ARTICLES

Effectiveness of Maize Cob Powder in Controlling Weevils in Stored Maize Grain
C.T. Gadzirayi, E. Mutandwa, and T.J. Chikuvire

Dim Delobsom: French Colonialism and Local Response in Upper Volta
Michael Kevane

Causes of Small Business Failure in Uganda: A Case Study from Bushenyi and Mbarara Towns
Charles Tushabomwe-Kazooba

AT ISSUE

Urban Renewal through Labour-Intensive Construction Technology in South Africa: Problems and Potentials
Wellington Didibhuku Thwala

BOOK REVIEWS

Melinda Adams

John Craig

Mieke deGelder

Muyiwa Falaiye and Samuel Babatunde Jegede

Heidi G. Frontani

Marie Gibert

Mark E. Grotelueschen


Dheeshana S. Jayasundara


Erin Kenny


Mohammad Laghzaoui


Denise Martin


Frederick Ochieng'-Odhiambo


Vijayan K. Pillai


Jeremy Rich


Anjali Gera Roy


Issaka K. Souaré


Sam Spiers


Natalie Swanepoel


Ian Taylor


Ryan Wells
Effectiveness of Maize Cob Powder in Controlling Weevils in Stored Maize Grain

C.T. GADZIRAYI, E. MUTANDWA, AND T.J. CHIKUVIRE

Abstract: The broad objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of maize cob powder in controlling maize weevils in stored maize grain. A completely randomized block design, in which twelve small bags of maize containing 0.5 kg of maize grain (SC5313 dent variety), were used. Three concentration levels of maize cob powder 5g, 45g and 75g per 0.5 kg were compared with the control experiment containing conventional chemical Actellic super at 5g. Findings showed that conventional chemical control was more effective than traditional method at 5g and 45g levels of maize cob powder. However, greater effectiveness of cob powder was observed at 75g level. In the absence of conventional methods of control, which are unavailable due to local supply bottlenecks, the study recommends use of maize cob powder to control weevils.

BACKGROUND

The importance of the maize sub sector within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region is well researched and documented. Maize is an integral component of the staple diet of the citizenry of this region and is also considered to be an essential source of cash for farmers. It is also used in the manufacture of a wide spectrum of industrial products ranging from animal feeds to food products. Thus, the maize sub sector has important backward and forward linkages with industry.

In recent years, the region has witnessed dramatic changes in rainfall patterns ushered in by global warming that culminated in more frequent droughts. The effect of intermittent droughts has manifested itself in declining maize output, further exacerbating the livelihoods of farmers and the general populace. The effects of poverty largely stem from the failure of agriculture to sustain the lives of the rural poor. It is therefore not a surprise that the majority of the families in SADC live on less than $1 per day.

Declining food production exposes farmers to chronic and transitory food shocks. This creates the need for farmers to come up with mechanisms for conserving their scarce food resource base. Maize, which is normally stored in granaries, is usually treated with a different array of chemicals for preservation against pests such as weevils. Indeed, weevils (stophilus zeamais) are often identified as one of the major problems causing loss of stored grain in Africa. It is estimated that weevil attack accounts for approximately 5-10% of maize grain loss in Southern Africa.

In Zimbabwe, two main chemicals -- Shumba and Actellic Chirindamatura Dust ---- are used to conventionally treat stored maize grain. However, the inimical macro-economy has resulted in high prices for these products and the need for identifying other methods of preserving maize grain. One port
of call for rural farmers is using localized methods of preservation found within indigenous knowledge systems.

Indigenous knowledge is unique to a given culture or society. It creates the basis for local level decision-making in agriculture, health care, food preparation and preservation, education, and natural resource management. Indigenous knowledge is an important ingredient for development but is grossly under-utilized.

A cocktail of methods, extracted from local knowledge, have been used to preserve maize grain for generations in Zimbabwe. However, one of the most eminent “indigenous approaches” of maize preservation is using maize cob powder. After shelling maize, the remnants are burnt and the resultant powder is sprinkled on maize grain and this confers longevity to maize grain.

This method can be questioned from two angles. Firstly, to what extent does this method improve the shelf life of stored grain? Secondly, does the resultant soot from burnt cob powder discolor the maize grain or render it unfit for human consumption? Thus, the crux of the matter in this study is to broadly look at the value of local knowledge in preserving stored maize grain.

**Problem Statement**

Conventional approaches to development in Africa have often required the transfer of technology from developed to developing countries. This obliterates the importance of local knowledge and experiences in solving local problems peculiar to rural communities. Although, weevils account severe losses in stored maize grain in Southern Africa, the sustainability of conventional chemicals used to preserve grain is questionable given the high level of poverty present in the rural communities in Africa. Local prescriptions emanating from indigenous knowledge base, such as the use of maize cob powder are grossly under-researched. Thus, there is a paucity of information which illustrates the value of indigenous knowledge in the preservation of agricultural and food products. This study therefore provides a scientific inquiry to practices passed on for many generations in Zimbabwe.

**Research Questions**

1. To what extent is maize cob powder effective in controlling stored maize grain?
2. Do the maize ashes have an effect on the quality of the stored grain?

**Objectives**

The broad objective of this study is to ascertain the value of indigenous knowledge through determining the effectiveness of traditional methods of preserving maize grain.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the effectiveness of maize cob powder in controlling weevils in stored maize grain.
2. To ascertain the effects of maize cob powder on quality of stored grain.

**Justification of study**

The inauspicious macro-economic environment in the country implies that farmers cannot effectively access conventional technologies for preserving maize grain. Although indigenous knowledge is one of the options for farmers, little is known about whether the various methods used locally are effective. Therefore this study is important in generating information for sharing experiences with local rural communities constrained by scarce resources.
by determining rainfall patterns and soil fertility, among other issues. The social environment consists of
the networks through which the local community shares information. Indigenous knowledge is also part
of the social system but is normally overridden by formal sources of information such as extension
agents.

Overall, the farmer is operating in a constrained optimization scenario and this often leads to low
productivity. Low productivity translates into poverty since agriculture fails to sustain farmers through
sale of produce. This condemns the farmer to subsistence production, that is producing only for family

needs. However, this food stock, mainly maize, is exposed to pests and other hazards such as weevils.
This can potentially result in further food bottlenecks for the farmer. Since the household is not effectively
participating in the cash economy, it cannot access expensive technologies for preserving this food stock.
Assuming rationality, the farming household then resorts to using cheaper methods of preserving food
reserves such as using maize cob powder. This ensures that the household is able to overcome transitory
food shocks. Therefore indigenous knowledge can compliment already existing conventional methods of
food preservation.

**Effects of maize cob powder on maize kennels**

According to the 1995 Elwell study, ashes from plants (wood, cobs, and stalks) used in combination with
agricultural lime has the effect of preventing insects from moving from seed to seed. Seeds soaked in cob
ashes are protected against fungal and bacterial diseases as well as protection from weevil attack. Cob ash
contains certain natural salts and these create inimical conditions for growth and habitation of weevils.
This characteristic gives the ash some insecticidal property. Other studies have also shown that salt mixed
with maize grain confers protection to grain for sustained periods of time.9

Results from a series of experiments in some African countries such as Zambia and Mozambique
have shown that maize protected using traditional methods of preservation (e.g. cob) ash was not
significantly different in quality from maize grain protected by conventional chemicals.10 However, there
are gaps in the scientific literature on using cob ash in traditional African systems.

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*African Studies Quarterly* | [http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v8/v8i4a1.htm](http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v8/v8i4a1.htm)

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Conventional approaches to protecting grain against weevil attack

A number of insecticides, usually in the form of fumigant dust are used to control weevils. These include methyl bromide, phosphine and carbon disulphine, and Malathion dust. Other approaches for protection against weevils include use of airtight storage systems to suffocate weevils and weevil proof containers.

Over the years, concerns have been raised over the use of chemicals on human health and ecosystem balance. Arguments that over-use and abuse of agro-chemicals imposes serious costs on a nation’s economy while eroding the ecological foundations and thriving agro-ecosystems. Evidence from different African countries illustrates that improper use of chemicals is causing loss of life and negative repercussions on human health.

Traditional remedies used for post harvest crop preservation in Zimbabwe: Historical Overview

State-sponsored attempts to introduce new technological innovations among smallholder farmers in colonial Zimbabwe were begun in 1926. The Rhodesian government enacted a two tier agricultural extension policy that served the interests of smallholder and large scale farmers through the Department of Agricultural Development (DEVAG) and Department of Conservation and Extension (CONEX) respectively. The extension approaches used were prescriptive and tended to deligitimize the use of methods derived from indigenous knowledge by farmers. Indigenous methods of crop preservation were used by local farmers during the 19th century and early part of the 20th century. However, the nature of crop preservation has been dynamic from the pre-colonial period to present day Zimbabwe. A key feature of most approaches is that they are derived from locally available natural materials such as trees, shrubs, and sometimes parts of crops. Since there were little or no cash demands in the acquisition of traditional methods of preservation, it meant that they were readily available and thereby consistent with the small farmers’ social, economic, and institutional setting. An inventory of the known methods of crop preservation used by smallholder farmers during the pre-colonial period is presented in this section. Some of the preservation materials are native to Zimbabwe (lipia and marigold species) whilst others are exotic (eucalyptus species). The exotics could have been brought by early Portuguese traders during the pre-colonial period since they started spreading from the Southern part of the country which borders with Mozambique along routes used by the Portuguese.

Eucalyptus species (Gum Trees)

The basis for using gum trees as a method of crop preservation is predicated on the strong aromatic smell that characterizes the leaves of the trees. In Zimbabwe, gum tree leaves have been used to preserve crops such as beans, Irish potatoes, maize, millet and sorghum. The oil exuded by the gum leaves repels bean bruchids whilst the aroma emanating from the leaves repels maize weevils. In all cases the gum leaves are spread before and after the crop is stored such that there are two layers of leaves in the granaries. The quantity of leaves used for any given crop depends on expectations of the likely occurrence of pests as well as the farmers’ experience with the method. Use of gum tree leaves has been restricted to areas where the tree grows well in Zimbabwe, particularly in natural regions 1 -- 3 which receive at least 500 mm per annum and relatively warm temperatures that range from 18 degrees Celsius.

Lipia Javanica

This is a common perennial shrub in Zimbabwe with a characteristic aromatic smell. Historically, the leaves have been known to repel pests and it has also been used as a spray against aphids. In grain crops such as maize, it has been used to repel a broad range of pests, including weevils.

Marigold leaves

Marigold is one of the most problematic weeds in Zimbabwean crop agriculture. In spite of this, the weed is used by some farmers to kill nematodes and suppress other oil borne infections. In grain crops, it is used by placing alternate layers of grain with the marigold leaves. This method is more rarely used in most parts of the country since its effectiveness hinges on the availability of the plant within the farmer’s environs.
Salt

Salt (in dehydrated form) or in solution has a dehydrating effect on soft-bodied insects such as caterpillars, snails and slugs. Salt is not used in the preservation of grain crops since most of the pests attacking these types of crops have a hard outer shell.

Tobacco

Tobacco contains the strong aromatic poison nicotine that is toxic to a wide spectrum of pests and microorganisms. In Zimbabwe, farmers use it as a method of crop preservation, especially against the grain weevil, only at low levels in cases of lack of access to conventional chemicals such as Target® or Coopers Shumba. Tobacco can also be dusted on to vegetables as a remedy against spider mites, aphids, and various caterpillars. Farmers argue that it is less harmful in this form. However, the main drawback of this method is that food plants treated with tobacco must not be eaten for at least three days.

Wood ash

Wood ash use for the preservation of grain crops in Zimbabwe dates back at least to the late 19th century. During this period, agricultural production by farmers was largely subsistence oriented. Furthermore, no manufactured chemicals were known by the farmers themselves or traded by the early Portuguese traders who came into the country during this time. Wood ash was by-product of fires prepared for cooking purposes by households. It was used mainly for two purposes. Firstly, it was applied in fields as a form of fertilization and as a deterrent to slugs, snails and cutworms. Secondly, it also found its use in grain storage where it was often mixed with other ingredients obtained from other plants.

Characteristics of smallholder agriculture in Zimbabwe

In Southern Africa, smallholder agricultural production is relatively homogenous with the majority of farmers practicing crop agriculture on tropical soils poor in organic matter with low inherent soil fertility (mainly lacking nitrogen, phosphorus, and sulphur). As a result of general economic malaise characterizing this region, productivity has been declining thus compromising the food security situation of rural households. In Zimbabwe, agriculture has traditionally been the prime mover of economic development. Prior to the recent land reallocations, large-scale farmers occupied about 11.2 million hectares whilst small farmers occupied 16.3 million hectares with an average of 16.3 hectares per farmer. Crops such as maize, millet, groundnuts, and sorghum dominated the cropping pattern. Cash crops are primarily tobacco, cotton, and soybeans. Crop productivity among smallholder farmers increased nominally by 400 percent between 1980 and 1990 from Z$148.28 million (US$ 148.28 million) in 1980 to Z$ 603 million (US$ 120 million) in 1990. This trend was attributed to the use of inputs such as fertilizers, chemicals, and hybrid seeds. For instance, seed sales rose from 4, 500 tonnes in 1980/81 to 16,000 tonnes in 1989/1990 and fertilizer sales increased from 24,000 tonnes in 1975 to 130,000 tonnes in 1986 and to around 200, 000 tonnes in 2003. Presently, approximately 96% of farmers use improved seed despite evidence that open pollinated varieties such as Salisbury White and Hickory King are surging back because of current high seed costs. Productivity in the 1990s generally declined because of droughts of 1991/92 and the 1993/94 seasons. The structure of agriculture changed from the year 2000, ushering in more resource stressed smallholder farmers. Although agricultural exports are still important, these have been declining due to a range of problems such as rising cost of inputs and recurring droughts from 2001 to 2004. For instance, the fertilizer price to maize ratios from 1980 indicate that the price of fertilizer has been raising faster than the price of maize, thus lowering the gross margin obtainable from major crops. Therefore crop production systems relying on external inputs are not sustainable for most smallholder producers both because of the immediate escalating procurement costs and longer term effects on the environment.

Social context

Zimbabwe has been facing an inimical economic environment over the past five years (2000-2005). As a result, the gross domestic product (GDP) has been declining by an average 8% per annum. The rate of inflation has risen from 32 to 1042 percent in the years -- 1998 2006. Foreign direct investment declined from US $ 440 million in 1998 to US $ 3.6 million in 2005 resulting in foreign currency bottlenecks.
These challenges have trickled down to the farm level, particularly reducing the profitability of agricultural activities and purchasing power. The population living below the poverty datum line (US $ 1 dollar per day) was 36% between 1989-1994 and rose to above 80% in 2003.

Use of inputs by smallholder farmers

Most smallholder farmers in the country still use hybrid seeds which account for 90-95% of all maize seed planted by farmers in any given season. The rising cost of maize seed has, however, resulted in an increase in the number of farmers (20%) using retained seeds, mainly in the northern provinces of the country. In addition, the increasing cost of fertilizers has resulted in changes in the crop production systems. Farmers located in southern and eastern provinces of the country are relying on cattle manure as opposed to conventional chemical fertilizers. Farmers have also been facing post harvest problems because of difficulties in accessing markets. Thus, there is gravitation towards sustainable, low input production systems by Zimbabwean farmers in the country.

Opportunities for using traditional production methods by farmers in Zimbabwe

The unstable environment over the last five years has negatively affected the nominal prices of fertilizers and chemicals. Free government input supply schemes meant to bridge this gap have been falling in nominal value and are not effective in enhancing access to inputs by farmers. The use of inorganic fertilizers and chemicals has therefore been declining among smallholder farmers. In Chivi District of Masvingo Province, for example, use of inorganic fertilizers and agro-chemicals decreased by 78% and 71% respectively. Reliance on expensive hybrid seeds by farmers negatively affected traditional systems of storage and the re-use of seeds in subsequent production seasons. The need for farmers to explore options of crop production and preservation is inevitable given the current supply bottlenecks and also because capital markets are increasingly becoming closed to farmers through prohibitive interest rates nearing 300%. There is gathering evidence, which indicates that farmers in the country, particularly in the southern and eastern districts, are resorting to traditional methods of production and crop preservation. The main advantage of these methods is that the materials used are locally available and within the farmers’ reach. They are also relatively easy to use and can be environmentally sustainable. Despite claims by farmers that most of the methods based on traditional knowledge are ‘effective’ there is little supporting scientific evidence within Southern Africa.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Site

The experiment was conducted at Belvedere Technical Teachers College (BTTC) farm located in Mashonaland East Province of Zimbabwe. The study site conditions are typical of agro-ecological region II, one of the prime agricultural zones of the country. This region covers 7,343,059 ha and this represents approximately 18.68% of the total land size in Zimbabwe. Rainfall received in a normal season ranges from 700-1050mm and is restricted to the summer season. Temperatures ranging from 20-27 degrees Celsius are experienced. Farming in this region is mixed and eminent crops include maize, cotton, tobacco, and soybeans whilst significant beef, dairy and pig production also take place.

