

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **Contemporary Perspectives on East African Pastoralism**

*The Pastoral Continuum: The Marginalization of Tradition in East Africa.* Paul Spencer. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000. Pp. 302.

*The Poor are Not Us: Poverty & Pastoralism.* David M. Anderson & Vigdis Broch-Due (eds.). Oxford: James Currey, 1999. Pp. 276.

The recent severe drought in northern Kenya dramatically illustrates the need to broaden our understanding about African pastoralism. According to the United Nations World Food Program, nearly thirty-five percent of children under five are suffering from malnutrition in the region. The food aid agency describes Wajir District as virtually without cattle, and other sources have put the loss of cattle in the north as high as seventy percent. As donor agencies consider what they can do to alleviate the hunger and suffering of the millions affected by the catastrophe, they would do well to consult the two volumes discussed here. Spencer's impressive monograph is the product of more than forty years work by one of the doyens of British anthropology and *The Poor are Not Us* represents the discerning contributions of leading scholars in Europe and the United States ably integrated by its two editors. Both books speak to the related issues of poverty and development.

The geographical area under examination is essentially the same in the two works. Spencer's study of the "pastoral continuum" focuses mainly on the cattle-centered pastoral groups of East Africa. These peoples are bounded in the north by desert and Islamic communities and to the south and west by tsetse-fly belts. Ecological barriers block the further spread of cattle herding and adherence to Islam alters the nature of power relationships within those societies that adhere to it. The exception to this geographical overlap is Bernhard Helander's study of camel-herding Hubeer Somali in the Trans-Juba region of southern Somalia in the Anderson and Broch-Due anthology.

An important part of Spencer's analysis is its historical perspective. Spencer, whose anthropological works have consistently demonstrated his unique appreciation of historical processes, again argues that in order to understand pastoralism, one must recognize how it has changed over time. Part Two of his book examines the history of the Chamus from the nineteenth century to the present. The Chamus's transition to a pastoral lifestyle under the aegis of the pax Britannica and the resulting changes they made in their age organization underscore their adaptability to the challenge of colonialism. Following independence, however, Spencer maintains that the Chamus age-system has become unsustainable even to the point where warriorhood has lost most of its meaning. Elsewhere, Spencer shows how historically, elders

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v5/v5i2reviews.pdf>

have reinterpreted tradition in order to respond to challenges to their way of life. He emphasizes their resiliency and ability to accommodate change, and uses the example of the Ariaal who switched between cattle and camel-herding over time according to changing circumstances. Using the example of the ethnic and cultural differences between the Turkana and Samburu, Spencer contends that there existed an "indigenous concept of 'tribe'" (p. 18) already in the precolonial period. Yet, he also notes how this concept was subject to abandonment in times of ecological adversity and how colonialism altered it. Likewise with respect to age-sets, Spencer states, "Generally, the evidence points towards a creeping change, and the resilience of the age systems may have been precisely their ability to adapt rather than persist unchanged. The age systems in the remote areas may have survived, not despite colonial and post-colonial interventions, but rather because they adapted at each stage" (p. 128).

As in *The Pastoral Continuum*, there is a strong sense of history in the Anderson and Broch-Due volume. Richard Waller's chapter is a perceptive and innovative one considering the difficulty of detailing previous instances of pastoral poverty due to scant references in archival records and oral histories. Basing his analysis mainly on the Maasai, Waller stresses the fundamental link between wealth and power, while also emphasizing the significance of age and gender in the allocation of resources in herding societies. Waller further presents a nuanced treatment of the impact of colonialism on the pastoral economy giving the reader a better understanding of the subtleties behind the marginalization of herders in Maasailand and northern Kenya. Broch-Due's contribution on the Turkana adds weight to Waller's thesis concerning the difficulty of gaining a complete understanding of pastoral poverty. She argues that the Turkana omit "losers," or those who have become poor and exited the local economy, from oral traditions. Nevertheless, Broch-Due is able to comment on all the aspects of the Turkana's past as well as their present circumstances with skill. In this case, again, distinctions of age and gender are of prime importance to the "moral economy" of the Turkana.

Spencer's earlier works have mainly focused on generational rather than gender and family issues. Likewise, *The Pastoral Continuum* emphasizes the significance of age systems to pastoral societies particularly the insightful chapter entitled, "The dynamics of age systems in East Africa." This does not mean, however, that as Spencer stresses the gerontocratic and patriarchal nature of pastoralism, that he ignores the fundamental importance of women and the family. Indeed, Spencer links these together, explaining how age systems are "an institutionalized way of controlling strains within the family" (p. 19). He points out that herding is not simply an individual, male domain—women are essential to trade and food production and the family are vital to growth. He argues that all are part of a wider, "moral community." In addition, Spencer notes how relations within pastoral societies are dynamic. Thus, the ability of younger men to acquire money through employment and trade to be used as a medium of bride-wealth has had the concomitant effect of increasing their power at the expense of that of the elders. Polygyny, to which Spencer devotes a chapter of his book, is an indication of the distribution of wealth and power within pastoralist societies.

The issue of gender is integral to *The Poor are Not Us*. Thus, while highlighting the relationship between dignity and poverty, Aud Talle's chapter discusses issues of sexuality between Maasai men and female prostitutes in a northern Tanzanian border town. Dorothy Hodgson's contribution on Tanzanian Maasai is a provocative reexamination of what she

describes as "narrow, ahistorical, gendered image[s] of pastoralists" (p. 222). According to Hodgson, Maasai women suffered a double deprivation under colonialism: not only did the Maasai become marginalized as an ethnic group, but Maasai men deprived females of traditionally shared rights to cattle as well. With these facts in mind, she is critical of the ill-conceived development projects initiated in the past, since they generally have been based on false assumptions that treat women as irrelevant to pastoral production. One certainly cannot take issue with Hodgson's plea for aid agencies to consider women's perspectives when considering developmental interventions. On the other hand, her advocacy of introducing cultivation, if this implies the widespread applicability of agriculture, bears closer inspection when one considers the historical failure of such projects elsewhere in pastoral domains. Indeed, within the same anthology the case study of the Rendille by Fratkin, Nathan, and Roth concludes "that alienating pastoralists from their livestock leads to impoverishment, not only of the body, but the spirit as well" (p. 162).

