generational, gender and class factors shaped the way people imagined and forged the nation—even if Moorman does a superb job in explaining how music eroded many of these divisions.

The book's cogency also wanes due to a thinning of the evidence as Moorman exports the process of nation beyond the capital city to the far-flung regions of the country. Indeed, despite her assessment of how radio might have facilitated the reterritorialization of this cultural process from Luanda's shantytowns to the Angolan

countryside, virtually all of the constitutive elements that made the shantytowns such a unique space are lacking in the latter setting. While some residents of rural areas or smaller cities certainly listened in, the cosmopolitanism and “cultural sovereignty” that marked the *musseques* and which are so central to the book’s argument were absent in these settings, or are at least unexplored. Without a vibrant club scene, competing bands, ethnic and class mixing, etc. it is difficult to envisage rural residents imagining the nation in an identical manner to shantytown residents. In a sense, Moorman is a victim of her own cogency: her argument related to the uniqueness of the *musseques* in the forging of the nation is so persuasive that simply extrapolating this phenomenon to the rest of Angola is problematic. Interviews with residents from these settings would potentially have made this less of a leap of faith and more of a confident stride.

Although upper-level undergraduate students may be able to grasp much of this much-welcomed contribution to the regrettably small body of Angolan historiography, *Intonations* is probably best-suited for a graduate-level course. Readers who have not previously explored the relationship between culture and politics may find these recurring passages somewhat inaccessible. Further, Moorman is at her best when she is engaging and problematizing existing historiography and the dominant nationalist narrative. While scholars and graduate students will likely appreciate these pursuits, undergraduate students may find them distracting. For similar reasons, the book’s complexity and scholarly tone are unlikely to appeal to a general audience, though Moorman’s prose is a delight and at times even exhibits a playful approach, as she implores readers to figuratively escape with her into the labyrinthine *musseques*.

Todd Cleveland  
*Augustana College*

**Kristin Loftsdottir. *The Bush is Sweet: Identity, Power and Development among WoDaabe Fulani in Niger*. Uppsala: Nordiska Africainstitutet, 2008.**

The WoDaabe of Niger are relatively understudied, but due to the region's recent international export of crafts, metalwork, clothing, and traditional music, anthropological and ethnological studies these people are growing in popularity. Based on having lived among her “subject's of study” for several months from August 1996 to June 1998, Iceland's Kristin Loftsdottir’s ethnographic research provides an introspective analysis of rural and urban WoDaabe.

Loftsdottir covers historical connections between the WoDaabe and their land through exploring issues of land use, urban development, pastoralism, and adaptations to such severe meteorological events as floods and droughts. In addition, Loftsdottir

explains how western depictions of WoDaabe are mostly incorrect, since WoDaabe culture is more intricate and complicated than the simplistic and exotic images of global “otherness” conveyed through folkloric or tourist-catered dances.

*The Bush is Sweet* builds upon Loftsdottir's personal observations and contact with WoDaabe, as well as many years studying globalization, race, gender, indigenous people, pastoralism, and ethnicity as a professor at the Department of Social and Human Sciences, University of Iceland. The dilemma for ethnographic research stems from several shortcomings, including phenomenology of perception from the point of the researcher and inability to construct an analytical conclusion without the subjects significantly changing their behavior. Loftsdottir's poignant analysis and critical observational eye, however, provides a candid and introspective journey of the WoDaabe culture. One of the book's primary purposes is to investigate the role of and lessen the effect of globally cut-off groups of indigenous peoples and illustrate how they play a larger part in the affairs of the greater local and regional communities.

Loftsdottir's observations of the WoDaabe's close relationship with their natural surroundings illustrate a way of life inherently tied to the “bush.” Of particular concern, Loftsdottir discusses the effects of wind, sand, drought, and rain on agriculture and livestock. Ultimately, the pastoralist nature of the WoDaabe allows for survival through adaptability to varying conditions. The younger generation of WoDaabe, however, feels torn between working in the city and leaving their elders or working in the bush tending animals and crops, while letting the globalization of industry and technology pass them by. It is in this latter disjuncture that Loftsdottir pays particularly close attention, and she succeeds.

In interviews with two WoDaabe friends, Loftsdottir finds a contrast between city and rural living as binary oppositions. For instance, “[T]he bush is sweet as sugar, while Niamey [the capital of Niger] is the place of corruption; the bush is a place of freedom for individuals while in Niamey they are constantly observed; in the bush people eat food that makes them strong and healthy, while in Niamey they eat food that lacks power and its unhealthy; in the bush people are surrounded by family while in Niamey they are without their closest kin...life is better in the bush” (p. 139).

In order to sum up Loftsdottir's experiences living in the bush, a WoDaabe friend's observation offers a few, comforting words of acclamation, “...something you [Loftsdottir] never knew before, you know hunger, you know thirst, you know hot, you know cold...you know how it is to not being able to bathe properly, how to sit down by yourself all alone...I think that now you know the bush” (p. 92).

All in all, Loftsdottir offers an in-depth observational critique of Niger's WoDaabe in both their rural and urban settings. *The Bush is Sweet* is actually an extension of Loftsdottir's dissertation, and thus, incorporates a plethora of reputable references covering all aspects of WoDaabe culture. Parts of the book take on a diary-like narrative, which at times, seems a little overdone. Of course, Loftsdottir's astute

observations and verbal clarity are essential elements that showcase a deep knowledge of WoDaabe living. Nonetheless, this ethnographic work should be applauded for its authenticity and a personal commitment to the field of anthropology at large. Likewise, this would be an ideal text for undergraduate and graduate students interested in West African studies, anthropology, WoDaabe culture, pastoralism, and Saharan studies.

Matthew J. Forss  
*Independent Scholar*

**Benjamin Lawrence. *Locality, Mobility, and "Nation": Periurban Colonialism in Togo's Eweland 1900-1960*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007.**

*Locality, Mobility, and "Nation"* contains an introduction and six chapters, with each chapter representing a story the author identified while undertaking archival research in Togo, Benin, Ghana, France and Switzerland from early 1999 through mid-2005, and for which he then sought oral information from witnesses to substantiate and develop. Chapter one examines the emergence of the periurban realm, the rural zone within the orbit of a major urban center or market town. The remaining chapters are case studies of local conflict, often representative of broader mobilizations from the 1920s to Togo's independence from France in 1960, but with a focus on the interwar years. Chapter two examines a dispute over a town's leadership and chieftancy. Chapter three explores a 1933 revolt by market women in Togo's capital, Lomé. The use of vodou by men and women as a means to reclaim political authority is the subject of chapter four. The activities of the German Togo-Bund, a protonationalist group, are detailed in chapter five. Chapter six offers a synthesis of the previous chapters and delves into local perceptions of the development of print journalism in Togo since the 1930s and is followed by a brief epilogue.