Research Design

The methodological framework used a completely randomized block design with four treatments replicated three times. Treatments were 5g, 45g, 75g of ash per bag and 5g of Actellic Chirindamatura dust (manufacturer’s recommended level). In this approach, 12 small jute bags of maize containing 0.5 kg of maize grain (SC5313 dent variety) were used. The SC513 was chosen since it is a commonly grown variety among smallholder farmers in semi arid areas. Harvested maize was checked for the existence of weevils before the experiment and also that it was free from inorganic chemicals. The nine bags were then sub-divided into three groups. The first three bags were labeled A1, A2, and A3, the second group B1, B2, and B3 whilst the third group was labeled C1, C2 and C3. The three bags in each set were considered replications for the experiment. To the first set of bags, 5g of ash were mixed with maize grain in A1, A2 and A3. For the second set of bags, B1, B2 and B3, 45g of ash were added. On the third set of bags, 75g of ash was added to the C1, C2 and C3. Extra three maize bags D1, D2 and D3 were used as the control.
EFFECTIVENESS OF MAIZE COB POWDER IN CONTROLLING WEEVILS

A group of maize. The bags were then put under the same conditions: which would mimic typical conditions of African granary, i.e. dry with ambient temperatures of about 24 degrees Celsius. Equal numbers (10) of weevils (Stophilus zeamais) were then put in each of the maize grain bags, ensuring that the weevils did not migrate from one-grain bag to another. The researchers then checked weekly for any changes in the containers over a period of 2 months.

Layout of the experiment

![Fig 3.1 Layout of experiment](image)

Hessian bags were used for the experiment and were arranged in the manner depicted in Fig 3.1. The room was clean and ventilation was guaranteed to ensure that the weevils had sufficient air supply. In addition, the grain bags also allowed for air movement without allowing them to migrate out of the bags. Blocks indicate replications for each level of ash concentration.

Parameters collected from each sample unit

Two parameters were of interest in this research and these included:
- Number of live and dead weevils collected weekly at different concentration levels
- Change in the color of grain

Data Analysis

An analysis of variance table was set to investigate whether there were statistical differences in the numbers of live and dead weevils as well as the quality of maize grain used. A one-way ANOVA table was set up to investigate whether there were differences in the grand means of weevils over time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Variations of live weevils at different levels of ash powder concentration

Fig 4.1 indicates the changes in the number of weevils from each bag over five weeks. The basic shapes of the functions are almost similar with the number of weevils in each bag increasing over the 5-week period. The higher the concentration of ash in the bag, the lower the incidence of weevils. This may be attributed to the toxic effect of higher levels of cob powder administered to the different bags. It can also be seen that for the control (which used Actellic Chirindamatura Dust), number of weevils were higher in the first than the 75-g ash powder concentration but this changed from week 2, with the control group increasing at a steady rate. The findings of this study are similar with those of Elwell and Booyens who illustrated that an increasing cob powder concentration results in a reduction in the incidence of weevil attack. 20
Fig 4.1 Graph showing weevil numbers per week with varying ash powder concentrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ash Concentration</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5g</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45g</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75g</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (Acetylic Super)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ANOVA RESULTS

The main hypothesis to be tested in this study was to determine whether there is a difference between the average numbers of weevils found per unit time across the different treatments. The results of the ANOVA table are shown below.

ANOVA TABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>Number of Weevils</th>
<th>Mean squares</th>
<th>F value</th>
<th>Significant F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concentration Levels</td>
<td></td>
<td>205.500 (MSE1)</td>
<td>4.693</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>43.792 (MSE2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The hypothesis being tested by the ANOVA table is that there is no difference in the average number of live weevils per bag over the 5 weeks. Since the significant F value is less than 5%, we reject the hypothesis that the means are equal. Therefore, the effects of the conventional chemical and cob powder are statistically different at the 5% level. One can conclude that there is a difference in effectiveness of maize cob powder and acetylic Super under the given set of conditions. The results from this study are at variance with those found by Elwell, 1995. However, this could be attributed to the different conditions under which their research was carried out.

Changes in the color of grain

At the end of 5 weeks, each of the samples was exposed to winnowing to remove the dust and ash. It was observed that for 5 and 45g ash concentration the dust could be easily removed. At 75g there was an element of discoloration, though this was not deemed significant in terms of quality.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The results of the study indicate that higher levels of cob powder are associated with lower incidence of weevils in any given sample. In the experiment, two treatment levels (the 5g and 45g) were observed to be increasing functions. These two functions increased at an increasing rate in the first two weeks and increased at a decreasing rate in weeks 3 to 5. This could be attributed to the slow toxicity effect of the cob powder in the first two weeks. The subsequent shape of the functions could be explained by the attainment of a minimum toxic threshold as the weevils are further exposed to the local microenvironment within experimental bags. Lower levels of cob powder permit relatively rapid multiplication of weevils. The shape of the 75g function almost resembles that of the control, in that weevil multiplication is curtailed in the first two weeks before increasing at a decreasing rate albeit at a lower level. It is possible that levels slightly higher than the 75g could almost simulate the shape of the control function.

The results showed that there is a statistical difference in effectiveness between the conventional and traditional approaches of preserving maize. The average numbers of weevils for the experimental period were 11 for the control and 15 for the 75g treatment level. Based on these observations, the conventional chemical control is superior in conferring an environment that is toxic to the multiplication of weevils. The need to explore the effects of levels such as 80 or 85 g of cob powder cannot be over-emphasized. Higher levels of cob powder would, however, also mean greater demand for the farmers to gather cobs and fuel energy, burning the shelled cobs, and creating fine powder through removing undesired objects. This would increase the shadow economic cost of the maize cob powder.

The transaction costs of acquiring conventional chemical techniques for preservation are relatively high for most smallholder farmers who are frequently located in inaccessible production areas. These costs include searching for appropriate information on the available chemicals and markets (such products may be unavailable in formal markets due to input supply bottlenecks in the country), as well as transport costs to and from formal market outlets. These costs can act as deterrent to smallholder use of chemicals for post harvest preservation.

The farmer is faced with a dilemma: he/she wants to ensure food security from one season to the next but also needs to acquire the form of crop preservation technology at a low cost. In the absence of the required chemicals, smallholder farmers can trade efficiency of the preserving technique for convenience and affordability. Traditional techniques confer some measure of protection but this protection may only be guaranteed at high levels of ash concentration of at least 76g/0.5 kg of maize. Amounts such as 76g could be used for levels of up to 5 kg of grain. Using this upper limit, this translates into 0.76 kg per bag and 15.2 kg of ash per tonne of grain.

It is also important to note that the findings of this study were only reflecting a given set of conditions in the Middleveld of Zimbabwe and this could affect the results. It is critical to broaden the scope of the study to include different maize varieties. Although the behavior of weevils was not an explicit parameter in this study, future related study endeavors could also investigate the relationship between weevil behavior and ash.

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Recommendations

According to study findings and experiences of some farmers, it is possible to use an application rate of at least 76 g of ash for 5 kg of maize grain. As such, a rate of around 15 kg of ash is recommended per tonne of maize grain. Since measurement challenges are encountered by farmers in quantifying the required levels of ash, a 50 kg sack (by volume) full of shelled maize cobs can give 2-3 kg of ash depending on the level of burning. Thus 5-50 kg sacks of maize cobs may suffice to treat 1 tonne of maize grain.

The value of indigenous knowledge cannot be doubted as illustrated by the study. Farmers may use cob powder in protecting their harvest against weevils. As a rule of thumb, effectiveness of cob powder is normally observed at high levels of concentration. Farmers will have to strike a balance between low cost and the labor time invested to remove ash when preparing for food consumption.

NOTES

6. AREX, 2004, p.3.

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Dim Delobsom: French Colonialism and Local Response in Upper Volta

MICHAEL KEVANE

Abstract: Dim Delobsom was one of the first indigenous colonial bureaucrats in the French administration of Upper Volta. Born in 1897, he rapidly rose through the ranks of colonial administration, becoming a high-level functionary. He also served as the resident ethnologist of the dominant Mossi tribe of Upper Volta, and published numerous books and articles on Mossi customs. Delobsom fell afoul of an important faction of the colonial apparatus, however, when he decided to assume the chieftaincy of his natal village upon his father's death. Colonial officials and French Catholic priests thought he would be compromised as a bureaucrat-chief, and sought to block his investiture. Delobsom died under mysterious circumstances shortly after being named chief, in 1940. His life reveals some important dimensions of the fractured colonial experience.

INTRODUCTION

Dim Delobsom was one of the first indigenous colonial clerks in the French administration of Upper Volta. He also was apparently the first indigenous ethnographer to publish in French West Africa. Delobsom fell afoul of the colonial administration, however, when in 1934 he became enmeshed in a major dispute over policy towards the Catholic Mission. Shortly after that he tried to assume the chieftaincy of his natal region upon his father's death. Some French colonial officials thought he had intrigued against the Mission and would be compromised as a bureaucrat-chief, and sought to block his investiture. Delobsom died under mysterious circumstances in 1940, several months after finally being named chief. A sad fact of Burkina Faso today is that few people have heard of Dim Delobsom, especially young people.

The life of Dim Delobsom exposes some key issues and caveats in the standard story of African decline as resulting from colonial legacy, of which Crawford Young remains a seminal narration. In his comparative study of the modern dysfunctions of African states, Young argues that the African colonial state was quite different from other states. It was forged in sudden and brutal violence, a Bula Matari 'crusher of rocks', as Congolese subjects referred to Henry Stanley and later the colonial state; it was prone to use new technologies of force to exercise power; it emasculated indigenous institutions by co-optation; and it successfully implanted a deceptively legitimating and paradoxically nationalistic ideology of a benevolent civilizing mission for the state in the brief post-war, pre-independence period. Colonizers then turned over power to their pupils: previously subordinate politicians and functionaries who had bathed in the waters of colonialism. This group of elite inheritors of the colonial state was experientially comfortable in the use of force, especially against leaders of 'traditional' institutions, and believed in the virtues of the higher purpose to be accomplished in the civilizing mission of the state.

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Summer 2006
But it is clear that this standard story must be more nuanced. Emily Osborn offers an excellent analysis focusing on the discrepancy of the Bula Matari story with the lived experience of the indigenous African colonial employees of the colonial state. As she notes in her conclusion: 'African colonial employees and their place in the equation of colonial rule reveal that French attempts to reshape African societies into French colonial ones were constantly challenged by the force and resilience of local processes and local relationships.'3 The same was true of other colonial regimes.

Understanding the life of Dim Delobsom reinforces and shapes this conclusion. Delobsom did not purchase Bula Matari's kit and caboodle with his hard-earned education and position. Rather, Delobsom illustrates in sharp detail how a 'native' worked in the interstices of the colonial state. He had one foot firmly planted in pre-colonial institutions of authority-- the traditional chieftaincy of the Mossi empire; one foot planted in new non-state institutions authoring new discourses of legitimation-- the Catholic Church and possibly the Free-Masons and certainly the world of books and other mass produced, globalized cultural output; and a third foot planted in the colonial state itself-- as a high-ranking clerk and widely-praised ethnographer, he was very close to the top administrators of Upper Volta. His two feet became a bit overextended, it is clear, but his potential, or ability, to master, contribute to, and lead all three worlds was never in doubt. His project, cut short by his untimely death, was similar to the project of many of his contemporaries: to amalgamate the various influences on local society. In his actions and words, and those of his contemporaries both French and 'native,' we see a reality quite different from the 'crusher of rocks' metaphor that is so evocatively used by Young.

Setting up Delobsom as an exception that disproves Young's thesis is not at all the point. As a matter of methodology, a single case study should not presume so much. As a matter of fairness, it should be noted that Young, without discussing Delobsom or going into details, actually uses the conflict of 1934 between state and mission in Upper Volta as an example of an exception to his portrait of a colonial state with an hegemonic cultural project to be transmitted to its pupils.4

This paper rather explores, through an examination of two key episodes in the life of Dim Delobsom, the specificities of how an exception to the Bula Matari story actually differs from that story. Each episode illustrates a different dimension that may be pursued in investigating alternatives to the Bula Matari story. The first episode is Delobsom's involvement in a major crisis of legitimacy in colonial Upper Volta, known by the name of l'affaire Carbou after the French administrator who, together with Delobsom, struck a hammer blow at the major institutions of the local colonial establishment. What emerges from this story is the possibility of complex alliances among the colonizers and the colonized, for the reality of the colonial project was that power was multipolar, with many different native and French factions competing within a framework that accorded ultimate legitimacy to the metropole, rather than to the local colonial state. The rules of the game were that political competition and intrigue continued until Dakar or Paris resolved the matter. Dakar and Paris, of course, were not themselves immune to intrigue and change; the victory of the Popular Front in 1936 was to have quick ripples through the colonial backwaters.

The second episode was Delobsom's quest, over six years from 1934-40, to wear the bonnet rouge, the red fez of chieftaincy, available after the death of his father, naba of the canton of Sao. Again, the fractured and multi-polar nature of the French colonial enterprise is revealed, as well as all the ambivalence of the more thoughtful French administrators concerning their project and rule. But the real theme of this saga is how alive and important traditional chieftaincy remained, even after forty years of the colonial rule. Rulers of independent African countries who later sought to crush chiefs learned to their peril that personal, prebendal rule could not eliminate the demand for chieftaincy, even as it punished the supply of chiefship services.

Dim Delobsom: brief biography

Antoine Augustin Dim Delobsom Kaboré was born in 1897 into a complex family and a society on the verge of great change. French armed forces, under Lieutenant Paul Voulet, had just entered Ouagadougou and imposed a new Moogo naaba, the king of the Ouagadougou region and the central figure in the four kingdoms that organized the Mossi people. Colonial rule would move quickly to direct occupation and last sixty years. Relations with nanamse (Mossi chiefs, singular naba) were always delicate. Delobsom's father Naba Piíga was the naba of the village and canton of Sao, northwest of Ouagadougou. The name after the honorific ‘Naba’ is the name of office that a chief takes, such as ‘elephant’ or ‘granite,’ while when the term naba follows a place name, such as Sao naba, this indicates the office of the chiefship for a place, rather than a particular person. Before ascending to office, Delobsom's father had helped the soon-to-be-deposed Moogo naaba Wobgo (Boukary Koutou) in his battles against the neighboring Lallé

African Studies Quarterly | http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v8/v8i4a2.htm
Summer 2006
naba. Boukary Koutou in return had helped Delobsom’s father in the competition to become Sao naba. “The king has returned the favor,” is the meaning of Dim Delobsom’s name.

Delobsom’s father seems to have been an astute leader, for he spread his investments across a wide range of social forces. He converted to Islam and maintained prominent Islamic holymen at Sao. Yet he sent Delobsom off as a young boy to be baptized, and then to be raised in the French colonial schools as a secularist. He also seems to have consulted and maintained good relations with traditional diviners.

Upon the completion of his education at Kayes, Delobsom returned to the colony of Upper Volta and took up service as a commis (clerk) in the bureaucracy of the colonial state. He served in a variety of positions, most notably as clerk to Louis Fousset, the secretary general of the administration and frequent replacement for the absent governor Édouard Hesling. Robert Arnaud, a colonial official who was to become acting governor of Upper Volta in 1927 and one of the more prolific and well-known interpreters of the colonial era for the French popular press, apparently encouraged Delobsom to write down ethnographic observations and publish them. The results, after a series of academic articles, were two books, L’Empire du Mogho-Naba and Secrets des Sorciers Noirs, published in the early 1930s. These books are characterized by a lively and intelligent style, with a friendly mix of personal anecdotes and serious questioning of Mossi society. These works became standard reading material for French colonial officers, and references to them are peppered in the writings of officers. They seem to be the first, or at least the first well-known, books by an African author in French West Africa.

Soon after the publication of his books, Delobsom became ensnared in two conflicts. He was accused of being a lead conspirator in what became known as l’affaire Carbou, where the acting head of the circle of Ouagadougou alarmed the government with accusations of meddling by the White Fathers in affairs of state and predictions of bloodshed. With still-fresh memories of the mass revolt of 1915-16, which led to hundreds of thousands of casualties among the population, the government responded to Carbou’s charges with seriousness. Many writers have asserted that l’affaire Carbou was to dramatically redirect the fortunes of the colony and Catholic Mission as the process of conversion to Christianity slowed dramatically and French suspicion of the Mossi empire as a political unit increased.

While these events were unfolding, Delobsom’s father died, and Delobsom tried to gain the title of Sao naba, confronting his brother and French officers in the process. His career seems to have suffered greatly from the fallout of these two battles. He did not publish again (though he may have kept writing, we do not know) and his transfer out of the Ouagadougou area in 1937 was viewed as a demotion and exile by the White Fathers. Although he was finally invested as Sao naba in April 1940, he died 83 days later without having a chance to fulfill the potential so evident in the early 1930s. He left no recognized children, though rumors circulate of descendants.

POWER AND LEGITIMACY IN COLONIAL UPPER VOLTA

Upper Volta, established as an autonomous colony in 1919, was soon marked by great uncertainty over fundamental questions of governance and the legitimacy of the French colonial project. The economic development dreams of Édouard Hesling, the first governor of the colony, had not come to pass. His road-building campaign led to roads that young men used to escape the colony rather than remain and be forced to build more roads. The dawning depression of the global economy in the 1930s underlined gross misjudgements about the profitability of the recent export oriented agricultural investments and campaign of forced cotton cultivation undertaken by the colonial administration. Unable to collect sufficient tax revenue to justify the administration, the colony was dismantled in 1933 and apportioned to other colonies. Government buildings were vacated.