Regarding the issue of development, Spencer is relatively pessimistic. To Spencer, the herders are "caught in an ecological trap" (p. 5) caused by human and livestock population increases and the expansion of market relations into peripheral, semiarid areas. The generally optimistic pastoralists are unable to cope with the contradiction between their hunger for bigger herds and the environmental degradation their feeding animals inevitably engender. Moreover, they remain uncaptured by a money economy and capitalism as they are reluctant to diminish their cattle herds or diversify their economy and remain tied to the "moral boundaries" (p. 44) of tradition. Finally, Spencer notes the widening gap between rich and poor with the wealthy gaining control over land and the poor increasingly having to seek wage-paying jobs as herders.

The contributors to the edited book present the broader context that development planners need to consider as they devise ways to help herding peoples. Thus, Hellander gives insights into the social dimensions that are associated with Somali poverty. In a similar manner, Tomasz Potkanski analyzes clan-based institutions for wealth redistribution among Ngorongoro Maasai and advocates their revitalization as a means of facilitating development. Rekdal and Blystad not only put contrasting Datooga and Iraqw attitudes towards the future into historical perspective, but they also demonstrate how religious attitudes influence access to wealth. Zaal and Dietz's well done comparative study of the impact of commoditization in Kenya's West Pokot and Kajiado Districts distinguishes between the survival strategies undertaken by the poor and the way the wealthy respond to economic challenges. Anderson's final chapter examines the successes and failures of development efforts since they were first undertaken on a large scale in the colonial era sixty years ago. His dispassionate treatment of contentious issues and his unwillingness to prescribe a universal panacea for the problem of pastoral poverty makes a fitting conclusion to the anthology.

Both of these books have much to recommend them. Taken together, their bibliographies are extensive and up-to-date. Spencer not only integrates his vast knowledge of East African herders, but reminds his readers of "the wider links between pastoralism and other forms of livelihood" (p.5). The contributors in *The Poor are Not Us* likewise succeed in their task of presenting a more holistic view of pastoral societies. They go beyond the widely held stereotypes that herders are conservative egalitarians and challenge the notion that pastoralism is a doomed means of subsistence. The scholarly articles demonstrate that one cannot

understand wealth simply in economic terms, but must also take into account social and cultural variables. Aid agencies would do well to consider this holistic approach to pastoral poverty before embarking on potentially misguided development projects in a part of Africa that is in crisis today.

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**"I Will Not Eat Stone": A Women's History of Colonial Asante. Jean Allman and Victoria Tashjian. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2000. Pp. 312.**

The politics of gender in colonial societies has taken center stage in the current renaissance of social history by Africanist historians. Jean Allman and Victoria Tashjian, two scholars examining various aspects of marriage and women's lives in the Asante society of Ghana, have written an impressive study on options and strategies available to the first generation of colonized women born between 1900 and 1920. This long-awaited book has happily proved itself worthy of the anticipation that preceded it. By viewing colonial rule through the lens of women's lives, this work adds a great deal to the already large number of historical works on Asante, as well as the history of gender in colonial Africa.

Innovation is an adjective commonly bandied about in book reviews. Unlike some other works considered revolutionary more for their style than their substance, this study is unique in many respects while discussing concerns previously covered by a number of scholars elsewhere in Africa. The authors succeed in disrupting chronologies that artificially highlight changes between colonial and pre-colonial periods, rather than consider the continuities and challenges faced in everyday lives. Additionally, their choice of exploring a single generation's experiences is a creative approach. In short, the book deserves much attention.

The introduction and chapter one serve to place this group of women in the larger context of Asante and colonial African history. In the first chapter, they reconsider the rise of money associated with the early twentieth century cocoa boom in Ghana by noting the prevalence of female traders at earlier points in Asante's history. Much as Diana Jeater and Elizabeth Schimdt have argued in colonial Rhodesia, the chaos of early colonial occupation in Asante disrupted older gender conventions and opened new opportunities for women to the growing chagrin of male elites and colonial administrators. While some issues are remarkably similar to other colonial experiences in Africa, others are not. For instance, missionary activities helped remake notions of gender in many African societies, however most Asante women before 1930 had little direct involvement with European church efforts.

Chapter two examines marriage practices during the early colonial period. The authors refer to marriage and child-rearing as "strategic entry points" (p. xxxix) that furnish the background information for later chapters on legal practices and women's strategies. Both show a slow process by which fluid marriage practices and relationships between families and children became undermined in the new money economy based in cocoa production. Pre-

colonial marriage practices were made up of a gradual series of negotiations rather than a fixed and linear progression. Many women and families used this ambiguity to test out the durability and benefits of relationships. While free women could turn to their families for aid and had some autonomy from husbands, slaves and pawns did not have such options of support. With the rise of cocoa and the slow end of servitude, husbands made increasing demands on their wives' labor. In turn, colonial courts gradually took a harder line against women by supporting decisions made by chiefs and the male-dominated African courts.

Ties between children and parents are the main topic of chapter three. In the late nineteenth century, uncles and matrikin had greater claims on children than did their (purportedly) biological fathers. Relationships between fathers and children changed due to new family models, educational institutions and greater demands for workers. Fathers, who were expected from the 1910s onward to furnish money for their children's clothes, their families' food costs and school fees, had a greater interest in maintaining control over their offspring. While in earlier times fathers held greater power over children born from pawns or slaves than those of free women, African courts and chiefs supported attempts by men to make more claims over all children. Uncles and fathers thus struggled for control of children, but eventually older ritual practices acknowledging the rights of matrikin faded from view. At the same time, these new arrangements led women and children to demand money and property from their husbands. While colonial courts increasingly favored husbands, they were less eager to support new rights of entitlement asserted by wives and children.