Lawrence conducted over 150 oral interviews to gain a greater understanding of Togolese nationalism. The author argues that studies of colonialism and nationalism have focused too much on the activities of the state, chiefs, urban dwellers, males, and the elite while undervaluing the importance of farmers, market women, and other rural-dwelling populations, especially those in the periurban realm. Lawrence succeeds in highlighting how ordinary people, including women, who lived outside of Lomé engaged with colonial officials, mobilized against unwelcome colonial initiatives including the deposing of certain chiefs and changes in taxation, and, when necessary, made use of a rather porous border with the Gold Coast's (present day Ghana's) Ewelands.

Lawrence demonstrates rural people's perceptions of French rule and the continuity of the nationalist struggle from the pre- to post-WWII period. By examining the social and political history of the decades which led up to Togo's independence, Lawrence uses his focus on the periurban to describe a more nuanced evolution of the nationalist struggle. In doing so, he arrives at a less glorified picture of the rule of Togo's Ewe nationalist leader and first president Sylvanus Olympio. Lawrence believes that the assassinated Olympio was less visionary and more opportunistic than generally portrayed, in part because he is so often contrasted with his successor, Togo's, and Africa's, longest-ruling dictator, Gnassingbé Eyadéma.

Whereas the author's concern about studies which present an artificial urban-rural dichotomy is well-founded and his efforts to enhance understanding of those living in communities not entirely urban or rural well executed, he perhaps overstates the extent to which his study, by focusing on the periurban, represents something entirely new or serves as a model for the study of colonial Africa. The author does not consistently and meaningfully meet his stated objective of "incorporating spatial theory into the social history of the anticolonial struggle" (p. 9) or his goal of "mapping the extent of involvement of the many constituencies in Eweland in the nationalist enterprise" (p. 180).

Nonetheless, *Locality, Mobility, and "Nation"* constitutes a considerable contribution to the history of the Ewe people and understanding French West Africa under colonialism. It represents the first detailed history of French rule of Togoland available in English. Lawrence's well-researched and documented study includes excellent maps, historical photos which are crisp and clear, important original interview material, and over 100 pages of extensive notes, bibliography and index. *Locality, Mobility, and "Nation"* will appeal to graduate students and experts with interest in the Ewe and Togo, as well as those with interests in African history and nationalist movements more generally.

Heidi G. Frontani  
*Elon University*

**David Graeber. *Lost People: Magic and the Legacy of Slavery in Madagascar*.  
Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007.**

Anthropologist David Graeber seeks in this ethnography of politics, history, and culture to uncover the roots and political significance of an old conflict that divides the social, economic, ritual and political life in Befato, a small town of between 300 and 500 people in Madagascar. At the time of his arrival in Befato in 1990, many of its

inhabitants were not on speaking terms with each other. Social life and local politics were structured along cleavages produced by old ancestral rivalries and family histories which impelled descendants to act with a “hidden source of bitterness and resentment” (p. 367). This conflict stands central to the *problematique* Graeber wants to address in this ethnography: how is it that Befato became divided between two sections, each considering themselves to be the descendants of two quarreling ancestors? What is the significance of the fact that one of these two ancestors was a noble (*andriana*) whose descendants today are impoverished farmers, while the other was a former slave (*mainty*) whose descendants are relatively well off? And how is it that Befato people believe that the mixing of these two ancestors’ bodies or their contemporary descendants can only lead to catastrophe? What exactly transpired in 1987 at a communal ordeal that was supposed to have re-established community solidarity but is now remembered by Befato people as proof that such solidarity is in fact not possible?

In answering these questions, Graeber leads us in an engaging manner through a succession of rich narratives obtained through taped interviews, superbly analysed ethnographic encounters, and sharp arguments based on a thorough knowledge of the ethnographical record and historical archives, including state records. Graeber is interested in political action and what could be constituted as ‘the political’ and ‘politics.’ Given the lack of something resembling a formal political sphere in Malagasy life, a fact remarked upon and theorized by earlier anthropologists, Graeber develops a range of arguments concerning political action based on his exploration of the political aspects of conversations and narratives and what he calls ‘relations of command’ – all in the quest of understanding the cleavages and conflicts in contemporary Befato.

Unsurprisingly, the cleavage between former nobles and former slaves turns out to be of central importance. Graeber argues that Malagasy have come to see all power relations or “relations of command” as “refractions of slavery” (p. 43). Graeber uses this starting point to investigate “relations of command” and power and authority in the context of the history of the state, local bureaucrats and social class, attitudes toward schooling, the practice of spirit mediums, types of political personae and the violence implicated in the memories of the ancestors. While he concurs with the ethnographic record positing the nonexistence of formal political spheres in Malagasy culture, he finds politics everywhere, expressed particularly in the context of narratives. For example, ancestral power is manifested to living people through “little narratives of transgression and retribution” (p. 60). Narratives not only direct him to the relationship between political action and magical action but also to the ways in which stories are ways of establishing authority through knowledge. In addition to his insightful definition of politics, his Befato material leads him to discuss two other important concepts, that of “negative authority” and “anti-heroic history.”

In trying to present an ethnography that is both honest and not written and structured exclusively for “the market.” Graeber does well to treat the ordinary (and extraordinary) people of Befato as “historical characters” (p. 31) and as historians in their own right. In this respect, his acknowledgment of the influence of character development in Russian novels is illuminating, and the list of names and descriptions of the characters who feature in his book, which is included at the end, is pretty useful. Graeber is not only interested in politics, but also the politics of research and writing. His reflections on this topic, especially those expressed in the epilogue, are of immense insight, originality and lacking in obfuscation. Other methodological comments—such as how, through his style of his research he became a “medium for spreading” stories (p. 309) and how Befato people “argued through him” by reporting narratives back and forth (P. 310)—adds to the multidimensional value of this ethnography. Not only is the result an ethnography that embodies the sentiment of fieldwork as a “dialogic process,” but its approach to politics reads, if not in the tradition of Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s ‘magical realism,’ like an account of the political realism of magic. This is a must-read for historians and anthropologists of Madagascar while those interested in the anthropology of politics and power should read this ethnographic account together with Graeber’s collection of more ‘theoretical’ essays titled *Possibilities: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion and Desire* (AK Press, 2007).