The early 1930s also saw secularists in the colonial administration, organized through the lodges of the Free Masons, attempting to curtail the influence of the Catholic Mission established by the White Fathers. The Mission had flourished under the charismatic, well-connected, and energetic bishop Joanny Thévenoud, who had served on Hesling’s advisory board for the colony of Upper Volta and who could speak directly with Cabinet-level officials back in Paris. The Mission saw the dismantling of the colony as a major threat; their activities continued to depend on sizable grants and other assistance from the colonial administration, as well as official discouragement of rival Muslim and Protestant movements. It should be noted that this was not the first time that colonial administrators had tried to curtail the influence of the Mission. Ever since the Law of Separation of 1905 which created a secular state in France, institutionalizing the anti-clerical movement, administrators had from time to time encouraged indigenous chiefs to resist and reduce interactions with the Mission.

In this atmosphere of political uncertainty, an experienced administrator named Henri Carbou was posted to Ouagadougou, to serve as an inspector of administrative affairs. Carbou, according to Joseph-
Roger de Benoist had a fine record as commander of the circle of San in neighboring Mali, administrator in Timbuctu, and as administrator in Cote d’Ivoire.[14] He also had published a book in 1912, La région du Tchad et du Ouadai. Within one year, Carbou seems to have taken a very negative attitude towards the White Fathers and developed a good relationship with Delobsom.

In July of 1934, Carbou telegraphed Governor Dieudonné François Joseph Reste in Abidjan noting that there were problems in the Bwa area. De Benoist offers an excellent summary of this ‘révolte des enfants des Peres’ (revolt of the children of the Fathers) or nana vo, as it became known in the local language.[15] Catholic converts were apparently refusing to accept the authority of chiefs imposed by the administration.[16] Reste ordered inspector François Cornet to take a military escort through the area. Cornet replied in the beginning of August that the problem lay with the Mission, which was undermining the authority of the administration. In early August, Carbou sent an urgent telegram to Reste: the Moogo naaba had warned the administrators in Ouagadougou that the Mission was exacerbating tensions in the area and that "...if you do not put a halt to the activities of the Mission, incidents of bloodshed will be sure to follow shortly upon minor provocation."[17] The telegram was followed by a report to Reste sent on 11 August, and read by the Governor on the 21st according to a margin note.[18] In the report, Carbou repeated the assertions of the Moogo naaba, and asked the Governor to interview the Moogo naaba directly, in private, when he came to Abidjan with other chiefs to celebrate the inauguration of the new government offices in Abidjan, using Dim Delobsom as interpreter.

Carbou then launched a full-scale investigation into abuses by the Mission, and called a meeting of all the native chiefs of the Ouagadougou area on August 16. At the meeting he reminded them that the Mission did not have authority over them. He encouraged them to come forward with cases of abuse. Thévenoud off a warning letter to Carbou the very next day; he knew about the meeting despite its secrecy, knew what Carbou had said, and would use every "legitimate" resource at his disposal to defend the Mission.[19] Carbou compiled a dossier of allegations, including a lengthy section on how the mission used converted Mossi as spies on the administration, but mostly concerning women who had left their homes for the Mission against the wishes of their parents or fiancées.[20]

There was no reason to doubt the veracity of the claims that the Mission was harboring women fleeing an oppressive patriarchy. That women were oppressed was not in doubt. Delobsom himself had a lengthy section of his first book devoted to it and did not hesitate to describe the status of women as that of “beasts of burden” compared with men.[21] Men controlled all assets, men took decisions within the family, men inherited and not women, women in fact were inherited themselves upon the deaths of their husbands, men had the right to hit their wives, and men could marry off their daughters without needing consent. This sentiment was underscored by Arnaud in his preface to L’empire du Mogho-Naba (p.vi), writing on the status of women in more elite households: "And this is why, reduced to penurious work and the status of female donkeys, women constitute, in the houses of war priests, a herd which serves as a kind of currency of exchange used when the occasion demanded, and from which the weak and old were culled without mercy."[22]

Delobsom’s writing on the subject of women had an authenticity and weight that made an immediate impact. In his political report of 1932, acting Lieutenant Governor of Upper Volta Henri Chessé referred to Delobsom extensively to defend his argument for a more vigorous policy of emancipation of women. He cited an extract from Delobsom that would be sure to resonate with constituencies back in France: "The customs of marriage constitute a real traffic in women, completely ignoring the rights of parents in the case of pogsioure [where a chief marries off young girls] and the consent of young girls to dispose of their own persons. This is like a disguised slavery to which the Mossi woman and others like her is still reduced."[23]

There is also ample evidence of the prominence of the issue of women fleeing these patriarchal structures by seeking refuge in the Mission in correspondence among and reports of French administrators. Baudu asserted that in Koudougou alone in 1933 more than fifty cases where heard by the commandant concerning the status of girls relating to the Mission.[24]

Catholic historiography of l’affaire Carbou (pretty much all that exists) casts Thévenoud and the Mission as engaged in a valiant effort to emancipate women of Mossi society from unholy alliance of an oppressive patriarchy that denied them natural rights and an accommodating administrative cabal of Free Masons who did not want to rock the colonial boat’s reliance on indigenous chiefs which and would rather shut down the Mission and transfer out indigenous clerks and chiefs allied with the Mission.[25] This is also the summary judgement of Elliot Skinner.[26] Some commentators have opined, without much evidence, that the struggle that threatened the administration was really a power struggle between Governor of Cote d’Ivoire François Reste and Governor-General of A.O.F. Joseph Jules Brévié.[27] Certainly the two held conflicting but confusing opinions over how to resolve the vexing question of the status of...
indigenous women who converted to Christianity and evaded the obligations to marry imposed on them by a patriarchal society.

In challenging the Mission, Carbou was not arguing that women should not have rights, but rather whether the Mission had the power to give them those rights. The Mission had been established in Ouagadougou in 1901, but the strong anti-clericalism of many administrators, also Free Masons, meant that the Mission was viewed by many with suspicion. There was certainly no shortage of evidence to support charges of damage to the legitimacy of secular colonial administration. Thévenoud was quite controversial. According to Baudu, Thévenoud was able through his protestations to have the administrator of Ouahigouya and his assistant removed or transferred from office. This kind of meddling, even the sympathetic Baudu agreed, did not serve the Mission well. His priests were not always well-behaved, and seemed to think that they too could apply the code d'indigenat, whereby French administrators applied summary justice when they felt the need. White Fathers demonstrated a readiness to apply gifles, or slaps, when crossed by indigenous men over issues ranging from marriage to payment of tax.

Governor Reste took over personally in September, touring the colony and extracting promises of obedience and loyalty. The Moogo naaba retracted his statements. Reste backed the Mission publicly, but did little to support the Mission materially. Carbou and Delobsom were transferred out of Ouagadougou. Inspection missions had the final words, and this was not encouraging for the Mission. Inspector of Colonies Bagot, in his report of 1935, was to conclude: "Even if the reports of ... Carbou contain what I have earlier described as exaggerations or unsubstantiated affirmations, he did signal some complaints that should have been examined at that time and place, regardless of what their real importance might have turned out to be."31

The crisis seems to have had profound effects. Catholic success in recruitment declined precipitously as chiefs and secularist administrators apparently concluded that the Mission had lost influence, and transmitted that message to the populace, who then became less afraid to assert themselves against the missionaries. French colonial administration was frankly revealed in all its confusion and weakness as authorities openly discussed in official correspondence what their actual purpose was: civilizing, proselytizing, or exploiting?

One interest for this paper is not in the actual events of the crisis, but rather what historians have had to say about Delobsom, what the silences in the historiography say about Delobsom, and then how these assertions and silences might reveal some of the workings of the colonial project as it operated in, through and around this one person. An expected but still unsettling aspect of the Catholic historiography of the 1934 political crisis is that all of the commentators uncritically follow Thévenoud in blaming Delobsom for the crisis. Thévenoud indeed seemed to have thought that much of the affair was the work of Delobsom. In a pastoral letter delivered at the Ouagadougou Cathedral in 1948, he observed, in the context of an argument that the White Fathers were not at all the same as the colonial administration (reproduced in Frédéric Guirma): “Even those of you who are young still remember Dim Delobsom, an intriguer who wanted to implicate the Mission in a rebellion of the population of the Black Volta in 1934. This revolt [was] known by the name of Nana Vo, or, 'end of presents for the whites'. Delobsom conspired with an inspector of administrative affairs, a Free Mason like Delobsom, come from Dakar to investigate the movement. Delobsom's only objective was to take vengeance on one of his traditional wives who had chosen liberty and dignity in coming to the Mission.”32

The Catholic historians cite unsubstantiated rumor, or the writings of the White Fathers themselves, for this conclusion. Baudu makes the following claim:

In August of 1932, two poughbi (that is how betrothed girls were called) of Dim Dolebsom [sic] came to the Mission. This Dim Dolebsom was an educated Mossi. Intelligent, he was a clerk in the administration, but with a European grade, a privilege he shared with only two others in Ouagadougou. He was preparing a book, under the guidance of a White, called Dans l'Empire du Mogho naba, where all the illustrations were furnished by the Mission. His relations with the White Fathers then were not bad, even for a man who for whatever reason was affiliated with the Free Masons. But this educated man was too proud and was filled with a maddening regret, frightening for the Black that he remained: he did not have children. He expected that someday a woman would make him a father. The entry into catechism of his two promised wives, his poughbi, almost at marriageable age, rendered him violent with rage... perhaps the Fathers did not put themselves on guard because they made an enemy whose implacable rancor would simmer into vengeance...33
Rose-Marie Sondo discusses Delobsom in the following passage:

...in Ouagadougou for example the hostility of one Dim Dolebsom [sic] is explained by a simple bad will. He was considered to be a Christian first devoted then perverted (the words of the missionaries in his area) who only wanted evil for the Mission. This was certainly the case, and according to one witness it seems his hostility against the Mission came about this way: a Christian, one day Dim Delobsom was late for mass, he was then publicly humiliated by the priest who slapped him. Nothing like a slap to sour an ambitious and proud functionary of the Whites, grand and respectable in the eyes of his black compatriots and who had influence over the Whites who didn’t know the local language and depended on him. One can understand why vengeance was the reply to this unfortunate gesture.34

The more careful of the historians, de Benoist repeats Baudu’s interpretation of Delobsom’s motives, but cites the Ouagadougou Mission diary, and has this to say: "After some time Dim Delobsom became the avowed enemy of the Mission," and later, "Many – and especially the missionaries – believed that he [Delobsom] was at the heart of the actions against the Mission."35 De Benoist then reproduces part of the daily record of the Ouagadougou Mission of the White Fathers on the occasion of Delobsom’s transfer to Ferkessedougou:

After a time, the administration enquired after this ambitious and infuriated arrivé and determined that he was dangerous only to the Mission. He was able to get a free ride then from the administrators....He was the heart of all the filthy manoeuvres against us for two years. Thanks to his position, he was able to impose himself on many, from those ambitious to those who were fearful. He acted as a chief, affirming that he could suffer no disgrace. So our formidable enemy is now finally distant from us.36

One of the reasons for why so many authors have given credence to Thévenoud’s views is that they also quickly became the official position. Governor Reste, in his report on the incidents, concluded: "I am absolutely certain that the beginning of this whole affair is an intrigue brought about by two men... Dim Delobson [sic]...and Koulouango [the principal interpreter of Ouagadougou]. These two are declared enemies of the Mission."37 Reste continued, explaining how Delobsom wanted to keep his many wives, but the Mission chastised him for this, and convinced then-Governor Heslin to remonstrate him, something that Delobsom never forgave the Mission. Reste is at pains to declare in a footnote that he had not spoken with Thévenoud about this, nor with any other White Father, as if to suggest that his information had come from a neutral source. Given the several other stories circulating, this footnote can only be seen as self-serving.

There are a number of odd things about blaming Delobsom for the crisis.

- Delobsom’s writings and style and introduction by Randau give no indication of his being a petty, spiteful, vengeful person, and the glowing recommendation by acting Lieutenant Governor Henri Chessé in his annual report of 1932 certainly contradicts these other characterizations.38
- The language of personalization (turning Delobsom into a conspiring, vengeful, frustrated and humiliated indigenous person) is in and of itself suspicious. The historiography contains little semblance of having read and engaged Delobsom’s written work. Again, his written work suggests a very different person than that presented by the Mission and the Catholic historians.
- Delobsom’s analysis in his book L’Empire du Mogho Naba is consonant with the position being advocated by the Mission. He is completely against the oppression of women, and unflinching in his descriptions of the subservient roles played by women in Mossi society.
- During the time of the crisis his father is probably dying (he dies in October 1934, just two months after the crisis). Would he really undertake this dangerous game at that time? The Catholic historiography contains no mention of Delobsom’s father’s death and subsequent struggle over the chieftancy, which sheds a very different, and sympathetic light on Delobsom.
- Delobsom’s actions, at least as they appear in the colonial and Mission record, and in terms of the actions of his ‘co-conspirator’ Carbou, appear to have been entirely above board: letters and reports are filed in a timely manner, and the whole enterprise is conducted, apparently, in a very transparent, bureaucratic manner. In fact, Delobsom spent much of the period of crisis, from 10 August to 3 September, in Abidjan in the circle of Governor Reste! None of the Catholic historiographers mention this, and de Benoist, for example, uncritically reproduces Thévenoud’s
The crucial importance of chiefs in the French administration of Upper Volta has been noted by many commentators. It suffices to recall the words of Hesling, the Lieutenant-Governor, in his political report of 1926:

> Chiefs and legitimacy

In the absence of available witnesses, a Catholic historiography that may have been overly reliant on the notes and interpretations of Thévenoud, and the absence of primary source material from non-administrative sources, the true role that Delobsom played in the conflict cannot be ascertained. The only document from Delobsom himself, a letter written to French administrator Bellieu in 1936, denied any involvement in the crisis. Delobsom, writing in regard to his request to succeed his father as Sao naba, reminded Bellieu of the Carbou affair, noting that he was in Abidjan with the governor during most of August, not in Ouagadougou, and so played no role in the crisis. A note of sardonic humor intrudes, with an aside about how the Mission seemed to think he could be in two places at once, "ubiquitous" is his choice of words.

Nevertheless, Delobsom’s ‘remembered’ role sparks a number of observations regarding the legitimacy of the colonial order. Most important is that the crisis of legitimacy as interpreted by many actors in 1934 had an arbiter, or a procedure of arbitration. Disputes among and within the administration and the major non-state actors were decidable by the metropole. The local colonial state was not the arbiter, but rather one among many players. Everyone understood this. The situation arose because the local state itself was not monolithic. There were sharp differences among the French administrators over their role. But these differences were discussed and debated and criticized through the written word, through reports and opinions on margins of reports. There was a whole set of superiors who had to be informed and persuaded, all the way up to the Minister of Colonies, who in turn answered to the French electorate (which was to dramatically change colonial policy in 1936 with the election of the Popular Front). The internal bureaucratization of the state, a key element of its legitimation, was entrenched in the early 1930s. But, as suggested, the audience for bureaucratization was not the ‘customer’ of the state, the citizen (or subject!), but rather the metropole.

The crisis makes clear that in 1934, more than three decades into colonial rule, the ordinary ‘native’ was not the source of legitimation. Nor was the elite ‘native’, the evolué, the source of legitimation. The local colonial state did not attempt to ‘win the hearts and minds,’ to apply the current jargon, of the elite, nor did it attempt to legitimate through a crushing of local power. The Moogo naaba, the highest authority in local society, had little idea who his counterparts were among the French, and what they stood for. But he knew he could make the administrators jump. The French administrators, distant from the people they ruled and unable to speak local languages, had little ability to be intelligent to the situation that surrounded them. They were always vulnerable to misinterpretation and manipulation. This may have been especially true in the Mossi case, famous for their silences and nuanced speech. But the administrators knew they could arrest and silence opponents. The Mission too knew their power to alter the shape of colonial life, and knew that they competed with Muslim preachers and Protestant movements. In this mix, the growing confidence of the intellectuals, such as Delobsom, as a class indicated a new source of power. The metropole enforced a cease-fire among these competing powers in the colony. The local colonial state was but one of those powers, and arguably on the decline as early as 1934.
This question of indigenous chiefs is essential and delicate. We command effectively only through the intermediation of the nabas. If we try to control very strictly the means and methods they use to get results, if we pretend to incorporate their actions into our conception of rights, we risk gaining nothing, and undermining customary law and mixing up indigenous society. Our relations with these indispensable intermediaries are above all relations of personal authority, and common sense and restraint.46

This accommodating policy was not without its critics, and in 1932 acting Lieutenant Governor Henri Chessé penned a blistering attack on native chiefs and their role in the administration.47 He urged administrators to immediately tour their administrative areas and make clear to the population that abuses by chiefs would not be tolerated. To set the example, Chessé revoked the chieftaincies of a brother of the Moogo naaba and of the Liptako naba, an important canton in the northern part of the colony.