Women maneuvered through the increasing power of husbands and fathers in a variety of ways, as discussed in chapter four and five. Many turned to divorce, particularly as they saw their labor serving the interests of men who preferred spending money on other wives or mistresses. Some opted out of marriage entirely. At the same time, courts and chiefs placed pressure on the mandatory marriages of single women. Chiefs and courts revised earlier definitions of adultery to claim new rights over wives and children. Women's testimony became increasingly ignored in courts, especially in the 1930s. Such stories have a familiar ring when compared with the legal developments in southern Africa that were also occurring during this period.

Missionary developments in health care from the 1920s to 1940s are also discussed in chapter five. Some European female mission workers held classes on child care and domesticity. However, these programs only affected a small number of Asante women. Instead of imposing European views on African subjects directly, the programs seem to have slowly led to everyday practices largely governed by African women themselves. Considering the oral sources cited by the authors, the subject of health care training seems to have interested the scholars more than the African women who experienced it.

Overall, this volume is a welcome addition to the growing literature on women's lives in colonial Africa. Although this reviewer suspects those more familiar with Asante will find omissions in the study, the use of extensive interviews, legal sources and archival data are impressive. The authors' tracing of women's lives and options over time undo the traditional divisions of African history. The struggles and hard choices of Asante women are clearly and succinctly stated. Unlike some monographs on Asante history, this text yields insights for specialists and general readers alike.

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**Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts, African Conflict 'Medicine'. William I. Zartman (ed.). Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000. Pp. 230.**

Even though international agencies, governments, and private organizations have entered the 'business' of conflict resolution in ever increasing numbers, it is clear that most interventions in African conflicts have done little to prevent the continent from taking the debilitating course it has traversed over the last decade. The failure of these attempts demonstrates the need for more creative approaches to conflict resolution. The renewed interest in traditional techniques for settling conflicts can be seen in this light. Osaghae argues in the volume that the implementation of 'African' approaches is important, since it allows Africans to be both the authors and the owners of the resolutions, which are still all too often imposed from the outside without local input or taking account of the unique characteristics of a particular situation (chapter 13). For practitioners in the fields of conflict management, peace brokering and reconciliation, however, the book does not, fortunately, provide easy answers or quick fix solutions to the range of clashes that have plunged large parts of Africa into deep crisis. On the contrary, no attempt is made to side step the difficult questions, complexities or contradictions inherent in conflict resolution processes ongoing in Africa. Additionally, the contributors avoid romanticizing about pre-colonial societies existing in a perpetual utopian harmony and there are no unrealistic expectations about the possibilities of implementing or re-inventing traditional practices within a modern order.

The introduction and conclusion written by Zartman are both well thought out and presented clearly. The introduction focuses on a variety of topics, including the methodological problems associated with such complex issues as conceptualising 'tradition' and weighs in on the 'cultural relativism' versus 'human universalism' dichotomy. Zartman argues that traditions are cultural practices, which are not imported and continue to be practiced and reproduced. The authors equally acknowledge the dynamic and 'invented' character of traditions. However, while many others have considered this dimension problematic, here, the fluidity of tradition is presented as an advantage, since it leaves open the possibility of re-invention with a view to positive change.

In his introduction, Zartman stresses the heterogeneity of Africa, and thus concedes that the extent to which the selected case studies are representative for the whole of Africa remains doubtful. Rather than attempt the quite difficult task of making generalized statements about 'African' conflict, the authors distinguish between conflicts within the system (either between members of the society or challenging the hierarchy) or between systems. In the first section, a variety of cases, concentrating on conflict management in traditional societies are discussed. Unfortunately, echoing Zartman's introductory comments, Central Africa, which is currently experiencing numerous and complex instances of war and conflict, is not among the regions

represented. Although one could criticize this omission, it is unreasonable to expect all regions to be covered in a single volume. A recurring theme that appears throughout the first part of the book, is the issue of land (e.g. chapters 3 deals with cross border migration between Togo and Ghana and 4 examines pastoral populations). Since land related problems seem to lay at the core of a wide variety of conflicts throughout sub-Saharan Africa, the essays in this section are very relevant to events currently ongoing. The authors question how traditional conflict settlement can function when conditions have changed so dramatically, due to factors such as increased pressure on land, the introduction of new actors on the scene (e.g. the state), and the emergence of new patterns of migration. Part two of the book deals with similar issues but in a non-African context. However, given the fact that so many issues and regions of Africa have remained untouched in this volume, it is questionable whether these excursions to Lebanon, Cleveland and China were necessary at the expense of further analysis of the African situation.

Part three provides concrete examples of the application of traditional techniques in a modern context, including Ubuntu, which is a traditional philosophy of governance found in South Africa (chapter 11) and the involvement of traditional actors in Somalia (chapter 12). The concluding chapters by Osaghae (chapter 13) and Zartman (chapter 14) attempt to synthesize the arguments presented in the volume in search of both the realistic options and limits of traditional conflict management techniques for dealing with (post)modern conflicts in Africa. For readers who are not immediately familiar with any of the case studies, these last two chapters may well provide the most insightful reading. Osaghae identifies similarities within the traditional methods presented in the different case studies and concludes that traditional conflict settlement is largely directed towards re-integration. Many techniques, although highly localised and varied, contends Osaghae, could be integrated within modern negotiation and diplomacy strategies. However, the main obstacle to this approach is the fact that the moral order which underpins re-integration, has been smashed by modern conflicts and along with it, the common ground upon which peace can be rebuilt. While Osaghae believes that common ground is something that can be re-constructed, Zartman is less optimistic. "It is the third category of conflicts that eludes the experience of African conflict management, the conflicts against the community.... Yet this is the type of conflict that is most prevalent at the present time (p.227)."