Detlev Krige  
Rhodes University

**James Currey. *Africa Writes Back: The African Writers Series and the Launch of African Literature*.  
Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008.**

James Currey, the editorial director at Heinemann Educational Books from 1967 to 1984, has produced a book that for many will be difficult to avoid reading straight through. It is many things at once: a personal career retrospective; an insider’s view of the often frustratingly complex business of book publishing; a fascinating series of glimpses into the personalities and struggles of numerous prominent—and not so prominent—African authors; and a foundational history of arguably one of the most important literary series in the history of books. His depth of relationships within the African publishing world is immediately evident in the volume’s simultaneous release by not only Ohio and his own imprint, but also by East African Educational Publishers (Nairobi), Mkuki na Nyota (Dar es Salaam), Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria (Ibadan), Weaver Press (Harare), and Wits University Press (Johannesburg). This is

hardly surprising as during his tenure the series released over 250 titles by authors from more than twenty-five African countries. Based upon personal recollections, extracts from the original African Writer Series (AWS) correspondence files (now held at University of Reading), various works of scholarly criticism, and media reviews, Currey produces a sprawling account that remains equally readable in sequence or alternatively, when simply opened to nearly any page. Complemented by selections from the distinctive AWS cover photography and author portraits of George Hallet, *Africa Writes Back* is likely to become a necessary purchase for anyone with more than a cursory interest in African literatures.

With a huge cast of characters that includes editors, reviewers, literary scholars, agents, publishers, politicians, and of course the authors themselves, Currey rather sensibly divides this history by geographic region. Beginning with West Africa and the founding of the series with Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Currey intersperses his history and brief author portraits with a number of in-depth profiles under the rubric "Publishing..." These include Achebe as well as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Nuruddin Farah, Alex la Guma, Dennis Brutus, Bessie Head, Mazisi Kunene, and Dambudzo Marechera. A common theme amongst many of the authors covered here is the oft contentious relationship between publisher and author on issues ranging from advance/royalty payments to editorial recommendations, the most problematic of which, by Currey's own admission, emerged with Ayi Kwei Armah. For his part, Armah later commented, in characteristic uncompromising terms, of his hopes "to find an African publisher as opposed to a neo-colonial writers' coffle owned by Europeans but slyly misnamed 'African'" (p. 75). One suspects, as Currey alludes, that he was likely not the only author with such sentiments even if these were rarely expressed openly. Indeed, such relationships were hardly limited to writers from Africa, and this in part exemplifies why some had difficulties even accepting the label of 'African writer.' Wole Soyinka for a time resisted having his novel *The Interpreters* appear in AWS for fear of being confined to the "orange ghetto" defined by the recognizable color scheme of AWS volumes.

So Currey, and his self-proclaimed "conspirators" in the promotion of African literatures through the AWS, all too frequently found themselves negotiating a delicate path between artistic vision (and sometimes very real material need) of authors and their own position in an evolving corporate structure where the bottom-line was the bottom-line. That the AWS succeeded at all in this environment was in part due to the revenues produced by Heinemann's wider educational book sales in Africa that allowed the publication of works with rather low expected initial sales. Certain authors' popularity also contributed to the possible publication of other new works, as evidenced by founding editor Chinua Achebe's titles accounting for one-third of the total AWS series sales in 1984 (at that time approximately 250 titles). Still, the intricacies

of this balancing act often initially escaped the writers themselves, leading South African Poet Laureate Mazisi Kunene to attack “the commercialism that guides the selection of what must be published from Africa” (p. 240). He later apologized, but it is clear that Currey and his staff had to invest enormous efforts in seeing through to print works that many others in the industry viewed as commercially unviable.

We are indeed fortunate that they did so. The broad availability of so many AWS titles on the continent from the 60s through the 80s (before corporate changes put large numbers out of print) likely did give many “a young person the idea that Africans could write and get published,” thus contributing to the future expansion of African literature (p. 246). The impact of the series in Europe and North America on developing scholars of African Studies – many in disciplines far afield from literature – should also not be underestimated. In his concluding chapter, Currey asks whether there is a future for the AWS. The unfortunate answer seems to be that new corporate ownership strategies have limited the series to annual reprints of well-established authors, producing dogged searches for the “orange ghetto” in used bookshops around the globe. No new titles have been added to AWS since 2003.

Readers may notice unevenness in the coverage of writers featured, but this could be the result of a similar trend in the archival files that are the basis of this history. For instance, of the eight writers in the expanded “Publishing...” profiles, five are from southern Africa. Or perhaps these were decisions based upon the qualities of their correspondence and the various issues that emerge therein. There are also a few too many typographical errors for a volume of this quality, particularly when proof corrections no longer require costly manual resetting as they did for those AWS authors who found their late changes charged against their advance amounts. None of these minor criticisms detract from the overall impact and usefulness of this volume. It will be of particular value in preparing courses on African literature, especially when paired with Margaret Jean Hay’s edited volume *Using African Novels in the Classroom* (Lynne Rienner, 2000) as many authors covered there also receive treatment from Currey. Some may find the minute intricacies of the publishing industry detailed by Currey a distraction from the more fascinating aspects of the authors’ personalities and their writing process. Yet it is often precisely through these accounts that we learn about writers’ commitment and determination. As Cyprian Ekwensi wrote to Currey in 1976, “writing is the one profession in which you are an apprentice all your life. There is no retirement. You just have to go on struggling in the queue until you die!” (p. 46).

Todd H. Leedy  
*University of Florida*

**S. M. Shamsul Alam. *Rethinking the Mau Mau in Colonial Kenya*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.**

Great Britain colonized Kenya in 1895 following up on the protocol set forth in the 1884 Berlin Conference for regulating European colonization and trade in Africa. After the Second World War, the colonized world was overwhelmed by indigenous nationalist movements sprouting up and demanding for self-determination. In Kenya, it was the Mau Mau revolt that determined the outcome of the demand for national autonomy and the achievement, in 1963, of independence. This book is a study that revolt and its contribution to independent Kenya. To understand Mau Mau one must understand its objectives within the context of the British colonial domination. Furthermore, to properly analyze the actions of the British colonial system one must engage with the popular counter hegemonic actions of resistance movements such as Mau Mau. The author makes a critical clarification that the Mau Mau was not a Kenyatta nationalist project. He identifies it as a movement that was not only violent but also having its own unique cultural, ideological, and political ideas for a free Kenya. The author utilized interviews with knowledgeable persons; primary documents from the Kenya National Archives; secondary literature by Ngugi wa Thiongo, Foucault, Fanon, Chartejee, and others in writing this book.