The ambivalent and fractured nature of French policy towards chiefs is reflected in their education policy. Early on in the colonial period, sons of chiefs were taken to the famous école des otages first at Saint-Louis and later at Kayes. As Conklin suggests, French policy in the pre-war period was assimilationist, modernizing and “civilizing.”48 After the First World War, and subsequent to the outbreak of major revolts, colonial policy shifted to favoring the uneducated, “traditional” chiefs who would be more able and willing to quell incipient unrest. Education of chiefs, and of the general population, followed the vicissitudes of budgetary crises and missionary priorities. Policy towards chiefs became increasingly linked to manipulation of the incipient local political parties, trade unions and other collective movements.49

After the death of his father in October 1934, Delobsom wanted to be Sao naba. The administration did not want him to be chief, and apparently prevented the Moogo naaba from appointing him. Delobsom, frustrated, wrote a remarkable letter in 1936 to the administrateur Bellieu.50 He began by suggesting that traditional chiefs were against his accession to the position of Sao naba because they felt threatened by his high salary as an administrative clerk. This initial impediment, he argued, was then compounded by a veritable labyrinth of indecisive beaureaucracy, as his request ascended to the colonial office in Paris only to slowly descend with instructions for a decision at the lower levels. There it sat for months. Delobsom went on to implicate one chief in particular, the Baloum naba, as the obstacle. As a well-known supporter of the Mission, it was then but a small leap to go to the heart of the matter, the Mission’s desire for a naba who would support their proselytizing in Sao. Bellieu was reminded of the accusations against Delobsom in the Carbou affair, and how these were unfounded. He closed with a rhetorical flourish, asking how it was that after being taken from his home to be sent to school, and then spending twenty-three years in service to the colonial administration, illiterate chiefs could have more sway over the commandant than his plain reason, and could lead to his younger brother being named Sao naba?

The background to this chieftaincy debate is interesting. On Delobsom’s book L’empire du Mogho Naba, much commentary agrees that a most controversial stance is taken in regard to the relations of authority in the Mossi political structure.51 Delobsom argued for the power and legitimacy of the kombéré, the canton chiefs, against that of the kug-zidba, or nesomba, the ministers of the court of the Moogo naaba.52 Of these ministers, four are typically taken to be those most important, Ouidi naba, Larallé naba, Baloum naba and Gounga naba. Robert Pageard recalls that this argument against the ministers was strongly criticised by the Laralle naba in 1960 when Pageard met with him to discuss Delobsom’s book.53 The Larallé naba argued that the opposite was the case: the ministers exercised considerable and non-negotiable oversight over ‘their’ kombéré. The Larallé naba further argued that Delobsom’s position was self-serving. Delobsom was not friendly with the Baloum naba, the minister overseeing the Sao chieftaincy and who had converted to Catholicism in 1927 and was a strong ally of the Mission and Thévenoud. Hence, according to the Larallé naba, the argument that kombéré were not really subject to the oversight of the ministers.

In his letter to Bellieu, Delobsom noted the vexation he would suffer were his younger brother named Sao naba. It was not a question of injured pride. He surely intended his reader to remember a startlingly personal passage in Secrets des Sorciers Noirs, published in 1934, where the kingirga diviner (someone who communicates with the ‘little people’ who live in the bush) hinted at his poor relations with his younger brother.54 Delobsom went on to explain in subsequent paragraphs that the diviner’s hints were exactly right: one of his brothers was plotting and intriguing against him.

Indeed, in 1936 his younger brother Zang-nê was invested as Sao naba by the Moogo naaba. According to Titinga Pacéré Delobsom was not informed of the decision, and immediately protested.55 Zang-nê had argued that his older brother was not interested and would not want to resign his position.

African Studies Quarterly | http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v8/v8i4a2.htm
Summer 2006
More discussion was contained in the Rapport Politique of the colony of Cote d'Ivoire, of which Upper Volta had become part in 1933. The 1936 political report observes that Delobsom was still a candidate opposed by the administration.65 His brother Zang-né was meanwhile fulfilling the role on an interim basis, according to the report. Delobsom, the report suggested, had asked to be transferred to Abidjan to represent the Mossi population in Cote d'Ivoire. Decision on this request was postponed until Delobsom returned from his leave. Delobsom was indeed transferred, but to the circle of Bobo Dioulasso on 5 October 1937. He apparently was subsequently posted to Ferkessedougou.57

The 1938 Annual Report contains a lengthier discussion of the unresolved controversy.58 It is not clear who the ultimate responsible author of the report is (Governor of Cote d'Ivoire Bressoles ended his term on 27 January 1939, succeeded by Crocichia) nor to whom it is directly addressed (at one point deviating from an impersonal report to directly address an unnamed reader), but the author is clearly opposed to Delobsom's nomination. The report noted that the Baloum naba was firmly opposed, and praises the Baloum naba for his circumspection. The 1937 report of Inspector Itier, critical of Delobsom, was cited. The issues of Delobsom's loyalty -- was he an agent, or did he control the Moogo naaba himself? -- and intentions -- why did he want so badly to be a chief? -- were raised. The author added that he had demanded answers to the numerous questions about Delobsom from the Resident-Superieur of Upper Cote d'Ivoire, presumably Edmond Louveau who was the administrator in Ouagadougou beginning in 1938.

The 1938 annual report does not note that the Sao canton was reassigned in 1938 to the oversight of the Larallé naba away from the Baloum naba. It is not clear what the basis or motives for this transfer were. The winds may have been changing. Louveau was happy with Delobsom.59 The Moogo naaba may have been on the ascendant with the posting of Louveau as resident administrator. Perhaps the more sympathetic position towards Delobsom of the Laralle naba encouraged Delobsom to resign from the administration on 16 May 1939, with the title “agent intermédiaire chargé d’assurer l’exécution des opérations budgétaires.”

A year later, on 21 April 1940 Dim Delobsom was invested as Sao naba, after the Moogo naaba and his counselors reversed their earlier decision to invest Zang-né. A strange reversal, and so far it is impossible to know what prompted it. There are a number of possibilities to speculate on. One is that Delobsom, having resigned his position, was no longer opposed by the administration, and so the Moogo naaba, already well-disposed towards him, could reverse the earlier decision, justified as temporary. Another is that the German invasion of France, and rapidly approaching armistice, enabled Delobsom and the Moogo naaba to convince Louveau that Delobsom would be more loyal and more powerful than Zang-ne. Could Louveau have already been laying the groundwork for his pro-de Gaulle declaration, which he was to make on June 22 1940?

As it was, Delobsom died suddenly 83 days after the ceremony. According to Titinga Paceré, Delobsom had received a number of bottled alcoholic beverages on the occasion of the 14 July celebrations.60 He perhaps consumed one of these poisoned bottles, is the conspiracy theory. Poisoned by whom? An enemy of his? An enemy of Louveau, who two weeks later was to be escorted to Dakar, arrested, and sent to prison in Vichy France?62 Of course, the possibility of tragic and sudden natural death cannot be ruled out either. This mystery will not be resolved in the near future.

Delobsom's long march to the chieftaincy, and the bitterness that his candidacy evoked, is remarkable. After forty years of colonial rule, the most modern and cosmopolitan of all the évolués of Upper Volta still insisted on the importance of traditional rule. Delobsom’s lone surviving photograph, reprinted in his book, displays a young man in impeccable European white suit against a mud brick building. His self-assured pose, and the confidence of his writing, suggest a character who could have lived a rich mental and material life without being chief. He chose to be chief. He wanted to be chief. He thought being chief was the right thing to do.

As many commentators have observed, colonial administrators never succeeded in elevating their barely legitimate institution -- the local state -- as the higher allegiance of the land. Instead, competing orders of the same level of allegiance persisted and sometimes even grew, during the colonial period and after.63 In many colonies, this competing order was the system of chieftaincy or traditional authority.64 Much contemporary scholarship demonstrates the enduring power of chiefs.65 In other colonies, secret societies, church groups, and Islamic movements mobilized populations and controlled violence in ways totally unavailable to the state. Again, the general point, of which this paper is one example, is that the Bula Matari story must be nuanced in a different direction.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS
The irony of Delobsom’s life was that Monsignor Joanny Thévenoud ended up on a stamp of the independent Upper Volta, and has been lionized through several books, while Delobsom faded into collective unconscious of the Burkinabe elite, with brief negative characterizations in the aforementioned books. A negative perception endures despite some recent efforts to rectify the situation. A school and avenue named after him remain just names, no more evocative than those of obscure colonial explorers. Nevertheless, an exploration of the major events of his life reveals the character of the colonial project that shaped an independent Burkina Faso. Colonial regimes in Africa deserve extremely careful analysis, if only because the trick in prescribing for reversal of African decline is to examine carefully the real choices made by political actors as they constructed and evaluated their careers and goals during a period when, for all its faults, discourses of popular sovereignty and human rights, improvements in living standards along a range of measures, and economic growth, were tangible and achievable. Only by a deep, textured understanding of lived biographies can future political actors learn from and avoid the same mistakes and temptations, and can ordinary citizens be inspired by a past worth remembering. In this regard, Crawford Young’s 1994 narrative has inspired a new generation of research into how the colonial legacy influenced contemporary economic and political decline.

This new work has pursued three different strands. One strand has tried to quantitatively measure the institutional legacy of colonial states, and see whether it is indeed correlated with subsequent economic performance in countries around the world. A second strand has asked how it was that the readiness to use force, and belief in the primacy of the state in its modernizing project over other legitimate institutions of colonial society, came to be part of the world view of the independence elites that inherited political power. This work bears down on the lives of subjects of colonialism and new rulers of independence. While Young’s work is remarkably devoid of individual African actors (only Blaise Diagne’s voice is heard for colonial sub-Saharan Africa), subsequent work suggests that there is plenty of evidence that more than one African colonial civil servant and politician “remained enclosed within the imposed metaphors of the colonial order and the circumscribed future that Bula Matari offered,” to use Young’s phrasing. Heather Sharkey, for example, finds abundant evidence in the written legacy of Sudanese colonial clerks and colonially-educated nationalists of these ‘imposed metaphors.’ Genova’s recent characterization of the French West African évolutés as ‘reluctant decolonizers’ is also pertinent.

A third strand has focused on some less psychological and more structural legacies of the colonial order. Some writers, for example, focus on the geography of African states and the populations their borders enclosed. Contra Young, they argue that the fundamental weakness of African states as coherent political entities stems from the boundaries inherited from the colonial project, and the post-colonial international order which prevented alteration of boundaries.

But while each of these three strands explores and amasses evidence consistent with Young’s broad comparative discussion on the exceptionalism of African states, there is not so much work exploring and amassing evidence that is inconsistent with the thesis. In a comparative perspective, inconsistencies would be findings that African states were not so different from other states. While the work noted above suggests that African states were indeed different, it must be remembered that this work has been conducted by Africanists primarily interested in finding differences. One must assume some self-selection of the measures used to measure state characteristics. Do studies by Latin Americanists looking at their region in comparative perspective find that African states are different? Perhaps not, for example, on dimensions of state enforcement of unequal distributions of property.

At the case study level, inconsistencies with the view of the importance of the colonial legacy of Bula Matari statedom would draw attention to continuities with the pre-colonial system of informal and multiple authority structures, to changes that would have probably happened even under very different colonial state structures and perhaps even in the absence of colonial state, or that were happening despite the deliberate obstacles of the colonial state. These include the spread of literacy by missionary schools, the spread of discourses of legitimation emanating from popular sovereignty, the suppression of the slave trade, and the integration into the global economy. Case studies might also present more sophisticated and nuanced analyses of the character of the colonial state. Perhaps the time has come to ask how influential were liberal reforming expatriate colonial officers such as Robert Delavignette in shaping the tenor of the state? On the other side were the indigenous colonial employees, who certainly helped define popular perceptions of the state.

Many indigenous actors, such as Delobsom, were actively engaged in creating, practicing and theorizing the amalgamation of these institutions. It is not clear that this legacy is such a specifically colonial legacy, nor whether this legacy of dynamic institutions was a ‘problem’ (and most African states had little difficulty continuing economic growth for almost two decades after independence). Institutions
were changing before, during and after the colonial period. The standard story of African decline as rooted in a colonial legacy of a perverse state needs some updating.

NOTES

1. Titinga Pacéré 1989 made the same observation almost 15 years ago. His entry in the historical dictionary of Burkina Faso is however somewhat misleading and unsubstantiated - it reads (McFarland & Rupley 1998, p. 39): "In 1934 Dim Delobsom was leader of an attack on the activities of the Catholic missionaries in behalf of Voltaic women because he felt such activities destroyed traditional culture. He was transferred out of Ouagadougou, but was appointed chief of Sao district by the Moro Naba."

5. This section draws heavily on the invaluable work of Titinga Pacéré 1989.
9. Baudu 1957, p. 179-85; de Benoist 1987; and Ilboudo 2000, pp. 188-91
12. On the Free Masons in French West Africa, little has been written for the period of concern here. For an earlier period, see White 2005.
16. There were similar, though less coordinated conflicts in the Mossi area. Ilboudo 2000, p. 147 reports that the commandant of the circle of Ouagadougou spent considerable time in 1934 and 1935 resolving a dispute between Mossi Christian converts and their chief, in the village of Koasenga.
17. "...si vous ne mettez pas un terme aux entreprises des Peres, des incidents sanglants se produiront sous peu."
18. Carbou 1934b.
22. "Et c'est pourquoi, devoulées aux travaux pénibles et ravalées au rang de femelles, les femmes constituaient, chez les chefs de guerre, un troupeau qui, à l'occasion, servait de monnaie d'échange entre les groupes, et d'où l'on éliminait sans pitié les faibles, les vieilles."
23. "La coutume régissant le mariage constitue un véritable trafic de femmes, au mépris des droits des parents dans le cas du pogsioure et du consentement des jeunes filles à disposer leur personne. Tel est donc l'esclavage déguise auquel est encore réduite la femme mossi et bien d'autres avec elle."
28. de Benoist 1987; Pauliat 1995b.
33. Baudu 1957, pp. 166-7 (see also p. 196): "En août 1932, ce furent deux <<poughbi>> (ainsi nomm-t-on les filles promises) de Dim Dolebsom [sic] qui vinrent à la fois se faire inscrire [à la Mission]. Ce
Dim Dolebsom était un Mossi évolué. Intelligent, il était commis à l'Administration, mais au titre européen, privilège qu'il ne partageait alors qu'avec deux autres à Ouagadougou. Il se préparait à faire paraître, guidé par un Blanc, un livre intitulé *Dans l'Empire du Mogho naba*, dont toute l'illustration lui avait été fourni par la Mission. Ses relations avec les Pères n'étaient donc pas mauvaises, quoique homme passât, à tort ou à raison, pour être affilié à la franc-maçonnerie. Mais cet évolué, d'un orgueil maladif, était, par ailleurs, rongé par un regret, affreux pour le Noir qu'il restait: il n'avait pas d'enfant. Il espérait que presque en âge d'être mariées l'indisposa violemment... peut-être les Pères ne prirent-ils pas suffisamment garde alors qu'ils se faisaient la un ennemi acharné dont la rancune implacable saurait patiemment élaborer une vengeance...

34. Sondo 1998, p. 210-1: "...à Ouagadougou par exemple l'hostilité d'un Dim Dolebsom [sic] s'expliquait autrement que par un simple mauvaise volonté. Baptisé, il était considéré comme un chrétien "dévoyé et perverti" (termes des missionnaires a son endroit) qui ne voulait que du mal à la Mission. C'était exact, mais après un témoignage, un fait semble être à l'origine de ce retournement haineux pour la Mission: chrétien, Dim Dolebsom arriva en retard à la messe; il fut publiquement humilié par le prêtre qui lui donna un gifle. Rien de tel pour aigrir un ambitieux et fier fonctionnaire des Blancs, grand et respectable aux yeux de ses compatriotes noirs et qui avait de l'influence sur les Blancs qui ne connaissaient pas la langue du peuple et comptaient sur lui. On comprend dès lors que la vengeance soit la réplique de ce malheureux geste."


36. Diare de Ouagadougou 18 juillet 1936, as quoted in de Benoist 1987 p. 452: “Depuis quelques temps, l'administration enquêtait sur cet ambitieux forcené et elle s'est aperçue qu'il n'était pas dangereux que pour la mission. Il saute donc par mesure politique... Cet évolué fut l'âme de toutes les manoeuvres ourdies contre nous depuis deux ans. Grâce à sa situation, il s'imposait à beaucoup, soit ambitieux, soit craintifs. Il se donnait pour chef, affirmant que nulle disgrâce ne pouvait l'atteindre. C'est donc notre ennemi le plus redoutable qui s'éloigne.”

37. Reste 1934.

38. Chessé 1932 p. 208: "La section d’apurement du bureau des finances du gouvernement de la Volta est uniquement constituée d’éléments indigènes. Son chef, M. Dim Delobsom pur Mossi devenu récemment Citoyen français, s’y révèle un excellent professionnel, dépassent en valeur bon nombre de fonctionnaires européens. Loin de se confiner dans les arcanes de la comptabilité, il cherche à étendre sa culture générale et s’est essayé dans la littérature documentaire...”

39. de Benoist p. 417.
40. Baudu p. 82, p. 165.
42. Delobsom 1936.
44. Somé 2004.
46. Rapport Politique Trimestrelle 1926.
47. Chessé 1932.
50. Delobsom 1936.
52. This issue remains of importance and the subject of considerable discussion for many commentators of the Mossi empire. See, for example, Izard 1973, pp. 202-3.
57. Titinga Pacéré 1989, p. 45.
60. Titinga Pacéré 1989, p. 46.
62. See Louveau 1947...
64. For Upper Volta, see Madiéga 1995.
70. Sharkey 2003.