This volume provides an interesting contribution to the debate on conflict management in Africa and makes a sound analysis of the possible value of indigenous conflict settlement practices. However, it makes clear that much more research and refining of our analytical tools must occur before the implementation of such techniques will make a practical difference.

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**Daughters of the Goddess, Daughters of Imperialism: African Women Struggle for Culture, Power and Democracy. Amadiume Ifi. New York: Zed Books, 2000. Pp. 300.**

The book opens by indicating the social, economic, cultural and political imperatives that determined and currently characterise Nigeria. Additionally, the author notes the benefits of using Marxist theory to examine gender and class relations under the present state system, as well as the contemporary nature of power between different classes of women locally, nationally and globally. She rightly points out the existence of shifting multiple identities under a pluralist system and attributes the problem of the state in Africa to the question of legitimacy and contestation. Without mincing words, the author puts the colonial and postcolonial state on trial. She does the same with development partners and all those concerned with improving the status of women.

She observes that the colonial administration laid inadequate foundations for the emancipation of women in Africa. It created many transformations following the introduction of a capitalist economy and imposition of a new system of government. These changes, the author contends, led to the creation of a gender ideology of power, demarcating public space and power as male to the exclusion of women. Amadiume singles out the case of Nigeria and postulates that, the British system of preserving the autonomy of local authorities did not apply when it came to the 'natives.' They operated in such a manner that made them, among other things, unpopular, undemocratic, and unrepresentative, all of which contributed to the marginalization of women. The above practices were adopted and refined by western religion and European style women organisations such as the YWCA and Girl Guide movement.

The female elites who ran these and other women's organizations have been able to manipulate certain social, political, economic and cultural spaces to their advantage under the pretence of improving the living standards of poor women. These types of manipulations have weakened a majority of women's local initiatives that have attempted to balance patriarchal structures. Unfortunately, these female elites are widely relied on by governments and International Development Agencies (IDAs) to improve the status of rural women.

Colonialism and IDAs, the author continues, largely determined 'development' in Africa. IDAs have dictated how the state in Africa should go about strengthening women's autonomy. The state has in most cases adopted formalised language of development based on formalised



list of developmentalist and evolving round controversial single issues. Daughters of imperialism in their quest to solicit for donor funding have embraced issues selected by IDAs, while more relevant matters concerning a majority of women are neglected.

She postulates that the postcolonial state has not only remained ill-suited to the task of emancipating rural and poor women, but it has also used inappropriate frameworks and policies. They have neglected the role and opinions of local women; development has been forced down their throats. The problem with this approach is that development projects are inherently embedded in the local processes in which they operate and are, thus, locally accountable.

In Africa, as elsewhere, IDAs have appeared in the form of the IMF and World Bank under the auspices of structural adjustment programs. Amadiume argues that these agencies have advocated for growth accounting and budget management, which have no relevance to issues such as social and political inequalities and human right abuses. Since these policies neglect the social arena, it is no wonder they have failed in Africa. SAPs have increased women's responsibilities, while diminishing their traditional access to goods and services. SAPs together with structural economies and neo-classical economic notions, the author argues, have weakened women's traditional system of gender complementarity, co-operation and exposed women's autonomous economic sectors to market forces.

The impacts of IDAs on the state are equally negative. Amadiume observes that IDAs have led to uneven development, bred corruption and political inequalities. IDAs have relied on bourgeois and elitist women to capitalize on the knowledge of rural women for their own benefits. They have made women's groups dependent on external funding and externally determined development policies. These external interventions have fragmented female solidarity and distracted women from their traditional roles as developers of their own towns and villages. She concludes that IDAs have undermined the state in Africa, fragmented communities, encouraged dependency, bred dictatorship, corruption and elitism.

As external intervention disrupts local contestations and creates a terrible imbalance in the system, a unique phenomenon has emerged in contemporary Nigeria. This is what the author calls the 'cult of first lady'. Others like Mama (1995) called it 'Femocracy.' Under a "femocracy," the female leadership, headed by the wife of the incumbent president, solicits money for herself and the wives of those in senior positions under the guise of improving the status of rural Nigeria women. The practice of seeking out donations enabled Babangida and Abacha's wives to emerge as formidable political figures in Nigeria. They became a political partner of military rulers and thus served to make a majority of women comply with unpopular demands of the state and international development agencies.

Working in alliance with development agencies, the Better Life Program and Family Support Program (started by the wives of the two presidents) became money-guzzling ventures. Amadiume argues that this cult has become an instrument of class reproduction and advancement in the name of service to rural women. It has undermined democratic processes and the autonomy of women's organizations, which have been appropriated by corrupt bourgeois women in an unceasing effort to gain prestige, status, and power. On occasion, these types of power-seeking ventures have sabotaged other organizations. At the same time, it has

caused the rural community to be subject to corruption and elitism. It is this cult that has impacted negatively on the development of women's groups in Nigeria.

The author argues that, since it is a woman's domain, the local government system can best be used to improve the status of local women. She puts forth a strong case for the establishment of a women's unit in the local government councils whose concern would be specific interest and needs of local women. She argues for a massive decentralization of the civil service and reorganization of the budget so that more money goes to provide services to the majority of the rural population. Given its position in the traditional or indigenous African economy, the marketplace should be placed, to a greater extent be under female control. Moreover, the author contends that the West should support the traditional democratic institutions that exist in Africa, rather than to try to supplant them in the name of development or modernization.

In conclusion, the text is very explosive, due to its critiques of those women and agencies that have taken the leadership reins of the women's movement in most of Africa. The book is worth reading by those interested in women, the state, and international development agencies. It has raised so many pertinent issues and questions on who should represent women in Africa and what should be the areas of concern. Using historical and anthropological sources the author has exposed the tensions and contradictions between competing interests over locally and internationally available resources and revealed gender, class and race conflict over power and resource sharing in contemporary African states.