In discussing post-colonial Kenya, Alam stipulates that there is a deliberate action by the ruling elite to bury Mau Mau history. This, he explains, is because its history is subversive and can serve as a critique of current political realities. He observes that though the subject is of great interest to common Kenyans, it is a history that causes discomfort and embarrassment to the post-colonial ruling elite. This attitude has been clear in the government's failure to honor the freedom fighters. The author provides a good exposé of one of the prominent Mau Mau fighters, Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi. This discussion is critical to understanding some of the personalities that fought for freedom at the expense of their own lives. During the Moi era there were numerous petitions by the family and other individuals that the state honor Dedan Kimathi with a proper burial. The effort, however, was opposed and never honored by the government of the day. These actions and attitudes are reflective of the hesitation of the Kenyan ruling elite to identify with history.

The book makes a unique contribution to understanding the role of the women in the freedom movement. It is a part of the Kenyan history that is seldom taught or discussed, but the contributions of women like Mary Wanjiru and Mekatilili wa Menza serve to correct long-held myths that women were passive in fighting for freedom. The book gives the reader a depiction of women who were active networkers and well engaged in the military offensive against British colonial rule. Another unique contribution is how the book addresses the contribution of literature to understanding history. The earlier writings on Mau Mau spoke of it as a savage Kikuyu entity that was

resisting civilization. This discourse is what then led to the counter discourse that sought to properly explain the movement and its objectives. For example, Ngugi wa Thiongo has written about Mau Mau as a subversive technique for critiquing the post-colonial ruling class, making it clear that the current state is not what the freedom fighters had envisioned when they had sacrificed their lives.

This study points to the crisis of history, and the fact that without a complete understanding of history it becomes almost impossible for independent states to properly develop. Alame links the current crisis in governance to how colonialism was fought for and how the nation state was formed. The Mau Mau contribution to independent Kenya has been a shunned topic and has often been judged on the basis of ethnicity, yet it is only in understanding the role of such movements and their objectives that this history can serve as a standard by which the current political leadership can be criticized and brought to order.

What is unique about the book is its richness of information about the Mau Mau movement. As an outsider of Bangladeshi descent the author's comparative view of Kenya and Bangladesh provides an advantage for understanding how the British went about consolidating power and colonizing their constituents. Particularly useful is his analysis of how understanding the Mau Mau history makes it possible to critique today's political system. I only wish the author had discussed this even further to draw a line as to the importance of history in determining good governance.

As a Kenyan it is interesting how much I have learned about my own history from reading this book. It should constitute critical reading for social sciences departments and African politics and history units in Kenyan universities. It makes a useful contribution not only to understanding the crafting and structure of an anti-colonial political movement but also to understanding the objectives of such movements and using these objectives as a subversion to today's political crisis.

In conclusion the author effectively communicated the importance of understanding Mau Mau as a critical component of Kenya's history. The ease in which he uses a wide array of illustrations from Kenya's past makes it easier for the reader to understand some of his fundamental assertions. His discussion on the gap that exists in the knowledge of Kenya's colonial history and the reasons for this makes the work an objective piece for understanding the leading Kenyan aristocrats. Overall the text's content enables the reader to understand the Mau Mau not as an ethnic entity but as a nationalist movement of men and women who sacrificed so as to ensure the freedom of Kenya.

Grace Maina  
*University of Bedford*

**Richard Price. *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.**

This is a different history of the British empire. It is a profound exploration of the dynamics of the encounter between the Xhosa peoples and the British. Its setting is the eastern Cape frontier of South Africa in the first half of the nineteenth century. Outside Britain, Richard Price discovered a mine of unused colonial archives, uncommon imperial subjects and a conventionally untold story of the empire. He, therefore, concocted an interesting brew of British culture at the frontier of empire. *Making Empire* investigates the way colonial encounters produced a culture of imperial rule.

On the basis of disorganized, eccentrically classified but remarkably useful colonial archives which include reports of British colonial officials, records of imperial administration, and missionary archives, the author wrote a vivid and well-documented history of the aims, practices, values, mindsets and ideologies of imperial agents like governors, military officers, missionaries and even intruders. These sources disclosed what the imperial agents were doing as they interacted with Xhosa culture. Similarly, they revealed what the former thought about what they were doing at the imperial frontier.

Why the Xhosa peoples, not the reputed Zulus? This is not a puzzle; the Zulus did not resist British rule for nearly a century, the Xhosa did. The predominance of the Zulus in the British imagination is indeed a British construct. The reality, a problematic one, is that in the eastern Cape relentless British expansion met with deep resistance of the Xhosa peoples. What is surprising, however, is how the British neglected the history of the first African people whom they had to decide how to rule.

This history of the empire breaks good ground insofar as it gives a voice to both the imperial ruler and the imperial subject. The colonial encounter, by its nature, was a space of inter-relationships and hybridity, where the behaviour of the coloniser depended on and was conditioned by that of the colonised and vice versa. The colonial project was a hegemonic enterprise but a fragile one, since hegemony had to be negotiated and defended to be maintained. In a sense, the empire was real in the metropole, not at the frontier where it was not secure. At the origin of this fragility and insecurity were the imperial subjects, the Xhosa peoples, who remained deeply attached to their culture and resisted any accommodation to the British terms of cultural framework.

This dark aspect of the empire figures little in the imperial historiography. Richard Price offers us detailed and sad accounts of how British imperial agents met the Xhosa and failed in imposing an imperial culture, a civilised, liberal and progressive culture, the imperial authorities claimed. It has to be noted that the Xhosa interacted with the British at many levels and developed a relationship of mutuality and reciprocity, cooperation and contention with them since their advent in the late eighteenth century.

The first part of the book is an extensive study of what happened to missionary culture as it met the Xhosa. Shrewsbury, Cumming, Niven, Williams, Barker, and others were the missionaries who came to the frontier with a deep sense of optimism. They came straight out of the culture of eighteenth-century evangelicalism, which placed at the center of its religious and social thought the power of individual salvation and the doctrinal certainty that God was in control of the world. For most of these uneducated, highly spiritual and zealous evangelical missionaries, there was every reason to expect Xhosa conversion to proceed easily and rapidly. For these strongly engaged field missionaries civilization was subsidiary to conversion. They resided with the Xhosa peoples, lived their lives, interacted with them, experienced the true and tough frontier, yet failed in their mission. The Xhosa people proved intellectually and culturally impermeable to missionary attempts of conversion. The cultural encounter with the Xhosa peoples was partial, short-lived and, therefore, destabilized missionary culture to the extent that these culturally relativist missionaries soon turned essentially racist. Their objective, optimistic, and open discourse shifted into a radically subjective, pessimistic and closed one. A different understanding and a new encounter with the Xhosa were called for.