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Causes of Small Business Failure in Uganda: A Case Study from Bushenyi and Mbarara Towns
CHARLES TUSHABOMWE-KAZOOBA

Abstract: The privatization drive and the Civil and Public Service reforms that began in the early 1990s in Uganda laid a foundation for an increased number of small business enterprises. By 2002, small scale enterprises were employing approximately 2,000,000, and serving about 6,000,000 people at business and household level. The entrepreneurs that set up these enterprises lacked business management skills and capital, and as such, many of them faced a number of problems, most of which were of a startup nature. A survey was carried out to establish the causes of small business failures in Uganda using businesses in Mbarara and Bushenyi towns as case studies. In-depth interviews and questionnaire methods were mainly used to collect data from 133 small business enterprises. It is concluded that the causes of small businesses failure are multidimensional and diverse. They include poor management as well as political, economic, social, cultural and environmental factors. In practice, many of these are interrelated. The survey revealed that the startup factors posed a greater threat than those that are encountered once the business has been established. As such, business people who successfully negotiate the initial startup hurdles have greater chances of future success in their businesses. Despite the solutions sought over the years, the business community in Uganda is still hampered by the challenges. The study concludes by making a number of practical suggestions against business failure.

INTRODUCTION

The privatization drive, which started in the early 1990s, made the Government of Uganda relinquish its position as the number one employer. The Civil and Public Service reforms downsized the public service, reducing staff employed by central government from 320,000 in 1990 to 191,324 in March 2001, a reduction of 40.9%. As a result, tens of thousands of retrenched civil servants joined the private sector as small scale business owners. This led to the mushrooming of small scale business enterprises, most of which employed fewer than five persons and as many as 90% of the non-farm private sector workers. Since then, the number of small scale businesses in Uganda has grown from 800,000 in 1995 to about 2,000,000 in 2002. These serve about 6,000,000 people at business and household level of the 26.3 million population.

Small scale business is defined as one which is independently owned and operated, and not dominant in its field of operation. It can also be defined in terms of sales volume and by the number of employees in the business. In Uganda, these businesses are very small employing up to a maximum of 50 people, who in most cases are members of the same family. They have working capital of less than USD 26,882 and revenue value of USD 5,376 - 26,882 throughout each year of operation. In addition, they have an asset base of up to USD $25,000. The major activities of small scale businesses in Uganda are farming, buying produce, market vending, catering and confectionery, shop keeping, second hand clothing, health/herbal services, secretarial services, telephone services, handicraft, transport, and many others. The majority of these operate in shared premises and are set up before they get licenses. Ownership and management is on family basis and as such has a small scale operation. It is labour intensive and skills are acquired on the job, often using adapted technology. According to John Keough, more than 50 percent of...
them fight an uphill battle from the start and fail in the first five years. This is a common scenario for Ugandan small businesses, as most of them ‘never celebrate their first anniversary.’

The purpose of this survey was to investigate the reasons for small business enterprise failure. Another reason for the survey was to determine the financial impact of “load shedding” to the businesses that use electricity as a source of energy. Case studies of businesses in two towns in Uganda were made and for the businesses studied, causes of failure and some practical measures suggested are outlined. This knowledge could help in mapping out strategies for solving the number of problems faced by these businesses, thereby contributing to poverty alleviation, one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A version of this survey is to be translated in the local languages in order to be available to a wider audience.

METHODOLOGY

Study area and population

This was a descriptive survey of the startup causes of business failure and other issues faced by small enterprises. Mbarara and Bushenyi are located in Southwestern Uganda. These are the district headquarters of Mbarara and Bushenyi respectively in what was formerly called Ankole region. The two districts neighbour each other. Bushenyi town has a population of 22,259 people of which 10,429 are male and 11,830 are female. It covers an area of 44 square kilometers. On the other hand, Mbarara town has a population of 69,208 people, of which 34,191 are male and 35,017 female. The total land area of the town is approximately 51.47 square kilometers. The economic activities of both towns includes but is not limited to crop and animal farming and trade, trade in retail and wholesale, workshops of carpentry and metal fabrication, hotels and food kiosks, brokerage, brick making, water vending, telephone operating, lodging and bars, taxi operating and milk processing. Mbarara and Bushenyi have both informal and formal business enterprises. In most cases, they engage in the same products, reducing opportunities for internal domestic markets within the region. In addition, Mbarara has 9,171(5.7%) of the total national businesses and employs 19,946(4.4%) of the total national workforce. On the other hand, Bushenyi has 1,225(0.8%) businesses out of 160,883 in the whole country and employs 3,599 people. Most of these businesses fall in the category of trading. These two particular towns were chosen for three reasons: 1) because of their close proximity; 2) the observed increase of economic activity in terms of new buildings, schools, hotels, petroleum products gas stations; 3) viable small businesses have sprung up in the recent past in these towns but most of them have not survived for more than a year.

Data collection

Data was collected from 133 business enterprises by interviewing the owners. Of these businesses, 113(85%) were from Mbarara and the remaining 20(15%) from Bushenyi. The number of businesses in Mbarara compared to those in Bushenyi is in a ratio of seven to one, and this dictated the numbers chosen from each town. The numbers were also determined based on the numerous socio-economic activities in Mbarara compared to Bushenyi town. Businesses were chosen by random sampling, judgmental analysis, and partly purposive decisions in order to have a wide representation of business activities in the sample. Business activities that were similar in nature were grouped together for sampling purposes. Two methods were mainly employed in primary data collection. These are in-depth interviews and questionnaire methods.

Data from Bushenyi town was collected in two days and all the 20 respondents were interviewed with a research assistant who was taking notes of the proceedings of the interview. The duration of these interviews varied between one to two hours. For those in Mbarara town, data was collected mainly using a field-tested questionnaire. Both structured and unstructured questions were administered to the proprietors. A special questionnaire was designed to collect information on the financial impact of load shedding on businesses in Mbarara town. This was administered to the proprietors of gas stations, bars, saloons, computer training services, hotels, and milk coolers that accounted for 28(21%) of the respondents.

Data collected was cross-tabulated to show the different variables. The entry and analysis of data were done using Epi-Info version 6.04b statistical package. This generated frequency tables for socio-economic and demographic data, taking into account the relationship between independent and dependant variables of different enterprises. The qualitative data was collected, transcribed, and
grouped. Double data entry and checking were used to minimize errors. Oral consent to participate in the study was obtained from all respondents. In addition, the researcher received approval from the town council leadership of Bushenyi and Mbarara.

FINDINGS

The response rate for the survey was high. One hundred thirty three (133) representing 95% questionnaires were returned out of the 140 distributed, of which 20(14%) were from the respondents in Bushenyi and the rest 113(81%) from Mbarara town. The high response rate was due to the fact that most of the questions were asked directly to the respondents. Of the responses received from the survey, 128 (96%) also gave suggestions on how they overcame common causes of business failure they encountered during startup or after they had established their businesses. These suggestions formed the basis for the practical action against business failure proposed in table 3.

Over ten different types of small businesses were sampled and studied from the two towns (see table 1). Of these businesses, 24(18%) were involved in general merchandise and 31(23.4%) were restaurants, hotels and bars. The other businesses studied were gas stations, milk cooling plants, maize milling, jua kali and saloons. Other activities studied included garages, hardware, clinics, pharmacies and those involved in selling second hand clothes. Also included in the study were business activities like security services and computer services (these are included under “others”).

Table 1: Businesses studied by town

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Mbarara</th>
<th>Bushenyi</th>
<th>Total sample number studied n=133(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Filling stations/gas stations</td>
<td>10(7.5)</td>
<td>10(7.5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-stations/petrol stations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk cooling plants</td>
<td>11(8.3)</td>
<td>11(8.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants, bars, hotels</td>
<td>28(21.1)</td>
<td>3(2.4)</td>
<td>31(23.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize milling</td>
<td>2(1.5)</td>
<td>1(0.7)</td>
<td>3(2.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garages</td>
<td>2(1.5)</td>
<td>1(0.7)</td>
<td>2(1.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jua Kali</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>8(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General merchandise</td>
<td>18(13.5)</td>
<td>6(4.5)</td>
<td>24(18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saloons</td>
<td>10(7.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10(7.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stationery</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>2(1.5)</td>
<td>6(4.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware shops</td>
<td></td>
<td>1(0.7)</td>
<td>1(0.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy/clinic</td>
<td>5(3.8)</td>
<td>2(1.5)</td>
<td>7(5.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>19(14.3)</td>
<td>1(0.7)</td>
<td>20(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>113(85)</td>
<td>20(15)</td>
<td>133(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the businesses studied were established after the 1990s, and these represented 124(93%). The turnover of these businesses 81(61%) ranged from USD 10,000 to 35,000. Only 4(3%) businesses had a turnover above this range. When asked what motivated them to go into the type of business, 69(51.9%) of respondents reported that they joined as a means of survival, 31(23.3%) as a need for self-employment, 11(8.2%) due to public demand. Other reasons cited were continuing the tradition, availability of market, success of others, no other options, fighting poverty, professional inclination and limited capital required. The number of people employed in each of these businesses is 5 and below, representing 104(78%). Only 29(22%) businesses employed more than 5 people but below 50. The majority of these were petrol stations, restaurants, bars and hotels.

Proprietors were queried whether they received business management training either before or after establishing their businesses. Of the respondents, 55(41%) had received training but most of these received training only after they had established the business. Of the 41% who had training, 18% respondents are those operating filling stations since it is one of the requirements by the petroleum
companies to train their agents. The remaining 78(59%) of the respondents had not received training. Most of the business management training is conducted by the Ankole Private Sector Promotion centre based in Bushenyi town.

All the respondents reported a number of problems they have faced. The questionnaire had listed 13 alternatives of causes of business failure but they were given an opportunity to list others not included. The study revealed a number of reasons why small business enterprises fail that were categorized into internal and external factors. According to the respondents, taxation was the major problem. Among the respondents investigated, 70(53%) of them complained that taxation was contributing to the malfunction of their businesses (see table 2 for details).

Table 2. Causes of small business failure (n=133)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Internal factors</th>
<th>Number (%)</th>
<th>External factors</th>
<th>Number (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Taxation</td>
<td>70(53)</td>
<td>Causes of small business failure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Load shedding</td>
<td>67(50)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lack of capital</td>
<td>64(48)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Poor market</td>
<td>48(36)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>High rent charges</td>
<td>48(36)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Wrong pricing</td>
<td>47(35)</td>
<td>Delays in processing applications</td>
<td>41(31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Negative cash flow</td>
<td>45(34)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Poor record keeping</td>
<td>44(33)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Domestic and family situations</td>
<td>43(32)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Management problems</td>
<td>35(26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Faulty product concept</td>
<td>32(24)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Inadequate control of inventory</td>
<td>24(18)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Lack of planning</td>
<td>23(17)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Trouble among partners</td>
<td>19(14)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

Other problems mentioned were load shedding 67(50%), lack of capital 64(48%), poor market 48(36%), high rent charges 48(36%), pricing 47(35%), negative cash flow 45(34%) and poor record keeping 44(33%). In all cases, recommendations were formulated to improve management of small businesses.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the survey was to investigate the causes for small business failures in Uganda. Many entrepreneurs (53%) reported that taxation is contributing to the malfunction of their businesses. With the introduction of Value Added Tax (VAT) in Uganda in 1997, many businesses have been hard-hit because of this category of tax. Given that the weight of this tax is borne by the consumer, this leads to an increase in price, which can dampen sales. The study also revealed that the local authorities impose other forms of taxation like ground rates, security fees, and trading licenses. Ground rate is a tax imposed on businesses according to the location and type of business facilities. These have a great impact on the operations of businesses. Another aspect of high taxation is a corresponding increase in illicit or illegal trade. Smuggled products have found their way into the markets of Mbarara and Bushenyi towns. These goods are
attracting customers as they are sold at lower prices. This mitigates chances for the success of genuine business people.

Power shortages that lead to load shedding accounted for 50% of the respondents and high electricity bills were identified as major problems faced by businesses. The findings of the study revealed that on average, hotels, bars, filling stations each uses 582 units of electricity on a monthly basis which costs US $68. To make the situation worse, it was found out that on average, hydropower goes off 2 times a week for a period of 4 hours. Generators were found to be a major alternative source of power. Businesses that do not have generators come to a standstill during such times. Even those that use generators find it much more expensive because of the high costs of fuel (1-liter petrol costs USD 1.21). Thus, on average USD 216 is spent monthly on fuel for generators. A total expenditure of USD 284 on only electricity and fuel for generator is a substantial operational expense. Due to the expensive nature of generators, most businesses do not even have an alternative source of power. The situation is alarming when it comes to businesses that deal in milk cooling. When power is cut off at night and they do not have automated generators, their situation is worsened. In one night when power went off, an entrepreneur lost 580 litres of milk which had been bought on credit equivalent to USD116.

Power costs are high. East Africa has the most expensive electricity on the continent. $70 is charged per MWH in Kenya, $80 in Tanzania, and $46 in Uganda, yet the international standard is $40. South Africa has even managed $18. The respondents pointed out that, with the privatization of Uganda Electricity Board (UEB), the costs of using electricity have increased and frequent power cuts have prompted the installation of alternative sources of power, which are costly, thus minimizing chances of success. The issue of electricity is paramount if Uganda is to develop into an industrial economy.

Lack of capital is another impediment to businesses in their early stages. Results of the study indicated a significant proportion of the respondents, 64(48%) raised this as a major problem. First, these businesses were started with limited capital. As observed by Snyder, ‘do not think that you can get a million-shilling start-up loan for a business. Even if you have 500,000 shillings, you can start small, small.’ Secondly, microbusinesses lack collaterals such as cars or land titles that can be deposited to get loans from the traditional commercial banks. On the other hand, the loans provided by microfinance institutions are small, with a short repayment period and high interest rates. This is in line with Mbaguta’s assertion that financing suitable for Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is still insufficient in Uganda, and this results in limited growth and survival of SMEs.

Ssendaula lists factors that have discouraged banks from lending to SMEs. Among them are poorly compiled records and accounts; low levels of technical and management skills; outdated technologies; lack of professionalism and networking; lack of collateral; lack of market outlets due to poor quality and non-standardized products; poor linkages and limited knowledge of business opportunities. In addition, most businesses, such as those dealing in foodstuffs, have been affected by lack of proper storage facilities. This has been a major limitation on business success because most agricultural products require preservation and have an inelastic demand meaning that even if their prices are lowered, quantity demanded can increase in that same proportion to clear the market of surpluses.

Lack of sales has been a predicament during the inception of such businesses. This is because most of these businesses lack the competence of challenging already established businesses. They usually lack a public image and yet publicity is one of the major mechanisms for business triumph. The study also revealed that these business people start enterprises without careful regard to the location of the business; thus less sales and less profits and this delays growth. With the above in mind, what should be done to increase sales?

Firstly, the owners and managers of smallscale enterprises must make form of market study so that the quality of the goods produced/services provided are what customers/clients want. However, most of the small scale businesses studied will find the market study costs to be prohibitive. Joining market groups can help. Secondly, the owners/managers must overcome any negative attitude/environment in service delivery that can put off customers/clients. Thirdly, the owners/managers of small business must understand the scope and use of marketing knowledge. Lastly, but important too, the small scale business will do well when the owners are present in the business to attend to customers and answer their queries.

The problem of pricing was prominent among the startup reasons of small scale business failure. Owners lack the capacity to ascertain best prices and they tended to operate at high prices in relation to already existing businesses. This tends to away most customers to their competitors who are already in the business and maneuver at lower costs.

The findings of the study revealed that the profitability of many businesses in their early stages is negative. During the startup period, negative cash flows have been a common characteristic, mostly due
to lack of sales, pricing problems, high competition, and most often, operation on a small scale combined with soaring costs of operation.

Poor record keeping is also a cause for startup business failure. In most cases, this is not only due to the low priority attached by new and fresh entrepreneurs, but also a lack of the basic business management and skills. Most business people, therefore, end up losing track of their daily transactions and cannot account for their expenses and their profits at the end of the month. Biryabarema emphasizes the importance of proper record keeping in that it enables a small business to have accurate information on which to base decisions such as projecting sales and purchases or determining the break-even point and making a wide range of other financial analyses. However, the persistent lack of proper records has seen the closure of some businesses, thereby making it a significant issue for business success.

During the early stages of some business start-ups, owners were unable to separate their business and family/domestic situations. Business funds were put to personal use and thus used in settling domestic issues. This has a negative impact on profitability and sustainability. Some owners/managers employ family members simply because of kinship relations. In some cases, these have turned out to be undisciplined and ineffectual, a factor that has led to eventual and sometimes rapid failure of businesses.

Lack of effective management during their early stages is also a major cause of business failure for small businesses. Owners tend to manage these businesses themselves as a measure of reducing operational costs. This study uncovered the example of businessperson who locks the shop for a full day whenever he goes shopping in Kampala. He does this once every week, a total of four days a month. One result of this is loss of customer loyalty. This is clearly explained by Katuntu’s remarks that poor location of business, lack of management experience, and over-investment in fixed assets has led to the collapse of many businesses.