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**Beyond Rights Talk and Culture Talk. Mahmood Mamdani (ed). New York: St. Martins' Press, 2000. Pp.170.**

*Beyond Rights Talk and Culture Talk* emerged from the papers presented at a conference on Cultural Transformations in Africa, held at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, in March 1997. Beyond the "Talks" lay issues of the relations of power and identity, contest and conflicts of interest, power and privilege, and justice and freedom. The essays draw from scenes as diverse as Tanzania, the USA, Nigeria and India. Different disciplines, from sociology, law, politics, political economy, and theology are covered; the diversity of fields and case studies is indeed a strong point of the book. Despite the variety of the text, there are some regions that are unfortunately neglected. For instance, a look at China would have been useful because a focus of Western relations with China in recent years has been couched in terms of human rights. Thus a critical examination of the human rights issue from Chinese perspective would have been especially relevant.

That said however, the subject is topical particularly in the African context, which is experiencing a series of economic, social and political crises, in which zealot-like social engineers forcefully impose social models or ideas on a disempowered citizenry. It is no wonder then, if the rights movement, as Mamdani notes, "is intolerant of competing world-views...[tending] to dismiss every local cultural assertion as masking a defense of privilege and inequality at the expense of the individual rights of the disadvantaged in the same society (p.3)."

Martin Chanock argues that the cultural-orientation of rights in Western cultures is noted by African states whose leaders "have tried to push rights issues out of the realm of both state and society and into that of 'culture' (p.35)." But this does not "dispose of the question of the desirability of 'rights' being universal (p.19)." On the other hand, Thandabanto Nhlapo observes that rights talk continues to be problematic in non-Western settings. First, in its ordinary perception of who is entitled to what, and secondly, there is the perception that the historical origin of the "rights talk" is linked to Western value systems (p.137). It is questionable whether the ratification of rights conventions would achieve expectations that are difficult to fulfill in the context of "Third World, poor, rural, non-Christian, drought stricken and war-torn or other specific situations (p.138)." However, it should be emphatically stated that none of these arguments justify appalling human rights violations by some repressive regimes in Africa.

Issa Shiviji explains the relativism of the notions of rights and justice manifested along customary, state and religious laws. He places his analysis in the context of land tenure in Tanzania and concludes that for a consensual national ideology to exist, there ought to be a contest between Western-statist-liberal concepts of justice and rights and the social democratic conceptions and perceptions -- the right to life and self-determination -- of the large majority (p.60).

Writing on the US civil rights movement, Kimberle Crenshaw argues that the "rights discourse can both facilitate transformative processes and insulate and legitimize power (p.63)." While the era in which the civil rights movement in the US produced meaningful reformist victories has come to a close, it is the same tone that creeps into the contemporary human rights

discourse in Africa as something with the vision for social change. The confrontation between "modernity" and "tradition" is evident.

In the case of India's Uniform Civil Code, which makes provisions for individual and collective rights, the confrontation plays out between women's rights, and the rights of religious communities to maintain their ways of life. There, the feminist debate is locked within the perception of modernity as a liberator hero, while, at the same time tradition is viewed as "the quiet and dignified defense against the alienating, dislocating thrust of modernity (p.75)."

The tension for varying rights is even more acute in Africa. According to Hussaina Abdullah, the right movements in Nigeria focuses around religious revival, human rights activism and women's rights. While the trends of religious "fundamentalism" is becoming all too common in many countries of Africa, the Nigerian state was interested in women's issues promoting the process of "femocracy" or "state feminism" linked to the "First Lady" phenomenon and supported by international organizations (p.96). This essay puts in clear focus the economic and political circumstances through which assorted social movements came to the fore. Noting the problematic of different human rights movements, Abdullah prescribes "a more inclusive and holistic concept of human rights that will embrace the needs and aspirations of all minority and historically marginalized groups, including women (pp.119-120)."

Just as the civic rights movements in the US were allied with the religious community, in South Africa the history of religion and the support of church leaders including Desmond Tutu may explain its importance in the anti-apartheid struggle and its liberation theology. According to Ebrahim Moosa, in the 1980s different religious groups formed a coalition whose "representatives articulated a social message rooted in their respective religious teachings against the evil of enforced racial separation (p.123)." In what is described as "one of the most advanced liberal documents of its kind," the South African Constitution is given to increasingly secularized framework, and it is "bound to impact on the transformation of religion (p.134-5)."

In sum, the book is a commendable work; it is a superb resource for human rights activists, theorists, law professionals, sociologists, feminists and Africanists. It contributes to our understanding of intense conflict underpinning what occurs within a "cultural transformation," from which most readers will benefit.

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**The Midfielder's Moment: Coloured Literature and Culture in Contemporary South Africa.**  
**Grant Farred. Boulder: Westview Press, 2000. Pp. 178.**

In the aftermath of the recent local elections in South Africa, Hugh Nevill in the Mail & Guardian (7.12.2000) quoted various sources to say how "the DA's [the Democratic Alliance, the main opposition to the ANC] supporters-mainly whites and coloureds-turned out in large numbers, but that many black ANC supporters stayed home [...] the voting seemed to confirm

Mbeki's statement that the country was one of two nations-one black and one white." The race/class chasm crystallized by the elections shows the relevancy and timeliness of Grant Farred's book on the position of the coloured community in South Africa. Coloureds are spoken of as white when they vote white, and their own racial history-their colouredness-is silenced. Farred's discussion of the dynamics of this silencing should be of interest to researchers and students of South African literature, culture and society, and in particular, cultural / postcolonial theory.

In three chapters on literature and three chapters on sports, *The Midfielder's Moment* deals with the coloured community in apartheid (from around 1960) and post-apartheid South Africa. Following an introductory chapter on the problematics of South African colouredness, chapter one ("Writing in a Twilight Zone") deals with the short story writer and novelist Richard Rive. Rive wrote about race, but did not establish in his writing a distinct coloured identity for himself because of his belief that blackness included coloureds (Farred generally conflates the writers and their texts in his literary analyses). As Farred writes, Rive's "belief in nonracialism...inhibited his capacity to name himself-and his racial identity-accurately (52)."