The imperial state interaction with the Xhosa is what the second part of the book is about. The religious mission was imploded and this motivated the state's intervention. The cultural interaction of the missionaries gave place to a settler culture and to the state's indirect rule. Missionaries closed their minds to the Xhosa and adopted a new discourse and a different strategy to meet them. The Xhosa peoples were now perceived as a degenerate race unable to survive and destined for extinction. They could not embrace the benefits that the British culture offered them. By the 1830s, a new knowledge system about the Xhosa was established. It perceived them as cunning, deceitful, and inveterate thieves and irredeemably savage; their chiefs, who were the major link with the imperial administration, were seen as conspiring manipulators and agents of tyranny. Great Xhosa chiefs, such as Maqoma, Ngqika, Mhala, and Xhoxho, for long reputed for their wisdom, intellect and political vocation, came to be seen as obstacles to the spread of British civilization and progress.

Imperial Britain's new knowledge system retreated into ignorance. The Xhosa peoples, who refused to cease to be Xhosa, became the enemies of the empire and joined the characters of the imperial literature of stereotypes. No options were left but coercion, force, humiliation and violence against the Xhosa. This book ends with a sad note, that of the brutalities and atrocities that marked the history of the British relations with the Xhosa.

This sensitive study of the brutal conquest of Africa by the British is useful for the student of history, anthropology, and cultural studies as well as for those who still have nostalgia for the empire.

Adel Manai

*Institut Supérieur des Sciences Humaines de Tunis, Université Tunis El-Manar*

**Jeremy Rich. *A Workman is Worthy of His Meat: Food and Colonialism in the Gabon Estuary*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007.**

Contributing to the burgeoning scholarship about the history of food and its historical influences, *A Workman is Worthy of His Meat* offers a crucial sharpening of historical perspectives on the ways in which French colonialism, and its lasting effects, have shaped food supply and consumption in the Gabon Estuary. Pointing out that scholars of African history have typically focused on food supply and consumption only in times of crisis, Jeremy Rich attempts to redress this imbalance by analyzing the everyday diets of urban (specifically Libreville) and rural residents of the Gabon Estuary from 1840 to 1960. Rich argues that analyzing the daily culinary habits of Libreville residents offers an insight on the colonial urban and rural transformation and experience in Gabon.

Rich unpacks his main arguments in seven chapters that are presented thematically and chronologically. What links the chapters together is the author's overarching assertion that French colonialism disturbed the culinary and agricultural habits of the Gabonese, thereby forcing urban areas like Libreville to find other pathways to the accumulation of food. For example, Rich outlines several reasons for the lasting food shortages in Libreville. One explanation was the heavy reliance of domestic slavery. The author underlines that because Gabon was on the Atlantic coast, the slave trade slowly began infiltrating the Estuary in the mid-eighteenth century, particularly in Mpongwe coastal communities. As a result, rooted domestic slavery greatly impacted the diets of Mpongwe, for it was slaves who cultivated the land and prepared the meals. However, there were also culinary shifts under French occupation and colonialism beginning in 1840. The French disdained slavery and pushed for its elimination. As domestic slavery declined, Libreville residents, who did not want to farm themselves, began to rely heavily on imported food from Europe and other areas of Africa. In pointing out this historical trend, Rich is careful to note that African eating practices never disappeared. The author reminds readers that African and European culinary habits intersected and borrowed from one another. Hence, the culinary (and cultural) habits of the Gabon Estuary became a hybrid of European and African influences.

This is clearly an erudite and scholarly book rooted in the extensive use of a wide array of sources—clearly a noteworthy strength of the book. The author utilizes diverse sources, such as interviews and records from Gabon and France. This helps the author

to provide a useful synthesis of issues of colonialism, food supply and production, and changing access to food.

A key strength of Rich's book is embedded in the useful background information he provides for the Gabon Estuary. The author discusses the country's colonial past, its ties to slavery, its environment, and even the ethnic groupings of the people. For example, he explains who the Mpongwe people are (a small ethnic community that was highly influential in the Gabon Estuary until French occupation in 1840). Equipped with the beginning knowledge of the historical context in which Rich frames the book's main themes and arguments, readers will be better able to approach and understand how culinary habits and access to food changed in colonial Gabon.

Rich's work also positively diverges from many African historical texts in that he carefully weaves in the roles that women (both African and European) played in transforming Gabonese culinary habits. Though the author points out in his introduction that "constructions of gender are not on the table," he impressively intertwines the historical narratives of women as part of his larger arguments and explorations (p. xvii). For instance, in the 1920s, many Mpongwe women in Libreville protested colonial policies on food production by demanding that restrictions and fines on food be lifted. In highlighting such events, the author acknowledges the important roles that African women have played in shaping the political, social, and economic facets of their societies. Though not a book specifically focused on gender roles, this text is an excellent example of how historical narratives of African women can be utilized to better shape the understanding of historical events.

A drawback of the text is that there is some confusion over exactly how European and African eating habits started to diverge in the twentieth century. The author claims throughout that African and European culinary practices always intersected and that even today the country's colonial legacy shapes contemporary culinary practices. He points out, however, that from the early twentieth century Europeans started to distance themselves from African culinary habits. He stresses that multiple factors such as strict racial lines in Libreville and changing attitudes toward race and hygiene influenced this change. Unfortunately, the author leaves several significant questions unanswered such as, did Africans, like Europeans, also try to distance themselves from European foods? How complete was the divergence of European and African eating habits? It is hard to believe that European food in Gabon today is not somehow influenced by African culinary practices.

This is an excellent book despite its shortcomings. *A Workman is Worthy of His Meat* contributes significantly to the understanding of multiple forms of history—colonial, economic, political, food, and cultural history. Scholars and graduate students in these fields will greatly benefit from the text. As graduate reading seminar, students will gain from the book's insights such as the linkage between colonialism and changing culinary habits. The text will also provide students with a foundation for discussion and critical

analysis of the historical impacts of colonialism and the agency and roles that the colonized assert in their lives.