During this research survey, faulty products were also identified as an additional startup problem. Since most new businesspersons are not experienced in the sector, they are not normally familiar with the condition of the products they purchase. Products which do not suit the tastes of the customers remain in stores thus tying up working capital.

Lack of planning (17%) was also listed as a cause of businesses failure during their startup phases. Less than a third (30%) prepare a formal business plan prior to starting up and 37% do not plan at all. The survey found that most businesses just start without plans. Small business persons end up with no set goals or targets to meet. The study also revealed that the cost for preparation of a simple business plan ranges from USD100-200. Small business owners looking for start up capital cannot manage this amount.

Respondents were also asked to identify any additional problems not specifically covered by the questionnaire. A number of causes were revealed by the study: competition, high rent charges, lack of business skills, transportation costs, and politics.

Once businesses are established, they confront competition from other businesses in either similar or related businesses. 112 (84 %) of respondents agreed. As towns expand, the number of entrepreneurs also increases. Therefore, the success of one business often comes at the expense of another. This necessitates advertising and price reductions so as to attract more customers, which in turn lead to a potential reduction of profitability.

High rental charges have impeded the success of many businesses as some charges are pegged to the United States dollar, which in most cases appreciates against the Uganda shilling. One businessperson mentioned that their rent is US$200 for a space of 12 feet by 10 feet. Expansion of towns has led to increased demand for business premises, which means that some small businesses have been pushed away from the busy areas of the town to the periphery. This has increased costs and resulted in poor sales and negative cash flow, thus minimizing the chances for most businesses to succeed.

High transport costs have become one of the problems faced by startup businesses. Lack of oil reserves in the country, coupled with the unstable Ugandan shilling, has made the cost of transport high and unpredictable. Fuel is a factor that propels an increase in costs of production across the board, which has led to failure of many businesses. Communication networks have also been poor, leading to high operation costs. Lack of information on existing goods and poor access roads in rural areas have constrained businesspersons to buy products that are in easy-to-reach areas where competition is relatively high.

Politics can also pose a threat to business success. Building and construction companies complain that tenders are awarded to political favorites who then do not deliver to the required standards. Some businesses operate without paying taxes or are under-assessed, gives them an advantage over their competitors. Politics influences customers who choose to deal with specific people because they were in the same camp during presidential, parliamentary or local council elections, irrespective of the quality of the services provided. Gordon Wavamunno, who has built a vast business empire in a wide range of
fields (including transport, manufacturing, tourism, motor vehicle distribution, trade, insurance and banking, commercial farming, electronic media and property development) has personally stated that politics and business are like fire and water – they do not exist together amicably.16

PRACTICAL ACTION AGAINST BUSINESS FAILURE

The interest of the researcher was to establish the causes of small business failure, either during the startup or those experienced once established, and how they might be overcome. From the study, the researcher came up with a number of approaches towards improving the management of small businesses not only in the Bushenyi and Mbarara towns of Uganda, but also further afield (see table 3).

Table 3: Practical action against business failure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Some practical measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of capital</td>
<td>• Make a budget; source cheap loans from financial institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Borrow from friends; negotiate favourable credit purchases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Negotiate advance payments from your customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Merge with others that have similar businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Seek silent partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Re-invest the profits made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Respect money by making frank spending priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Join Microfinance Institutions or Saving and Loan Associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased taxes</td>
<td>• Tax assessment by local government in conjunction with the business owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Business people should know the investment code and tax regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pay tax in time to ease the burden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low sales</td>
<td>• Location of the business premises is very important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Improving customer care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Employing qualified personnel and motivating them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Carrying out market research and advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Optimization of peak periods such as morning, lunch and evening hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management problems</td>
<td>• Financial management should be emphasized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Keeping records of workers to help in evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Attending refresher courses on business management skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Networking with other people with similar businesses or at professional level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative cash flow</td>
<td>• Scale down operational costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Prepare a cost – benefit analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lease equipment and other financial assets to improve your cash flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Negotiate outstanding loans through payment procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Aggressively pursue the account receivables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor record keeping</td>
<td>• Employ qualified personnel and put them in position according to their skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Establish a record of books of accounts on a daily, weekly, monthly and annual basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Financial records should be a priority since they aid planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family situations</td>
<td>• Separate business activities and family obligations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Look for alternative sources of income to cater for family basic needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Set aside the time to spend with the family for social events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate control of inventory</td>
<td>• Know and understand existing skills needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maintain, control and take stock of the inventory regularly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of business plan</td>
<td>• Set specific targets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Prepare cash flow forecast and budgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faulty product concept</td>
<td>• Spot supervision during mixing of ingredients for businesses engaged in such businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Regular product inspection to protect against selling the defective product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have an inspector on staff to inspect goods in process to protect against poor quality of the finished goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Load shedding</td>
<td>• Purchase a generator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: A mix of respondents and author
For small businesses to succeed, it is essential to have a good business plan whether formal or informal. In addition, small businesses should aim at fixing prices that will enable them to earn sufficient profits for survival and growth. Further, every small businessperson needs effective and efficient management skills to go into business and new, effective, and efficient management skills to stay there.

CONCLUSION

Small businesses in Uganda are faced with a number of challenges that lead to business failure. These causes of failure are quite diverse in nature. They have resulted in more than fifty percent of businesses failing in the first five years and fighting an uphill battle from the start. The study established causes of small businesses failure, among which are: lack of business plans, high taxes, load shedding, lack of capital, poor market, high rent charges and wrong pricing. It came up with practical actions on how to overcome them. The aim is to help the business owners design business plans and work with one another. If followed, then businesses might move from where they are today to where their owners, investors and managers want them to be.

NOTES

1. This paper is based on data collected from Bushenyi and Mbarara towns during January 2003 to April 2003. Several people helped in collecting data most especially the 2002/2003 year III Bachelor of Development studies undergraduate students of Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST). Mr. Allen George formerly with the Faculty of Development Studies, MUST made comments on the draft research tools. Professor Owen Willis of Dalhousie University is thanked for comments on earlier drafts of this paper. The usual disclaimer applies; all remaining errors are mine.

2. The size of the service was halved; real wages increased from next to nothing to a broadly acceptable living wage, most allowances were consolidated and monetised into single cash. (http://www.Vuw.ac.nz)


10. Mwanje 2003


15. This was contained in a seminar paper by the Executive Director of DFCU Bank, Mr Robert Katuntu in one day Seminar of the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Uganda.


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Small Business Act (1953).


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AT ISSUE

Urban Renewal through Labor-Intensive Construction Technology in South Africa: Problems and Potentials

WELLINGTON DIDIBHUKU THWALA

Abstract: In South Africa, the levels of unemployment and poverty are extremely high and two of South Africa’s most pressing problems. There is also a widely acknowledged need for housing and municipal infrastructure (water supply, sewerage, streets, stormwater drainage, electricity, refuse collection). There is a need for physical infrastructure in both urban and rural areas. The infrastructure backlog is aggravated by the apparent lack of capacity and skills at institutional, community and individual levels. Urban renewal and inner city regeneration projects are a priority for the South African government which have invested in several areas to stem the tide of decline in its nine major cities. Commitment to alleviation of poverty has become very high on the government agenda and will stay one of the focal points of government. A labor-intensive approach can be used to maximise the number of people employed in urban renewal projects and this can go a long way in alleviating poverty and reducing the more than 28% unemployment rate in South Africa. This paper will look at some past African experiences in assessing the problems and potential of a labor-intensive approach in urban renewal projects. The paper will then outline the contribution which labor-intensive approach could make to alleviate the unemployment and in reducing poverty in South African cities. Finally, the paper closes with some recommendations for the future.

INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, unemployment and poverty are extremely high and amongst South Africa’s most pressing problems.1 Unemployment has been rising steadily over the years. The level of unemployment was 7% in 1980, 18% in 1991, and 28% in 2003.2 Commitment to alleviation of poverty has become very high on the government agenda and will remain one of the focal points of government. Currently around 24% of the population lives on less than $1 a day, below the poverty line defined by the World Bank.3 In addition to high levels of unemployment, there is also a widely acknowledged need for housing and municipal infrastructure (water supply, sewerage, streets, stormwater drainage, electricity, refuse collection). This lack of infrastructure is a problem in both urban and rural areas. Infrastructure backlog is aggravated by the apparent lack of capacity and skills at institutional, community and individual levels. According to the World Bank, infrastructure can deliver major benefits in economic growth, poverty alleviation, and environmental sustainability - but only when it provides efficient services that respond to effective demand.4

Over the past 25 years, several projects have been initiated in South Africa to counter unemployment and poverty.5 It is envisaged that there will be others in the future. Properly formulated employment creation programs based on the use of employment-intensive methods could be established to construct and maintain the required physical infrastructure, thus creating employment, skills, and institutional capacities. The Urban Renewal Infrastructure Projects have the potential to redress the disproportionately high unemployment levels in South Africa and also to correct the skills deficit in disadvantaged communities. These may be achieved through an efficient institutional set up, effective community participation, and construction technology that is pragmatic and innovative in nature.

This paper will look at some past African experiences with labor-intensive urban renewal projects. The paper will then outline the problems and potential contribution which labor-intensive approach could make to alleviate unemployment and reduce poverty in South African cities. Finally, the paper closes with some recommendations for the future.
INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMS AND EMPLOYMENT CREATION

Public works programs have a long history in industrialised countries as an economic-policy tool, both as a fiscal measure to expand or contract public spending in periods of unbalanced domestic demand as well as a short-term measure to alleviate unemployment. In recent years, they have formed important components of special job-creation schemes launched by many industrialised countries in response to either economic recession or rising unemployment among youth. In contrast to their short-term, anti-cyclical role in industrialised countries, labor-intensive public works programs have acquired far more significance in developing countries where they are now frequently resorted for one or more purposes, such as the following outlined by Jara as long ago as 1971:

1) To deal with emergency situations arising out of natural calamities such as drought, floods and earthquakes; 2) To serve as a means for harnessing the potential resource of surplus manpower and for evening out seasonal fluctuations in employment and incomes; 3) To achieve permanent drought-proofing of drought-prone areas through systematic soil-conservation and water-development measures; 4) To attend to long overdue tasks of erosion control and other land-development works; 5) To promote systematic development of essential infrastructure facilities integral to rural and urban spatial planning.[6]

These major programs generally comprise a wide variety of minor and intrinsically labor-intensive works such as soil conservation and reforestation; small and medium-scale irrigation (for example, canals, field channels and dams); drainage; flood-protection and land-development schemes; rural access and crop-extraction roads; and basic amenities such as inexpensive housing, drinking-water-supply projects, school buildings, and health and community centers. They are often undertaken with the involvement of local communities and institutions in their identification, formulation and supervision. They utilise predominantly public funds but sometimes receive supplementary support in the form of local community contributions in cash and materials, as well as food aid provided by bilateral donors or multilateral aid agencies such as the World Food Program.

By sustaining demand for large masses of purely unskilled labor, these rural works programs indeed provide an important contribution towards a simultaneous solution to the problems of rural employment, income distribution, and growth. Their direct and indirect employment and income effects apart, the infrastructure they create supports agriculture and helps to preserve the ecological balance of land and forest areas which have long suffered excessive exploitation; they accelerate the integration of monetized and non-monetized sectors and help to modify the prevailing spatial distribution pattern of rural settlements so as to facilitate the more economical provision of common facilities and growth of viable rural communities. Finally, they meet some of the more elementary basic needs of the poor.[7]

The incomes that such infrastructure works generate can help to create new demands for manufactured consumer goods which, in turn, can make import-substitution industries viable. The true economic cost of such manufactured consumer goods, moreover, can be kept very low if underutilized manufacturing capacities - a phenomenon not uncommon in some of the developing countries - can be more fully utilized.

LABOR-INTENSIVE APPROACH

In order to alleviate poverty and generate employment during the construction and maintenance of infrastructure projects, attempts must be made to encourage the use of labor-intensive methods. According to Bentall “labor-intensive approach” is defined as an approach where labor is the dominant resource for carrying out works, and where the share of the total project cost spent on labor is high (typically 25 – 60%).[8] The term “labor-intensive approach” indicates that optimal use is made of labor as the predominant resource in infrastructure projects, while ensuring cost-effectiveness and safeguarding quality. This involves a judicious combination of labor and appropriate equipment, which is generally light equipment. It also means ensuring that labor-intensive projects do not degenerate into “make-work” projects, in which cost and quality aspects are ignored. Labor-intensive construction results in the generation of a significant increase (300 – 600%) in employment opportunities per unit of expenditure by comparison with conventional capital-intensive methods.[9] Appropriate levels of other resources should be used in order to ensure competitive and quality results.
OVERVIEW OF AFRICAN EXPERIENCES WITH LABOR-INTENSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMS

The use of labor or employment-intensive public works programs is not new to Africa. In the 1960s, Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, experimented with such programs. Although started initially as emergency relief works programs, especially in rural areas, these gradually came to acquire a development orientation. The Moroccan experiment, known as National Promotion, was launched in June 1961. This large-scale program aimed at enhancing opportunities for the rural unemployed in productive works thus slowing down the rural exodus and addressing associated problems with rural populations in the development process. The importance of this program was confirmed by its mention in the constitution of 7 December, and subsequently by the creation in 1975 of the High Council of National Promotion Plan. According to one estimate, the program provided employment for 85,000 workers per month during the peak season and increased GNP by 3.6 percent.

During 1959-1960, a large Tunisian works program, known as Worksites to Combat Underdevelopment, was carried out with 80 percent of the cost being borne by Tunisian authorities and the remaining 20 percent in the form of food aid from the United States. The employment created was equivalent to an annual average of 20.7 days per head of Tunisia’s labor force. In Algeria, the publicly-sponsored works program, known as Worksites for Full Employment (Chantiers de plein emplois or CPE) began in 1962 as a relief operation. It soon acquired a strong development orientation to maximize employment in a project of economic interest, namely reforestation work to fight the severe erosion problem. In 1965, the Peoples Worksites Reforestation (Chantiers populaires de reboisement or CPR) was created as a statutory body attached to the Forestry Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform. Since then, the World Food Program has provided assistance and the scope of projects have been increased to include land reclamation and other infrastructural works.

A variety of employment-intensive works programs in other countries consisted of limited experiments with local self-help projects. In such cases, the projects were proposed by local communities and the state made its technical assistance conditional on execution by the local population. The intention was to get the work done as cheaply as possible, but more especially to ensure that the people viewed the projects as their own and so paid more attention to their maintenance. A few countries have tried to create, through employment-intensive infrastructural works, relatively small ‘functional economic areas’ in the countryside in an attempt to stem rural-urban migration and retain more people on the land. An example is Mali’s Djoliba pilot project for converting a swollen rural village into an agro-urban community, calling for several layers of investment in infrastructure. This project was to test the feasibility of the establishment of some 150 rural centers that would service Mali’s more than 10,000 villages. Ghana’s Volta River Settlement Program involving the creation of network of rural towns and access roads, is another example of rural spatial planning. Three times as many workers were employed in these resettlement preparations than were involved in building the Volta dam, showing the employment-generating potential of employment-intensive infrastructural investment.

In Kenya, over 12,000 kilometres of rural access roads have been constructed and over 80,000 man-years of employment have been created. The Kenyan Rural Access Roads Program is the overall responsibility of the Ministry of Transport and Communications but operates within the national District Focus policy which gives great autonomy to the local level. According to McCutcheon the methods have been considered so successful that they have been introduced in the secondary roads network (the Minor Roads Program). In Botswana a national program of labor-intensive road construction units has been set up within District Councils which are semi-autonomous bodies under the overall responsibility of the Ministry of Local Governments and Lands. This program has resulted in the creation of over 3,000 jobs (total employment within the public sector is only 20,000) and the construction and upgrading of nearly 2,000 km of road. In Malawi, the roads program is part of the Ministry of Works and Supply. Since its inception, over 3,845 kms of district road have been upgraded in 16 of the country’s 24 districts. The Labor Construction Unit in Lesotho has been attached to the Ministry of Works since 1977. By 1985, about US $3,350,000 had been expended on various road construction works.

Thus, within different institutional and organisational frameworks, a wide range of labor-intensive road construction and maintenance has been extensively tried and tested over the past 45 years. Despite their valuable contribution to employment-generation, many of these earlier experiments in employment-intensive public works in Africa suffered from one or more of the following short-comings: The ad hoc nature of schemes lacked spatial focus and links to national rural development and infrastructural planning systems. Makeshift administrative arrangements and failure to inject sufficient technical competence into project selection and execution resulted in poor project planning, programming, and
manpower management. Lack of balance between centralisation and effective involvement of local administrations produced problems with crucial program decisions, planning and implementation. Planners failed to adjust program operation and intensity to seasonal labor demand for agricultural operations. Programs lacked precision about target groups and programming occurred on the basis of inadequate information about beneficiary groups. Programs lacked sustained adequate, sustained political commitment, and allocation of public funds. Programs had inadequate maintenance arrangements. Finally, there was inadequate emphasis on reporting cost-benefit studies and general performance evaluation.  