Chapter two ("The Poetics of Partial Affiliation") deals with the poet Arthur Nortje. Nortje wrote about being coloured and the paradox of being neither African nor European, while simultaneously having ties to both worlds. In Farred's reading, Nortje's was more a biological than a constructionist understanding of colouredness. He wrote "about how the miscegenated past articulates itself through (and sometimes despite the denial of) the coloured body (65)." Nortje was neither debilitated nor silenced by his 'shameful origins,' but wrote about those origins in an attempt to construct a place, a belonging, for the coloured community in South Africa.

The third chapter ("Searching for Colouredness") discusses the poet Jennifer Davids, who does not write about colouredness. Her "originality resides not in her refusal to be representative of a particular racial experience, but in her ability to do so elliptically (87)." Indeed, David's intentional neglect of the coloured voice "serves only to draw attention to its absence (98)." Farred's conclusions serve convincingly in his problematization of colouredness in South African writing. The three writers demonstrate different ways of dealing with their colouredness: Rive sought to transcend the term coloured, Davids to erase it, while Nortje painfully examined it as a 'racial interregnum (17)."

The second half of the book moves into the politics of sports in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. This intersection is where sports and race issues meet in Farred's use of the term 'midfielder.' Farred writes, "in football, midfielders represent the links between defence and attack, much as the coloured community constitutes the physical connection between black and white communities....Midfielders, like all footballers, have only a moment to make up their minds, and the fate of a contest depends on their decisions (19)." Presumably, the midfielder analogy does not imply that coloureds have had much of a choice, as in reality only a few could have had the possibility of 'passing' (as in passing for black or white, thereby deciding the 'race-game').

In chapter four ("Theatre of Dreams': Mimicry and Difference in Cape Flats Township Football"), Farred presents the fascinating international team affiliations of blacks and coloureds in Cape Town townships. Farred found blacks to be exhibiting postcolonialist or Africanist

leanings in their support of Brazil or Soweto football teams while coloureds largely supported English clubs. "The very names of English clubs carried with them, in those early days [of forced removals] when 'community' was spoken of in the past tense [...] the possibility of cultural and political survival (119)." Here, as in the rest of the sports section, one cannot help wondering if this is also how the women 'survived'? Unfortunately however, a discussion of gender issues is absent from the volume.

Chapter five ("The Nation in White") deals with cricket, where, again, Farred observes that the coloured and apartheid history of the sport is being erased. The South African team remains (with one or two exceptions) a wholly white one, and thus participates in a "trek into the postapartheid future emblazoned with the symbols of the apartheid past (146)." The team's coloured player, Paul Adams, is "being asked to make history bereft of basic resources such as cultural memory or the ideological traditions of his embattled community," in the name of that South African spirit of reconciliation that Farred criticizes because it mutes coloured history (149).

Chapter six ("McCarthyism, Township Style") uses footballer Benni McCarthy as an example of the appropriation of a sports hero in nation-building rhetoric. McCarthy's "colouredness has to be, in the same rhetorical maneuver, acknowledged and denied: It has to be implicitly recognized so that, through him, his community can be incorporated into the nation. It has to remain, however, an unspoken-and unspeakable-identity because to publicly emphasize it would be to remind the nation of his racial difference, of his liminal blackness and of the marginal, conflicted relationship the coloured community has to the postapartheid state (158)."

As evidenced by Farred's strong language in the above passage, the book presents a passionate critique of reconciliation rhetoric in contemporary South Africa. In its current form, reconciliation erases the coloured past and deprives the community of its cultural memory. "The new South Africa is no less politically expedient than the old, appropriating, reinscribing, eliding, or exaggerating racial sameness or difference as is ideologically useful (23)." Farred is outspoken in his criticism of the ANC government in this respect: he knows who his heroes are, and where they come from, and he does not like the way they are being tackled when they are off the field.

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**United States Interests and Policies in Africa: Transition to a New Era. Karl P. Magyar (ed). New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000. Pp. 193.**

It should come as no surprise that a book on US-African relations makes for a relatively slim volume. However, *United States Interests and Policies in Africa* serves as an excellent primer for the new student of US-African affairs.

The editor of the book, Karl P. Magyar, who wrote three of the book's seven chapters, states in the introduction: "Generally, the shifts over time in America's perceptions of the African continent reflect great initial apprehension of the importance of Africa's emerging state entities whose potential role in the Cold War was very uncertain." This "apprehension" could be the hallmark of any era when changes occur on the global scene. As a fledgling nation, the United States, seemed mostly concerned with North Africa (due to shipping interests in the Mediterranean Sea) and the slave trade off West Africa. The United States generally kept a distance from matters involving the eastern, southern, or interior regions of the continent, which were the domain of the European powers.

Delving into more recent history of US-African interaction, Mohamad Z. Yakan describes the relationship between the nations of the Maghreb and the United States quite clearly. His historical overview is enlightening and solid. His finding that geopolitics (protecting Europe and the transport of oil) will continue to determine the nature of American policy regarding North Africa is spot on. Additionally, Yakan's treatment of US-Egyptian relations-as an example of the exception to the rule in US-North African relations-is as concise as it is thorough.

However, Yakan gives little attention to Islamic fundamentalism in places like Algeria. He makes a sweeping generalization in his final passage:

"So far, however, religious extremism in North Africa as elsewhere in the Arab/Muslim Worlds continues to be a highly misunderstood phenomenon in the US. Clearly, as long as this misunderstanding remains, and as long as the political and economic factors underlying the rationale of religious extremism persists, American foreign policy objectives in North Africa will continue to be under siege in some quarters."

Though his conclusion is indeed vague, it does not detract from the overall analysis.

Another problem with the chapter however, was a neglect of detail. Yakan, for instance, mistakenly dates Iraq's invasion of Kuwait as August 2, 1991, when in fact, it occurred on August 2, 1990. Though this error may simply be the result of sloppy scholarship or inattentive editing, it is not a trivial mistake for students of the Middle East: it is as if the date of Japan's attack upon Pearl Harbor was mistakenly identified as December 7, 1940, rather than December 7, 1941.