Jacqueline-Bethel Mougoué  
*Purdue University*

**Jay Straker. *Youth, Nationalism, and the Guinean Revolution*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.**

Focusing on the cultural and moral development of Guinean youth during the period 1958-1984, this book provides a penetrating exposé of an understudied population during a turbulent time in Guinean history. According to Guinea's first president, Sékou Touré, it was the youth who would fight imperialism, promote cultural authenticity, and establish national unity. As the first generation of citizens fully formed during the First Republic, the youth would spearhead the development of the revolutionary nation-state. Straker's book is the first major examination of this important topic.

Departing from previous works about the First Republic, which tend to be either intensely critical or overly laudatory of the Touré regime, Straker's work is characterized by nuance, complexity, and texture. Straker attempts to understand Guinean youth from the inside and from the bottom up. He delves into the experiences of those who came of age during revolution, asking how the revolution shaped their social identities and historical imagination, and how they, in turn, affected the way the revolution played itself out. His primary sources include the writings of Sékou Touré, *Horoya*—the official organ of the party-state—party tracts, newspapers produced by teachers and youth, films, novels, poems, and memoirs written by Guinean intellectuals, photographs, popular plays, and numerous interviews with male and female participants, most notably from the forest region. Basing his claims on information gleaned from these sources, Straker rejects the received wisdom that grants absolute, tyrannical power to Sékou Touré and reduces the Guinean people to one dimensional figures devoid of agency, whose postcolonial history consists only of oppression. Straker argues that Guinea was composed not only of two groups—those with power and those without; rather, it was divided by a multiplicity of conflicting and overlapping categories, including ethnicity, region, religion, generation, gender, and class.

The Guinean revolution was characterized by intense conflict in multiple arenas. Turning tradition on its head, the party-state promoted young people over their elders, granting them a political role unimaginable in earlier times. In their attempts to

transform both town and countryside, the youth challenged local authority structures for the power and authority to define nation and culture. Nor were the youth homogeneous. They were divided into schooled and unschooled, urban and rural—with the unschooled and rural idealized by the state as authentic, untainted by French culture and individualist aspirations. During the First Republic, Western-educated urban youth were compelled to go to the countryside to engage in manual labor and to receive the wisdom of their rural counterparts. It was with this authentic indigenous knowledge that the new youth were to transform the nation.

Rejecting the unspoken assumption that Conakry and the coastal towns represent the nation, Straker asks how the revolution was experienced in the interior—particularly, in the remote forest region. In the process, he demonstrates the state’s ambivalence toward the forest and its peoples. While idealizing the rural populace in general, the state withheld its seal of approval from the forest region, with its unfamiliar rites and rituals that struck fear into the hearts of the predominantly Muslim ruling elite. From 1959 to 1961, it carried out a harsh demystification campaign against the forest entities it could not control, destroying fetishes and other objects central to forest religions and cultures. The campaign was implemented by forest youth and widely resisted by local elders. Gender conflict also ensued, as the state forced male elders to reveal secrets previously off-limits to women.

Other groups also resisted state impositions. Intellectuals in the urban areas protested educational reforms that rejected the French-centered colonial curriculum and threatened their privileged social positions. In 1961 and again in 1965, the state cracked down on teachers and students, whose allegiance to the revolution was in question. The “Socialist Cultural Revolution,” launched in 1968, initiated major reforms that were intended to transform the national culture and economy. Reluctant to rely on schools to complete the task, the state turned to militant theater, dance, and music—“authentic” African culture—to accomplish its goals. Local and national theatrical and dance competitions, with mandatory participation, became the preferred locales for capturing youth allegiance and imagination. Forced participation resulted in more conflicts with students who preferred to spend their time in study, with parents who protested their loss of control over their children’s time and labor, and especially with the parents of girls, who feared the widespread sexual harassment and abuse associated with some of the cultural troupes. However, there was also a positive side. The final competitions, held in the Conakry, brought together youth of all ethnicities and regions. Performing “Guinean culture” in the capital, these youth could truly imagine themselves as a nation.

The only weakness in Straker’s book is a function of the complexity of his task. The book is divided into two parts—the first laying the theoretical and historical groundwork for the youth revolution, the second focusing on experiences in the forest region. While the first part is necessary, the second is by far the most compelling. It is

there that the voices of ordinary people make the story their own. A more dynamic opening, incorporating African voices, would give the reader a preview of the richness of the book's second half. These points aside, the book makes an important contribution to the historiography of independent Guinea. It is mandatory reading for graduate students and scholars interested in youth, revolution, and nation-building in Guinea and elsewhere.

Elizabeth Schmidt  
*Loyola College, Maryland*

**Thomas Benjamin. *The Atlantic World: Europeans, Africans, Indians and their Shared History, 1400-1900*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.**

The growth of Atlantic history has called for the production of textbooks to consolidate and render masses of new research into a coherent story. The new Atlantic history, as opposed to an older tradition which addressed primarily European expansion and its colonial activities in America, pays more attention to the non-European actors—Africans and Native Americans. Benjamin's attempt falls firmly into this latter school, as indeed the work is structured around the meeting and interaction of European, Africans, and Indians.

The book begins with antecedents, a quick sketch of Africa, America, and Europe on the eve of contact that is fairly comprehensive, covering both mighty empires and decentralized polities in all continents. This is followed by sections outlining the mostly political interactions between them. "Conquests" deals with attempts of Europeans to conquer and dominate parts of Africa and the familiar stories of Spanish conquest in the Americas, and including the Portuguese conquest of coastal Brazil, rounded out by a short account of Morocco's conquest of the Songhay Empire in West Africa. "Realms" outlines Spanish society in post Conquest America and similar Portuguese societies in Brazil and western Africa, notably Angola. A section following then brings in the northern Europeans, first by describing Spanish America's international trade and the incursions of French, Dutch, English, and other Europeans into the realm, including the creation of colonies. Here Benjamin is admirably comprehensive, including colonial ventures in the Caribbean and South America and noting the work of the Dutch and other lesser colonial powers.

While Benjamin's first part is unusual in its comprehensiveness, the story that he tells in is more or less an expected one. In the second half, however, he engages much newer themes. "Engagement" describes, again with multi-regional focus the way in which Europeans and indigenous Americans interacted in the New World created by

the political maneuvering of the first section. After dealing with Spanish government in conquered America, Benjamin also brings in the missionary efforts, not only in Mexico and Peru, but also in Paraguay and in Canada. This is then followed by two back to back chapters dealing with the slave trade and the African experience in slavery, again showing a good regional balance between North and South America. An interesting and engaging chapter, "Partners" explores the wide ranging sexual and gender relations between Europeans and various non-Europeans ranging from the casual "wives of the coast" in Africa, through the elite marriages of Spanish conquistadors with Aztec and Inca nobility, to the temporary marriages of French backwoodsmen and their Huron consorts.