OVERVIEW OF LABOR-INTENSIVE CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Government of National Unity initiated the National Public Works Program (NPWP) after 1994 elections. In essence, the NPWP consists of a process of labor-intensification through increased training and capacity building in the provision of infrastructure. The NPWP is a key component of the Government’s Reconstruction and Development Program. The NPWP has been shifted towards a Community Based Public Works Program (CBPWP), which places more emphasis upon smaller companies and regulatory bodies than a national program. Another initiative, the Framework Agreement, was later incorporated into NPWP. The Framework Agreement was a social compact between Government, labor, the construction industry and the civics. The main item in the Agreement was the commitment of industry to maximize the use of labor-intensive systems of construction within public works programs with due regard to economics.

Its main objective was to change the Public Works program from relief, emergency, and “special” public works to a long-term structured labor-intensive program. The approach was to link economic growth, employment, and investment policies. Such programs should aim at ensuring that infrastructure is planned around local needs rather than vice-versa. Public spending on infrastructure construction and maintenance can be a valuable policy tool to provide economic stimulus during recessions. As long as quality and cost-effectiveness are not compromised, employment-intensive approaches to infrastructure development can also be an important instrument for economic growth. When public spending on infrastructure is not wisely deployed, it can crowd out more productive investment in other sectors.

Implementation of well thought-out programs can have an important impact on the development of the economic and social situation in South Africa. According to the Department of Public Works, increased investment in physical infrastructure is constrained by public-sector fiscal capacity and the limited ability to mobilise private-sector finance and initiative. There is also lack of public-sector capacity to manage the procurement and service delivery process which has become a growing concern in Government and industry circles. The new Constitution has further complicated the already difficult task of implementing policy, causing delays while new agencies and personnel are established. The lack of experience in the delivery of line-function goals and services is undermining the position of the public sector as a knowledgeable and expert client. Ultimately, the inability to manage delivery reflects poorly on the image of Government, undermines its policy objectives, and inhibits the development and transformation of the construction industry.

McCutcheon has set out the implications for South Africa derived from experiences elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa. Firstly, the programs in Kenya, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi and Ghana demonstrate that good quality, low-cost, low-volume, rural roads may be constructed and maintained by highly employment-intensive methods. Five to seven times more employment was created per unit of expenditure without compromising cost, quality and time. The significant increase was achieved through various factors, in particular: 1) identification of types of work which could incorporate a significant increase in labor per unit of expenditure; 2) investigation of economically efficient methods; 3) application onsite of the principles governing the use of employment-intensive methods.

Secondly, the potential for employment generation on a large scale using employment-intensive methods could be realised through the establishment and expansion of large national programs. The South African Government needs to establish a long term program on employment intensive construction. This cannot be established overnight, and will take some years to fully grow into a national program. In order to achieve greater success in the long run, a four-phased approach should be adopted (orientation/preparatory work; analysis and design; pilot/ initial training; and expansion of training into a national program) only at a rate at which the training program can produce trained personnel (in particular site supervisors) and institutions can absorb trained personal. Thus in an attempt to redress the infrastructural backlog problem and proactively combat the high unemployment facing the country, the Department of Public Works in South Africa should undertake the following activities.
Improving Basic Infrastructure in both Rural and Urban Areas

The improvement of basic infrastructure can be achieved through: 1) Creating employment by orienting investments towards employment-intensive public and community infrastructure in both urban and rural areas; 2) Constructing, rehabilitating and maintaining infrastructure using local labor, local resources and local capacities, thereby maximising employment and income-generation for the poor; 3) Providing technical advisory and capacity-building services for the planning and implementation of different types of employment-intensive infrastructure (roads, irrigation, drainage, soil conservation, water supply, slum upgrading).

Large-scale employment-intensive public works programs are relevant and are urgently required to create new employment opportunities in rural areas where the rate of unemployment continues to increase. To achieve a sustainable improvement in their situation, poor persons require access to remunerative employment and/or productive resources. Although emergency relief and assistance programs may help poor populations survive in crisis situations, they do little to improve their situation in the longer-term. In South Africa, a much greater contribution can be made to their well-being through investments which provide jobs and basic services, such as roads, water, drains, housing and schools. If the current high rate of unemployment in South Africa continues without being checked, our democracy might not be sustainable. Many workers face declining job prospects in the mining industry. On the other hand, large-scale labor-intensive opportunities exist for deployment of masses of rural workers in long-overdue erosion-control works, rural road works, etc., without which agriculture has stagnated.

Creating Quality Employment

The creation of quality employment can be achieved through: 1) Ensuring respect for fair working conditions and basic labor standards, including equality of treatment, workers’ participation, and the prohibition of child labor and forced labor; 2) Promoting participation and empowerment of the working poor by introducing them to local planning, prioritising infrastructure programs, and introducing innovative methods of collective negotiation.

Women are often over-represented among the poorest of the poor. They are also in many cases the sole providers for their children. Nevertheless, women are often not offered remunerative employment. The public works program should give great attention to the inclusion of women in employment-intensive infrastructure works where in the past men have tended to predominate. Women’s participation has reached thirty seven percent in programs in Botswana, twenty five percent in Madagascar and up to sixty percent in Lesotho.

URBAN RENEWAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMS IN ALEXANDRA, SOUTH AFRICA: EXPERIENCES, PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Urban renewal and inner city regeneration have become serious issues for the South African government which has invested in several structures to stem the tide of decline in its nine major cities. The township of Alexandra was established in 1912 and is close to the centre of Johannesburg. It covers an area of over 800 hectares and its infrastructure was designed for a population of about 70,000. Current population estimates vary widely and have been put at figures ranging from 180,000 to 750,000. There are estimated 34,000 informal houses of which approximately 7,000 are located in “backyards”.

The significant, unplanned population has overloaded the infrastructure such that water pressures are low and sewers frequently block and overflow. Maintenance of such systems is very difficult because the high densities and congested nature of the backyard informal houses makes access for maintenance very difficult or impossible in places.

At the official opening of Parliament in February 2001, the State President announced a seven-year plan to redevelop Greater Alexandra. The estimated budget for the Alexandra Renewal Project is R1, 3 billion over seven years. The project is one of the eight original nodes forming part of the Government Integrated Sustainable Rural Development and Urban Renewal Programs. The project is one of the main vehicles through which the Government is implementing its objectives of sustainable development and poverty alleviation. The project was supposed to be labor-intensive so that more people could be employed and at the same time building new infrastructure for the community.

The Alexandra Renewal Project seeks to fundamentally upgrade living conditions and human development potential within Alexandra by: 1) substantially improving livelihoods within Alexandra.
and wider regional economy; 2) creating a healthy and clean living environment; 3) providing services at an affordable and sustainable level; 4) reducing levels of crime and violence; 5) upgrading existing housing environments and creating additional affordable housing opportunities; 6) redensification to appropriate land.

The desired outcomes for the Alexandra Renewal Project after the seven year implementation period are: 1) to stimulate income-generating opportunities for the economically active population of Alexandra, so as to reduce unemployment; 2) to provide services that are appropriate and affordable and paid for; 3) to create a safe and secure environment with sufficient policing, criminal justice, and emergency services, so that rates of serious crime are at least 50% below the current levels; 4) to provide and ensure the maintenance of local government services in a manner that is well planned, administered, and accountable to the public; 5) to create a clean living environment that creates a good quality of life for the residents of Alexandra; 6) to provide a choice of sustainable and affordable housing with secure tenure that is well regulated in terms of density and quality; 7) to create a healthy, empowered, self sustaining community with access to integrated, effective social services.

A comparison of the jobs created by the project to date and the potential for job creation in the Alexandra Renewal project showed that only twenty two percent of the potential numbers of jobs were created. The failure to create the full potential number of jobs was due to the failure to apply labor-intensive methods of construction on the projects. The potential for expenditure on labor for each project was calculated by multiplying the potential number of laborers obtained by the different task rates dependent on the level of skill of the laborer. In the case of the South African Government Minimum task rate setting, the following task rates were used: R59.40 ($10) for unskilled labor, and arbitrary rates of R65 ($11) for semi-skilled labor and R80.00 ($13) for skilled labor. The task rate for unskilled labor of R59.40 is the Government minimum wage for Gauteng Province in South Africa. Using the Government Minimum task rate setting, the analysis of expenditure shows that the Urban Renewal projects have a potential of 22% of their total project costs going to labor. This expenditure on labor is far below the range of 25 – 45% of the projects costs going to labor that earlier research showed possible. Considering the potential expenditure on labor using the Government Minimum task rate setting, the projects cannot be considered as labor-intensive projects. Analysis of the project costs using the Government Minimum task rate setting shows that profits and overheads account for 60% of the project costs, showing that the emphasis was not on labor as should have been the case if the projects were labor-intensive.

From an employment creation perspective, the Alexandra Urban Renewal project experience has not been impressive. To date in South Africa, projects with similar objectives have not been as effective. Over the past 25 years, billions of Rands have been spent on projects and so-called programs with stated objectives of both creating employment and providing physical infrastructure such as roads, water supply and sanitation. To these objectives, community participation and entrepreneurial development have been added. Based on both the international and local experiences, the problems of the Alexandra Urban Renewal Projects through labor-intensive methods had been attributed to the following factors, which must be avoided in order for future projects to be successful in South Africa: 1) a lack of clear objectives linking the short and long-term visions of the program; 2) no pilot projects with extensive training programs or lead-in time to allow for proper planning at a national scale; 3) projects have seldom been scaled to the magnitude of national manpower needs and often introduced in an unsystematic or fragmentary style; 4) frequent organizational infirmities and inappropriate administrative arrangements; 5) an imbalance between centralization for higher level co-ordination and decentralization for local decision-making and execution of works; 6) inadequate post-project maintenance arrangements often undermined the efficacy of the projects; 7) projects have been over ambitious; 8) a lack of clearly defined and executed training programs that link medium to a long-term development plan; 9) very little sustainable employment creation; 10) expenditure on development failed to reach target groups to the extent envisaged; 11) individual skills were not improved.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

In the early phases, the emphasis was upon the creation of employment opportunities for unskilled labor. Over the past decade it has become clear that in order to use labor productively it is necessary to train a skilled supervisor who is technically and organizationally competent and thus able to direct and motivate the workers under his or her control. In Kenya the ratio of laborers to site-supervisors is about 70 to 1; in Botswana it is about 20 to 1. Equally, for a successful national program it is necessary to educate...
engineers about employment creation and train them in the specific skills required in planning, control and evaluation of large labor-intensive programs. In time, an experienced technician should be able to do this level of work releasing the engineer for engineering and planning.

The following are the main reasons for the success of the programs in Kenya and Botswana: 1) good preliminary analytical work and thorough attention to technical aspects throughout the work; 2) pilot projects which tested all aspects (technical, administrative, organisational, institutional, wage rates and conditions of employment, training, planning, socio-economic/community) and acted as the embryonic training program for future work; 3) strongly yet flexible institutions with good management systems; 4) extensive training; 5) long-term political support; 6) long-term financial support; 7) good long-term coordination and objective external advice; 8) consensus with the regard to wage rates, conditions of employment, role and responsibilities of the community. 34

The Urban Renewal Projects in South Africa should change as the policy environment changes, from emergency relief, to a long-term structured employment-generation program. The approach should link economic growth, employment, and investment policies. The Urban Renewal Projects must aim to ensure that infrastructure is planned around local needs rather than vice-versa. The Government needs to establish a long term program on employment intensive construction. This cannot be established overnight, and will take some years to grow into a national program.

Public spending on infrastructure construction and maintenance can be a valuable policy tool to provide economic stimulus during recessions. As long as quality and cost-effectiveness are not compromised, labor-intensive approaches to infrastructure development can also be an important instrument for economic growth but when public spending on infrastructure is not wisely deployed, it can crowd out more productive investment in other sectors.

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BOOK REVIEW


Country-specific, historical dictionaries abound in the field of African studies; yet reviewers of even recent editions of these dictionaries have highlighted the paucity of entries on women (see, for example, Gardinier 2001 and Reynolds 2001). To fill this void, Scarecrow Press has recently launched a new series on women in the world. Kathleen Sheldon’s Historical Dictionary of Women in Sub-Saharan Africa is the first in this series, and it is an excellent first step toward filling this scholarly lacuna.

The volume consists of a chronology of African women’s history, a brief (13-page) introductory essay that traces broad developments in African women’s history, 276 pages of dictionary entries, and an extensive (115-page) bibliography. The dictionary entries are wide-ranging. Sheldon covers prominent female politicians, activists, writers, artists, and historical and religious figures; historical and contemporary women’s organizations; and more general topical entries (e.g. missions, nationalism, structural adjustment programs, and shari’a law) that emphasize how these topics have affected women in Africa and/or how women have participated in these movements and processes. The bibliography begins with a brief—but quite interesting and useful—essay on the evolution of scholarship on women in Africa. Most of the sources included in the bibliography are in English and have been published since 1975. The first part of the bibliography is organized chronologically; the second part is organized around specific topics. The last section of the bibliography provides lists of journals, films, and websites. Dictionary entries on contemporary organizations also generally include the organization’s website.

Country specialists will undoubtedly find that Sheldon has excluded some prominent women and organizations. In the case of Cameroon, for example, Yaou Aissatou, Françoise Foning, the Association Camerounaise des Femmes Juristes (ACAFEJ), and the Association de Lutte contre les Violences faites aux Femmes (ALVF) are omitted. Also, the depth of coverage varies quite significantly across countries. South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya have a significant number of entries (75, 52, and 31 respectively), while Rwanda (6 entries), the Democratic Republic of Congo (1 entry) and many others are covered far more superficially. Yet, these shortcomings are by no means fatal. A project of this breadth will inevitably contain omissions, and the unevenness of country coverage largely reflects the state of scholarship on African women. Unfortunately, there is relatively little written (especially in English) on African women in certain African states. Those teaching and doing research on African women and women and politics more generally will find Sheldon’s book a useful resource. It serves the dual purpose of providing concise information on a broad range of topics and offering a thorough list of sources to assist those seeking in-depth knowledge on particular individuals, organizations, and issues.

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References


BOOK REVIEW


The story of how African states abandoned the state-led economic policies pursued during the 1960s and 1970s, and moved to adopt market orientated structural adjustment policies in the 1980s and 1990s has been the subject of a large and voluminous literature. However one aspect of this – the emergence of stock markets – has been relatively under-explored and what has been written has tended to fall into one of two camps. The first has been authored by those professionally involved in the financial sector and has tended to focus on the new investment opportunities that the emergence of these markets has given rise to. In the other camp are a range of more technical studies focusing on issues within financial economics. By contrast, issues relating to the political economy of these stock markets and questions such as why they have been created, by whom and for whose benefit, have received less attention.

Todd Moss's book does a good job in redressing some of these previous omissions. Having provided an overview of the development of these stock markets in chapter one, Moss goes on to spend two chapters looking at the reasons for their creation before exploring the actual and potential consequences in a further three chapters. The book ends with a concluding chapter which suggests that while stock markets offer no panacea for economic development, they have the potential to make a positive contribution so long as a range of prerequisite conditions can be put in place. Whether or not this is the case will depend not so much on the internal dynamics of the stock markets themselves, but rather the wider political and economic environments in which they operate.

As Moss notes, there are now fifteen stock exchanges across sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of these having been established since 1989. Despite this, established patterns remain resilient, with South Africa’s Johannesburg Stock Exchange (the oldest on the continent) continuing to dwarf the combined size of all the rest. This may of course change in the future, and Moss sees the potential for moderate growth in the capitalization and turnover of the newer markets, but it will certainly take some period of time for this pattern to change.

Generally, I found the earlier parts of the book to be the more engaging. For example, in chapter three, Moss explores the ‘political logic of stock markets’ and develops an interesting line of argument on the symbolic nature of these institutions. From this perspective, they can be seen as a ‘low cost’ reform which nevertheless demonstrates to the international business and donor communities the commitment of a country to engage in the international market economy. However, they can also be seen as yet another high profile ‘white elephant’ project, aimed at impressing foreign visitors but providing little practical benefit to local people. In exploring these questions, Moss draws on a range of interviews that he conducted in the course of his research, with policy makers, business people and investors. Together they begin to paint a picture of the complex and sometimes contradictory ways that market capitalism is imagined by these actors and the role within it which they see for both themselves and each other.

As with all books which aim to cover the breadth of the African experience, there is a balance to be struck between the coverage of different individual countries and broader comparative observations. At the start, Moss declares that his primary focus is on Ghana (justified as being “relatively typical among African bourses owing to its size, liquidity, age and other features”) and this remains his lead case study throughout the book. This does not stop Moss from providing the reader with useful insights and illustrations drawn from other stock markets from across the continent – such as Mozambique, Ethiopia, Botswana and Zimbabwe – which enrich the study. However, as this proceeded, I began to feel that the central focus on Ghana was slipping into the background, to be replaced by a more cross-continental and in places global coverage. While this did provide interesting insights, I did feel that I gained more of an insight from the in-depth country based sections.

Notwithstanding these points, I feel that overall it was a good book that begins to address a gap in the existing literature. When it does not provide the whole answer to the questions it raises, it certainly
provides the reader with a good range of raw materials to start thinking about how to address these issues and a good knowledge of the strengths and limitations of the existing debates.

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BOOK REVIEW


Five years after the publication of Madumo: A Man Bewitched, Ashforth presents us with a more conventional academic text examining spiritual insecurity in Soweto, South Africa. If his general purpose is to “begin reflecting on the implications of the quest for spiritual security in a world of witches for the project of democracy in an African state”, the book accomplishes other objectives as well (311). While democratic initiatives and state efforts are addressed in Part III (Spiritual Insecurity and the State), Part I (Soweto) and II (Sources of Spiritual Insecurity) provide rich ethnographic descriptions and analyses valuable in their own right.