In the chapter on West Africa, Earl Conteh-Morgan describes the effects of neglect on the region, particularly since the fall of the Soviet Union. He writes:

"Far from ameliorating civil conflict, the post-Cold War situation and the process of democratization has exacerbated or enabled societal cleavages - in particular ethnic conflicts, an insurgency against the state (Sierra Leone), until the election a stalemated situation among warring factions (Liberia), overthrow of one of Africa's longest 'democratic' regimes (Gambia under President Jawara), ethnoregional-based regime intransigence (Togo), and the tenacity of a northern-dominated, self-perpetuating military oligarchy (Nigeria)."

While the conclusion of the Cold War cannot be held as wholly responsible for the above laundry list of calamities and upheaval, the lack of superpower interest has contributed to this

situation. In a telling example, the US has failed to replace a Voice of America transmitter and an intelligence listening post in West Africa. Despite the apparent lack of interest in the region, strategic or otherwise, Nigeria, will, in the foreseeable future, play a potentially large role in America's global oil-power game.

Essentially the same indifference by US policymakers regarding the western part of the continent is repeated in both the east and the center regions of Africa. Aside from the adventure earlier in the 1990s in Somalia, US policymakers have been content with letting events take their course in eastern Africa. In Sudan, for example, where famine and inter-religious warfare have killed countless numbers of people, the US remains disengaged-if not disinterested. While the US has enacted modest measures here (as well as in Rwanda and Burundi), Washington D.C. has not made any serious overtures indicating their willingness to actively involve themselves in helping bring the conflicts to a close or better the lives of the citizenry of these nations.

Magyar, in his chapter about southern Africa, controversially states that this area of the continent has received more attention in the US due to the number of caucasians who live (and once ruled) there. Even so, with the threat (real or not) of a Soviet takeover eliminated, the US, Magyar says, will most likely limit its activities in the region.

In his closing remarks, Magyar writes that it will take an "unprecedented global commitment" to address the many needs of modern African nations. This statement however, amounts to little better than wishful thinking, since he does not reveal how such involvement would increase the bottom line for the developed world. Overall though, *United States Interests and Policies in Africa* is an excellent starting point for understanding the origins of modern American policymaking with regard to Africa.

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**Street Children in Kenya: Voices of Children in Search of a Childhood. Philip Kilbride, Collete Suda, Enos Njeru. Westport: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 2000. Pp. 184.**

*Street Children in Kenya* provides an in-depth examination of the experiences of street children in Nairobi, Kenya. Drawing from participant observations, individual and focus group interviews, the authors, Kilbride, Suda, and Njeru allow readers to confront the harsh realities, suffering, and survival skills of nearly 400 of the over 40,000 homeless children in Nairobi. These children are part of the over 110,000 children described by UNICEF as "in need of special protection" (GOK/UNICEF, 1998). Reflecting the anthropological and sociological backgrounds of the scholars, the book's initial chapters introduce the methodology and background for the study, including a description of the study's setting, Nairobi, and relevant information on the communities studied. The text also provides information on social and cultural issues affecting families (e.g., the weakening of family structures due to poverty, the impact of AIDS, and government sanctioned ethnic conflicts), which have contributed to the rapid rise in the number of children living and working on the street. Even though only one chapter is solely devoted to



the narratives of the children, most chapters are infused with humanizing accounts and perspectives on the children's lives. A unique contribution of the study is its methodology, which involved giving older street children cameras to document their daily life, thus greatly personalizing the book, since the children were allowed to tell their own stories. A more traditional scholarly analysis is presented in the final chapter, which addresses policy implications, particularly with regards to long-term, culturally framed solutions to this complex and growing problem.

*Street Children in Kenya* addresses a critical, global issue that is, in many ways, a by-product of rapid globalization, structural adjustment programs, and increasing poverty and urbanization. Street children and young mothers have become part of the landscape in most Kenyan cities and towns. Many Kenyans are fearful of street children and look upon them as criminals, due in part to their increasingly bold begging and extortion techniques. Those who combat this situation often feel helpless when confronted with the enormity of the problems and the lack of infrastructure and policy initiatives designed to alleviate the crisis. A recent UNICEF program however, has targeted more funding toward this issue and some, often ineffectual, government actions have begun to address it. Government responses have included large scale round-ups and arrests of street children on vagrancy charges and holding them in remand homes without provisions, to funding more vocational training and housing programs, many run by churches and NGOs. This book's publication is well timed then, given the urgency of this issue and the fact that there is a growing number of organized initiatives, as well as increased media attention.

Professor Philip Kilbride is one of relatively few researchers who has done sustained research on homeless children in Kenya. This book thus builds on his earlier anthropological work (Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990), which investigated the impacts of social, economic and cultural change on family life in Kenya. The earlier work examined changing family roles, the increase in single parent families, and impacts of dislocation, urbanization, and austerity measures on families living in poverty - all of which bear responsibility for the rapid increase in street children. In his writing, Kilbride conveys humor and humility in describing his initial experiences with street children in Nairobi, as he tried to build rapport and find informants to assist him in the research. Not surprisingly, many of the boys he initially befriended viewed him primarily as a tourist, and, as such, someone to "hustle" for resources.

Given the paucity of authentic cross-cultural collaborative research, we considered the Kenyan-U.S. research team a strength of this study. We found that this "insider-outsider" collaboration helped give an accurate representation of the issue of street children in Kenya, which is often lacking in work done by foreign authors. Such efforts contribute to the long and complex process of decolonizing (Gandhi, 1998, Smith, 1999) research in Africa and to the quality and depth of the research. Although it may not explicitly draw from cultural geography, much of the book brings readers into the hidden spaces as well as the public places inhabited by the street children. We gain access to their temporary "housing," recreation, daily rituals, and work in a wealth of details that interviews alone would not have provided.