"Rivals" moves back to inter-European rivalries of the eighteenth century occasionally involving indigenous people as participants, followed by chapters that cover the Age of Revolution, including the American, Dutch and French Revolutions; then the Haitian Revolution, the liberation of Spanish America, and the independence of Brazil. The final chapter tells the story of the abolition of slavery and the slave trade.

*The Atlantic World* is a good representation of the themes of the New Atlantic History, which focuses on exactly the sort of questions and interactions that Benjamin chooses. It is particularly commendable for the ease with which both Americas and Africa are included in the Atlantic World. He has been attentive to recent literature and themes, though as this is not a work of primary scholarship, the book adds little in any specific area to that fund. Furthermore, in some areas, notably the African sections, it presents some distressing errors. Benjamin, for example, presents the Portuguese presence in the Gold Coast in far too "colonial" a light, as if there had been a conquest. He also seriously misstates the story of Kongo's engagement with Portugal, relegating its Golden Age from about 1580 to 1665 as a period of isolation and decay. His step is generally surer on the American regions. On the whole, then, the book is likely to be a worthwhile textbook for classes devoted to the New Atlantic History at the undergraduate level.

John K. Thornton  
*Boston University*

**Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator. *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*. New York, NY: Orbis Books, 2008.**

Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator writes that his book "offers neither sophisticated arguments nor complicated analysis of the different themes of content of Christian faith. It is not even a technical recipe for doing theology." Rather, it "offers an invitation to

drink, savor, and celebrate theology in an African context (p. 10). For him, theology is the practice of “talking sensible about God,” and “faith seeking understanding and hope” (pp. 3,5). This last quote is telling. Saying that faith in God is required to do theology leaves little room for doubters and non-believers. Orobator does not “intend to make the vexing question of God’s existence or nonexistence the starting point of our reflection on God.” He continues by saying: “If you think this assumption does not adequately express your situation in life, read no further. This book is not for you” (p. 15).

It is clear that Orobator writes for only the believer and views theology as a discipline that does not question God’s existence. For him the philosophical arguments for and against God’s existence fall outside of the domain of theology. Whether these questions are properly called theological is an interesting question, but not one I shall dwell on. I bring it up to highlight Orobator’s view of the relationship between theology and philosophy and the limitations of such a view. He thinks that secular reasoning has no place in theology. One limitation of such a view is that it makes it difficult to enter into dialogue with potential converts who approach questions about what they should believe from a view point based on critical reasoning. Is not understanding the nature of God open to those who are not born believing in him?

In an African context, Orobator thinks that there are no such beings. He provides a quote from John Mbiti: “All African people believe in God. They take this belief for granted.” He completely agrees with Mbiti (p. 19). It is hard to know how Orobator and Mbiti want us to understand this claim. It’s surely false if they mean it literally. I get the feeling, though, that this is how Orobator intends us to understand this claim, which is a problem because there are no doubt Africans who have questioned and doubted the existence of God.

I bring some of these things up to point out some ways in which I think this book could have been better. Had it appealed to philosophy at certain points it could have made difficult theological questions less unsettling. Before providing examples, I will note Orobator’s general method and the structure of the book. The book is divided into 11 chapters. The first two chapters serve as an introduction, and the rest discuss issues such as the triune nature of god, creation, grace, the meaning of “church,” the role of Mary in African Christianity, the place of ancestors in African religion, the relationship between faith and culture and inculturation, and African spirituality in general. A short set of questions for reflection and inspirational prayers follow each chapter. The book also takes inspiration from Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, and takes examples from that book as starting points for discussion. Each chapter begins with a quick account of what the Bible and church teachings have to say of the particular matter at hand, then Orobator puts the subject of the chapter in an African context. In the rest of this review, I shall focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the book.

I mentioned earlier that the book could benefit from philosophy. Let me give an example. Orobator wants his readers to get a better understanding of the Trinity, which he says is mysterious. He does not think that abstract reflection can yield much insight into this matter. He is in general skeptical of purely abstract theologizing and says at many points that his method of doing theology depends on lived experiences. That is all well and good. But let us look at some of things he says about the triune nature of God, which he could have been made clearer with more reasoning. He says that the concept of the Trinity is the idea that there are three persons in one God. Of course, we all know that there is God, his son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. But what sense is there to calling all three of these people as Orobator does? Is God a person? Is the Holy Spirit? I would certainly think that they are not. Jesus was a person (at least in part), that's for sure. However, it is a category mistake to think of the Trinity as being a relationship of three persons in one God.

Of course the Trinity is difficult to understand when we articulate it in terms of three people. Orobator turns to African thought to help us solve this puzzle. This is a good method: it looks at previously untapped ways of thinking to solve problems, and it gives those preaching to Africans a way to articulate the Trinity. He uses the idea *Obirin meta*, which conveys the notion of "a woman who combines the strength, character, personality, and beauty of three women" (p. 31). This metaphor is supposed to help because we can understand how one woman could have this sort of strength. So, we should not let the mysteriousness of the Trinity get in the way of our closeness to God. Orobator then goes on to say that "*Obirin meta* symbolizes the abundant and radical open-endedness of God in God's self and in our encounters of God. The veil of mystery is lifted, and we are able to recognize the God who enters into our experiences and meets us where we are" (pp. 32-33).

What, then, is *Obirin meta* intended to symbolize: the triune nature of God or the idea that God is in our experiences? It is hard to see a clear answer here. This is one of the weakness of the book. Orobator wants to use this symbol to do too much. It does not really help us understand the triune nature of God. It may distract us from the mystery by diverting our attention, but it does nothing to remove the mystery. Had he engaged in a bit of philosophy, we could have made the situation a bit less mysterious. First, we should think of the Trinity not as three persons in one person, but as three roles of one entity.<sup>1</sup> This is how Orobator could have used his metaphor: to show us how we can understand one person playing different roles. Just as a man can be father, lawyer and husband, so can an entity be God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. We need to think of the Trinity in this way and not as three persons in one God. This is the sort of philosophical reasoning--the avoidance of category mistakes--that would have helped Orobator.<sup>2</sup>

There are many strengths in Orobator's method, though, and we do get many insights into the nature of Christianity in an African context. Let me focus on an example. His writing on the nature of sin in and out of an African context is interesting.