Another strength of this volume is that it portrays street children not just as hapless victims and objects of pity, but as children who possess hopes, dreams for their future, and feelings of responsibility for each other. Although it does not turn away from the harsh realities of the

street-the beatings, rapes, prostitution and drug use (particularly glue sniffing)-this book makes it clear that in most cases, street children are both proactive and resilient even in the face of these extremely difficult circumstances.

We found very little to critique in this book, and consequently, we have only a few minor quibbles. Considering the personal nature of the book, we were a bit surprised that it did not include any photographs-particularly some of the pictures that were taken by some of the children who participated in the research. Given that this study frequently refers to street children in Westlands, an affluent suburb, we also would have liked to have seen a discussion of whether there might be any differences between the survival skills of these children and those who beg in downtown Nairobi. Although the authors acknowledge crimes committed by street youth, they clearly are more concerned with the human rights violations committed by Kenyan police, reservists, and askaris (guards). While we agree with this well documented critique (Human Rights Watch Africa, 1997), it should have been noted that the rationale for these police actions against street children is the threat they pose to Kenya's number one business: tourism.

In terms of the recommendations made in the final chapter, we found many familiar themes. However, in practice most, if not all, of the proposed solutions have been tried and few have worked. This is likely due to the overwhelming impact of persistent poverty and lack of sustainable, structural solutions. Universal education, for example, is a fine slogan, but in reality, most families cannot afford to educate their children beyond primary school. Youth with only a primary education are ill prepared to compete in the rapidly changing, globalized job market, particularly given the high rates of unemployment, impacts of imposed austerity measures, and other economic factors.

This book will be of interest to researchers in several disciplines, including African studies, cultural anthropology, family sociology, education, and childhood studies, as well as to a wide array of readers, including human rights advocates, and policy-makers. The examination of the gritty everyday lives and mapping of the urban terrains or "geographies of exclusion" (Sibley, 1995) inhabited by these children make for compelling reading and calls upon the reader to take action or become more involved in advocating for the rights of all children.

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**Fire from the Ashes: A Chronicle of the Revolution in Tigray, Ethiopia, 1975-1991. Jenny Hammond. Lawrenceville and Asmara: The Red Sea Press, 1999, Pp. 456.**

Jenny Hammond's *Fire from the Ashes: A Chronicle of the Revolution in Tigray, Ethiopia, 1975-1991* is a sympathetic account, based on extensive field observations, of the origin and evolution of the Tigray People's Revolution Front (TPLF), the forerunner of the ruling party in Ethiopia. Hammond's data derives from elite interviews of some TPLF officials, as well as rank and file members of the party. The interviews with the leaders of the TPLF, including the current head of government in Ethiopia, are particularly significant, since they provide insight into how these leaders intended to portray both their organization and themselves.

Hammond collected the data in Tigray intermittently over a period of a few years (December 1986-March 1987, May-July 1989 and January-May, 1991). Among other things, the author discusses the changing role of women in the territory during the different stages of the revolution the anatomy of famine in the area, and the military strategies used for taking on and eventually defeating the superior forces of their opponents. The author spends a good deal of space (esp. see pp. 34-41; pp. 98-101) relying stories told to her by prisoners who experienced abuses at the hand of the Ethiopian government. With graphic detail, the book acquaints the reader with the fundamental philosophy of the TPLF, while also putting into perspective the changes that have since been introduced in Tigray.

Hammond's work is not, however, flawless. Some of the limitations of the book stem from the research design she created to fulfill the goals of her study. She aptly asks at the outset, 'What drives a people over the abyss from fatalistic acceptance of routine misery to armed struggle?' (p. 4) Despite such a clear thematic statement, she does not pursue its answer in the most logical and helpful way, rather she instead dwells on disparate personal narratives, thereby leaving the reader uncertain as to what conclusions or generalizations ought to be drawn from the anecdotal evidence.

Another problem with the research is that there is some question with regards to the author's ability to draw balanced and accurate conclusions. First, the fact that she was invited by the TPLF (p. 9) to study the revolution makes the reader wonder whether she was able to observe more than what the TPLF leaders allowed her to. And although Hammond did indeed recognize this dilemma, she was not in a position to do anything about it: 'The Front has invited me here to conduct an independent investigation, but I cannot go anywhere without their support' (p. 31). Secondly, because she experienced the bombardments and raids of Ethiopian MIGs along with her subjects, her analysis might be colored due to the bond that formed

between her and the Front's members following their shared combat experience. Again, she is cognizant of the potential for bias as the air raids turn her "from an observer of a revolution to its participant (p. 5)."

The book is also full of extraneous personal details that are neither of much interest to a reader nor which have a direct bearing on the subject matter. For example, there are passages discussing her urge to urinate (p. 10); how many hours she spent at the latrine (p. 19); her being sweaty and dusty (p. 41), and the like. While minor, these flaws, as they accumulate, tend to get in the way of the discussion of the main themes and should have been eliminated through more careful editing.

Judging also by the fact that the book reads more like a carefully-written diary than an analytical account of a structured field observation, it might have well been titled "A Chronicle of Jenny Hammond's Journey in Tigray," since much of what is written in the book pertains to her encounters and experiences, rather than the revolution per se. To be sure, Hammond spent much energy, as well as time, under truly dangerous circumstances (see for example, p. 115) trying to observe first-hand what she could. However, the volume focuses too much on the author's own story, to the neglect of her analysis of the events and personalities that are at the core of the study.

Still, despite its minor limitations, the book is important for a number of reasons. Particularly invaluable are the interview accounts of the TPLF leaders who currently occupy the reigns of power in present-day Ethiopia. Upon reading Hammond's book, one is likely to gain fresh insights into the philosophical, intellectual, and social origins of the policies of the current regime. The book is rich in details and could easily become a very useful source of reference for a comparative examination of the dialectics of movements that challenge the rule of established governments in different parts of Africa and elsewhere.

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