Orobator notes that in Africa one does not, as they say, sin against God. One's sin is felt by the entire community. Repenting for one's sins also involves the entire community, an idea very much in conflict with the Western view of confession.

There are more insights into the nature of African religion, especially in the last chapter. We learn that religion in an African context is not only a Sunday affair: it permeates every aspect of culture. Experience is more important to African religion than abstract theory. The Protestant idea that we have a one-on-one relationship with God is very different from the African idea that a community has a relationship with God, and each individual has a role to play in that relationship. Despite these interesting observations, however, we do not quite get much theology. Orobator states a few times that in an African context religion is about experience and one's everyday relationships and not about abstract matters. That theology in an African context is concrete and not abstract would be one way to sum up the view. No doubt that concrete, everyday religious experiences are important, and perhaps it is true that God permeates every aspect of life in Africa. But if theology is just that, and not a reflection on these experiences, reflection which is abstract, it is hard to see what sense there is to calling that theology. It sounds more like living to me. I bring this up in order to suggest again that this book could have benefitted from more reasoning of the theological and philosophical sort. Many of the claims are in need of justification that is not found in the book. For example, Orobator says, "Africans know God from birth" (p. 154). This is a fascinating thesis, and one that is far from obviously true, and, therefore, in need of justification. Are Africans the only people who know God from birth? If so, what explains it? All in all, though, the book does achieve its goal of wetting our appetite for a fuller treatment of this interesting topic.

## Notes

1. "Entity" is a term which has a broader extension than "person." Every person is an entity, but not every entity is a person. Molecules, tables, clouds, the number 3 and I are all entities, but just I am a person. Surely it makes more sense to say that God is an entity than a person.
2. This term 'category mistake' comes from Gilbert Ryle. A category mistake is a conceptual mistake. For example, if I say that the number 2 is heavy, I make a conceptual mistake. Numbers can't be heavy, nor can they be light; they are abstract and have no weight.

Casey Woodling  
*University of Florida*

**Ronald Nicolson (ed.). *Persons in Community: African Ethics in a Global Culture*. Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008.**

*Persons in Community* is a collection of essays commissioned by the Unilever Ethics Centre at the University of KwaZulu-Natal that gets ambitious billing in its introduction. Sadly, it fails to live up to its billing. The book sets out to answer four important ethical questions: “Is there such a thing as a set of African ethics? What constitutes African ethics? Are African Ethics consistent with, or different from, the prevailing set of Western ethics (however confusing and disarrayed Western ethics may seem to be)? Do African ethics have anything valuable to say, not only to an African context, but also in a wider world?” (p. 1).

There are other interesting, related questions which arise in the book: To what extent can the concepts and moral imperatives that constitute African and western ethical systems fit into the same dialogue? Is western ethics at odds with the basic African worldview? These are all very interesting questions in need of answers. The book’s seven essays do not answer them in a completely satisfactory way, however. Some stray too far from the above questions by discussing solutions to the HIV and AIDS epidemic, aspects of the assimilation of capitalism in Africa, the importance of traditional African healing, and whether or not the Truth and Reconciliation Commission did justice to all South Africans. These are all important issues, but the discussions of them take focus away from the above questions. Only one essay (Shutte’s “African Ethics in a Globalising World”) discusses in-depth the parallels between the views of certain contemporary Thomist (hence western) thinkers and African ethics. Furthermore, only one essay (Mkhize’s “*Ubuntu* and Harmony: An African Approach to Ethics”) directly and properly discusses what constitutes African ethics. Perhaps it is best to view this collection as a first attempt to answer the four key questions and not a comprehensive answer.

There, nevertheless, is a picture of African ethics that emerges from this book, one centered on the concept of *ubuntu*, a familiar word to South Africans. It is of Bantu origin, and has translations in other African languages (e.g., ‘maat’ in Egyptian); yet there is no one-word translation in English. Even so, we can talk about this concept in English. More than one author says that *ubuntu* is the idea that a person is a person through other people. This concept captures the communalism in which we typically think African societies are rooted. Perhaps the clearest articulation in the book comes from a quotation of Desmond Tutu:

A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished, when others are tortured and oppressed, or treated as if there were less than who they are (p. 68).

Nhlanhla Mkhize writes: "*Ubuntu*, the process of becoming an ethical human being, is the process by which balance or the 'orderedness of being' (Karenga 2004, 191) is affirmed. This is realized through relationships characterized by interdependence, justice, solidarity of humankind, respect, empathy and caring. From this perspective, then, ethics is not a matter of individual legislation by abstract, solitary thinkers; rather, it is grounded in practical life and human action" (36). This last part of this quotation supposedly shows how a *ubuntu*-centered moral theory is different from traditionally western ethical thinking.

*Ubuntu* seems to be, in part, a realization of the shared fate of humanity. First, one must understand that others are as valuable as oneself and that one's own fate depends on others. Second, one must act in light of this realization. *Ubuntu*, then, is an ethical attitude and motivation that one acts in light of and because of. It is a concept grounded in empathy. This is surely a concept that is important, perhaps of utmost importance to ethics. The notion of *ubuntu* could use a fuller articulation in this book. It is, after all, difficult to translate in Western languages, according to more than one author in this book.

Understanding *ubuntu* helps us to understand the answers to the four questions. African ethics have the concept of *ubuntu* to contribute to western ethics, which many of the authors see as flawed for its focus on man as a solitary individual. The essays are united by rejecting the flawed perspective of Western ethics: a lack of focus on the interdependence of community and individual, and the necessity of community for the growth of the individual. The answer to what constitutes African ethics and whether there is such a thing as African ethics could be more developed, but what we see is that there is an African ethics, and it is constituted by the notion of *ubuntu*. As I said, a comprehensive articulation of the concept of *ubuntu* would be needed if one is to fully answer our above questions.

In closing, I should note that the essays' general criticism of western ethics is an attack against a straw man. One weakness of many of these essays is that they fall into the trap of thinking that the entirety of western ethics sees man as an isolated individual in search of pursuing his own self-interest. This—certainly at odds with *ubuntu*—has also been criticized by many within the Western tradition. If we truly want to understand how the key concepts of African and western ethics can contribute to our moral lives, to our lives as global citizens, then the many perspectives of western ethics—and not the too simple articulation in this book—will be given their due alongside African ethics.

Casey Woodling  
*University of Florida*