Drawing on extensive research in Soweto, Ashforth begins by describing different dimensions of spiritual insecurity in the township at the turn of the century. Arguing that spiritual insecurity is closely linked to other forms of insecurity (poverty, violence, political oppression and disease, nowadays especially AIDS), he illustrates that there is a “presumption of malice” underpinning township life (69). This observation leads him to develop the notion of “negative ubuntu.” In his words, a “[t]o the adage ‘A person is a person through other people,’ the negative corollary of ubuntu adds: ‘because they can destroy you.’ That is, a person can survive only to the extent that others in the community choose not to destroy him or her. How they might do so is less important than the fact that they can. And when they do, whether by physical or by occult violence, the demand for justice inevitably arises” (86). Township life is in large part predicated on jealousy, and is motivated by complex relations of power operating alongside ‘traditional’ norms of reciprocity and kinship. Moreover, witchcraft thrives in a place where recent sociopolitical transitions have differentiated the black middle classes from their poorer counterparts, and where the AIDS pandemic is ravaging the population.

Ashforth then proceeds to ask what he terms the rationality question—Are people who believe in witches and witchcraft rational?—and the modernity question—Why do people still believe in witches? (111). Regarding the first, he writes that in recent years “the interpretation of witchcraft talk as idiom focused more on aspects of modernity, such as colonialism, capitalism, and globalization… While this literature has revealed much about African social life, it suffers from the singular defect… of treating statements that Africans clearly intend as literal, or factual, as if they were meant to be metaphorical or figurative” (114). Ashforth suggests that scholars enrich their analyses by treating witchcraft statements literally. While well-intended, his regular interpellations in the text expressing his own skepticism about witchcraft and his emphasis on the relations between spiritual and other forms of insecurity made this writer wonder to what extent he himself succeeded in this effort. Ashforth then considers the work produced by the ‘modernity of witchcraft’ school. The problem here, he argues, is that its writers “acknowledge the fallacies embodied in the old ways of distinguishing tradition and modernity” while they continue to “invoke the notion of progress in the guise of a multiplicity of ‘modernities’” (117). The author’s own inclination is to do away with the concepts of tradition and modernity, though he submits that “ideologies of modernism” and “celebrations of ‘modernity’” are “everywhere to be found” (117). I found his analysis here somewhat wanting as well, since he fails to present the reader with an alternative theoretical model.

Part II of the book concerns people’s interpretations of and attempts to manage invisible forces. Ashforth addresses the dialectical properties of muthi (literally ‘tree,’ meaning medicine, poison or herbs) and the ambiguous status of healers, witches and ‘African science’ in contemporary Soweto. Dangers associated with dirt, pollution, and death are considered, including the latter’s significance in light of the AIDS epidemic. The author also describes the ‘hosts of invisible beings’ and ancestors presence in people’s lives. This discussion is illuminating in its contemplation of how Christianity has reconfigured people’s interpretations of invisible beings, while the concept of spiritual insecurity adds depth to earlier, resistance-focused examinations of African Christianity.
In Part III Ashforth directs our attention to the implications of witchcraft for democratic governance. While the first parts of the book reveal the multifaceted ‘belief complexes’ associated with witchcraft, the regularization of persons and elements related to invisible beings and powers (healers, muthi) is here shown to complicate matters even more. Ashforth explains how earlier governments failed to deal with witchcraft and ‘traditional healing’ through the implementation of suppression of witchcraft acts, one of which remains in force in South Africa today. Consequently the ANC has inherited a situation wherein the prevalence of witchcraft must be addressed, while remaining duty-bound to maintain basic human rights and the rule of law. There are no easy solutions to the contradictions thus generated.

In sum, Ashforth’s book forms an important contribution to African studies, political science and anthropology, one of its strong points being the author’s development of the notion of spiritual insecurity in a world of witches. It will also be of interest to scholars and others working in the medical field, particularly if their work concerns HIV/AIDS in Africa. The discussion on the tensions between contemporary witchcraft and democratic governance forms a good analytical start by laying out current complexities, though it remains to be seen how this matter will work itself out in post-apartheid South Africa.

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NOTES

BOOK REVIEW


Messay Kebede’s *Africa’s Quest for a Philosophy of Decolonization* focuses on the liberation of the African mind from the shackles of Eurocentricism as a panacea to the problem of underdevelopment. In doing this, Kebede raises many questions. These include: Who is an African? Is it possible to safely affirm sameness or difference of the African with or from the West without running into the problem of evolutionism or relativism? Is the African essentially emotional and intuitive? Is mysticism, which is celebrated in traditional African Philosophy, compatible with ‘universal’ Philosophy? Can the African mind be decolonized, using Western paradigms and concepts?

To answer these time vexed questions, Kebede employs works, which are apt and very appropriate to his set agenda. These include Lucien Levy-Bruhl’s *How Natives Think*, and *Primitive Mentality*, Henri Bergson’s *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* and *Creative Evolution* and the works of contemporary African scholars such as Placid Temples; Paulin Hountondji, Odera Oruka, Frantz Fanon, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Cheik Anta Diop, Kwasi Wiredu among others. In more ways than one, Kebede’s book seems to be reacting to the works of Levy Bruhl, especially, *How Natives Think*. The rebuttal of Levy Bruhl’s categorization of traditional African thought as prelogical, mystical and therefore, lacking in the universal rational characteristic of philosophy, is a major task Kebede sets for himself.

Using the debate method in the presentation of positions and temperaments, Kebede divides the book into nine chapters, which treat the different themes germane to his set goals. The book opens with the traditional exploration of Western discourses on Africa. Kebede draws inspiration from the works of Henri Bergson, Immanuel Kant, Kiekegaard, Heidegger, etc to demystify reason as exemplified by Levy Bruhl. In his effort to demystify the role of reason and affirm intuition, Kebede agrees with Schopenhauer on the power of intuition and maintains “the revelation of the power of intuition protests in advance against the hierarchy established by Levy-Bruhl: rational thinking is not the highest mental ability; intuition or feeling obtains a deeper view of reality, especially spiritual realities. This role of feeling endows art with a greater cognitive dimension than science and speculation” (p.14) This position implies the affirmation of cultural otherness, pluralism and thus strengthens ethno philosophy rather than the school of professional philosophers.

Making allusions to Western evolutionist approach, Kebede discusses the hierarchy of cultures in a manner akin to Temples’ hierarchy of forces. Brandishing ‘Bantu Philosophy’ Kebede demonstrates that African philosophy cannot be inferior to Western philosophy. “[T]he demonstration of the existence of African philosophy confirms the participation of Africans, notes Kebede, “in the same process of reasoning as the West”

To further show that similarity of experience may not necessarily mean identity in their interpretation, Kebede uses Senghor’s concept of Negritude to affirm the otherness of Africans and African philosophy. Far from unwittingly accepting the inferiority of Africans, Negritude proclaims the “otherness” in such a manner that the universality of human ideals still remain. Just as in other cultures, there is always a need for modernization of Africa. As a prelude to this modernization, Kebede suggests a method of cultural adaptation, which he calls *Creative Synthesis*. This, is perhaps the greatest contribution of Kebede to the search for a philosophy of decolonization for Africa. Such a synthesis, according to Kebede avoids the mere borrowing of Western institutions and ideas by placing modernity as a continuity of the past. However, Kebede fails to show the disconnect between the past and the present in the dialectical game of explaining modernity.

A large chunk of the book is equally devoted to the analysis of well-known arguments about the canons/schools/approaches/trends in African philosophy. However, Kebede’s articulation of some of the basic arguments, either in support or against some of these trends is lucid, logical and incisive. An example is his dismissal of Oruka’s distinction between ethno-philosophy and philosophic sagacity.
According to Kebede “the belief should be that the so called collective and uncritical beliefs owe their existence to critical inquiries, however scanty and faulty they may have been, for the simple reason that individual thinkers first initiated them” (p.85) In the same vein, he discards the philosophy of violence in the effort to rehabilitate and modernize Africa.

The tone of the book radically changes from chapter six. From here, Kebede concentrates on fundamental issues of reform, stability, modernity and progress. In a systematic manner, the author shows that there is no necessary conflict between tradition and modernity. Kebede’s position is that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with reviving the past as long as what is exhumed is of value and capable of bringing progress. One major factor hindering progress discussed by the author is ethnicity. Kebede rightly traces the origin of the ethnic conflicts in most African states to their artificiality. His position is that for effective state formation and peaceful co-existence in multi-ethnic states, mystic drive rather than rationality is required.

The dilemma of Africa’s underdevelopment can only be resolved, in Kebede’s view, by settling for what he calls “complimentarism”. By this he maintains that “the best way to get out of the African dilemma is neither to assert nor deny the African difference; it is not to look for an uncontaminated vision of the past essence either. The recognition of the concomitance of myth and rationality, of traditionality and modernity, is the appropriate way to diffuse the African dilemma”(p.208). The kernel of Kebede’s argument here is that the liberation of the African mind would be the foundation of an authentic and true decolonization.

No doubt, Africa’s Quest for a Philosophy of Decolonization is an in-depth study on the African personality. In a refreshing way, it provides an insight into the intellectual pre-requisites for the resolution of the problem of underdevelopment of Africa. However, Kebede’s resolve to avoid evolutionism at all costs prevents him from accepting the existence of a wide divide between myth and reason. It is important to note here that philosophy in the real sense of the word began only when a sharp line was drawn between myth and reason. The future of philosophy lies in the sustenance of this divide.

The book is a worthy contribution to the debate about the future of Africa, not only in philosophical terms, but also about the development problematic of the continent. The book will certainly be useful to both undergraduate and graduate students of philosophy, sociology, political science and anthropology. It should also serve as a guide to other academics and politicians interested in issues of emancipation and development, within and outside the African continent.

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Employing a Marxian perspective, Steinhart examines the social history of hunting in colonial Kenya to highlight the prevalence of hunting by subsistence farmers who have been largely overlooked relative to ‘pure’ hunters in academic literature. He also demonstrates that the big game safari represents a truly cross-cultural or ‘trans-cultural’ practice, and notes the mixed blessings of the triumph of the preservationist ideal as evinced by Kenya’s 1977 ban on hunting. Steinhart argues that there were so few female hunters as to be negligible thus the book concentrates on men. Geographically the focus is on Kwale, Kitui, and Meru Districts because each contains a major national park (Shimba Hills, Tsavo, and Meru respectively) and was inhabited by Bantu-speaking people who supplemented their agro-pastoral activities with hunting. The author believes that his book is the first history of hunting and wildlife conservation in Kenya to treat both African and European hunters and gamekeepers. The author hopes to contribute to understandings of the place of wildlife in the world and humans’ relationship to it.

The introduction is followed by four parts: The African Hunters, The White Hunters, Black and White Together, and Gamekeepers and Poachers. Part one describes the tradition of bow hunting and African hunting generally in each of the three research districts. African elephant hunters using bow and poisoned arrow were viewed as primitive or non-existent by Europeans, yet bow hunting persisted during the colonial period and was arguably more humane than Europeans’ rifle use. Steinhart believes it was European prejudice against peasants that blinded them to the prevalence of hunting among African farmers and herders, such that they dismissed hunting activities as aberrant behavior. Steinhart argues that meat from hunting regularly supplemented local diets during dry seasons, not only during crisis or drought and that Africans contributed to Europeans’ misperceptions by considering elephant kills, but not animals caught in traps as ‘real hunting’.

In part two, the focus is much more on class, ideology, and individual action as opposed to the more geographic focus and non-class based analysis of part one. Steinhart posits that the European hunting heritage is steeped in the upper class and the expression of mastery over nature. The hunt was also associated with military skill and leadership and East Africa seen as a virtual Garden of Eden with an infinite supply of wildlife. Africans became the “dark companions” of early European hunters in the form of guides, porters, gun bearers, skinners, and cooks setting a class-based stage for later years when settler colonists from diverse class backgrounds joined in the hunt. The wealthy remained the dominant figures among hunters (Lord Delemere, Lord Cranworth, Berkeley and Galbraith Cole), but a movement towards a more populist movement in hunting was underway. Steinhart points to the abuses of the privileged including the literal hunting of Africans by a Hungarian Count and colonial officers who issued themselves licenses in violation of game regulations. Corruption and other abuses would remain an element of the big game safari, the focus of part three.

Steinhart believes that the modern game safari has its origins in a melding of the Arab/African caravan trade and European hunting practices and that a few well-publicized safaris greatly shaped the nature of the industry. Theodore Roosevelt’s 1909 safari involved the bagging of numerous trophy animals and set the stage for luxury safaris in which customers could bag desired animals without hardship. Eastman-Pomeroy-Akeley’s 1926-27 safari captured wildlife using Akeley’s new lightweight camera which would help popularize mixing hunting with photography increasing people’s interest in natural history and wildlife conservation. In 1927 and 1930, the Prince of Wales undertook luxury safaris during which he sought to photograph animals and gain new travel experiences as much as hunt. Hemingway’s published memoir of his 1934 big game safari helped romanticize the safari for the 1940s and 1950s when the reduced cost of air travel helped popularize the safari. White hunters served as professional guides for some time, but public sentiment and declining elephant populations helped Kenya transition to wildlife preservation.
In part four the transformation from hunting wildlife for sport and game control to preserving it in protected areas is described by focusing on the lives of colonial game wardens. Mention is made of Africans serving as scouts and former poachers including being used to as informants to capture others engaged in illegal off take of animals, but the reader does not gain much insight into African perspectives on wildlife management.

There is a notable lack of specific information on Africans in *Black Poachers, White Hunters* even though the author sought to have an inclusive study. Other than part one, the book is almost entirely about people of European descent. Three Kenyan districts were chosen for comparative purposes, but connecting people to specific districts is largely restricted to parts one and four. Steinhart used research assistants to conduct oral histories, but how many people were interviewed is unclear as is and why virtually no African voices are present even when covering events as recently as the 1960s. The desirability of using class analysis rather than the more conventional use of race or gender in East African studies is also not generally supported by the material presented—race and class essentially go hand in hand. The book is well-written and suitable for use in graduate courses in East African history or human-environment relations in Africa. Steinhart raises the interesting point of whether Kenya might not be better served by controlled hunting rather than allowing the hunting traditions of the Waata, Kamba and others to merely pass away.

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BOOK REVIEW


In this book, Forrest addresses the issue of the origins of Guinea-Bissau’s state fragility and thoroughly analyzes the relationship between the country’s rural civil society and state throughout the last century and a half. Basing his analysis on a comprehensive archival work as well as on more recent historical and anthropological studies, the author tests, through a historical and systematic approach, the applicability of J. Migdal’s ‘strong societies, weak states’ theory in Guinea-Bissau. He very convincingly shows that both the strength and adaptability of Guinea-Bissau’s rural civil society explain the inability of the country’s fragile state to carry out its policies.

One of the obvious strengths of the book is that it follows a chronological pattern, which helps to underline the commonalities and continuity – comprised in the word ‘lineages’ - that characterized the relationship throughout three eras that are generally considered separately in African studies. In each chapter, the author methodologically studies the diverse strategies used by Guinea-Bissau’s rural civil society to systematically escape central state rule. Goran Hyden’s notion of an ‘uncaptured peasantry’ is another acknowledged reference: Forrest shows that, like its Tanzanian counterpart, Guinea-Bissau’s peasantry was particularly skilled at escaping any form of state rule thanks to highly developed informal and cross-border trade networks. Guinea-Bissau’s successive states were thus unable to submit the rural population to tax collection, forced-labor recruitment or even state-monitored circuits of capital.

Forrest here seriously challenges those who explain African state fragility by underlining the ethnic diversity of many African states. In Guinea-Bissau, ethnic determinism played no role in rural civil society’s political decision-making. Rather, ethnic groups remained largely porous and non-exclusive, while inter-ethnic relations were dominated by pragmatic considerations that often led different ethnic communities to collaborate and conclude alliances in the face of Portuguese military and state violence. The most significant example of the ethnically malleable and incorporative character of Guinea-Bissau’s social formations, according to the author, was the expansion of indigenous spirit forces (irãs), which originated in Mandjack areas but attracted tens of thousands of followers from various ethnic groups. They soon represented an alternative to the power of the colonial state, thus becoming an alternative political sphere. Forrest therefore aptly shows that more than the much emphasized African ethnic divisions, it is the extraordinary capacity of rural society to create alternative spheres of political and social authority and economic activity that explain state fragility.

Forrest’s determination to study the Bissau-Guinean state’s history over a long period of time gives an essential but often underestimated historical dimension to African political studies. One of the conclusions drawn from this comprehensive study is the strength of political memory and its significance for state-society relations in Guinea-Bissau. From the very beginning of the Portuguese colonial conquest, the communities to-be-conquered showed an extraordinary ability to unite and lead coherent guerrilla warfare against the undermanned Portuguese forces, often surprised by such resistance. Thanks to these first military victories, Guinea-Bissau’s civil society developed a ‘memory of praetorian success’ that would re-emerge periodically through the colonial period, and then during the independence struggle.

Another conclusion drawn from this historical approach is the similarity in the colonial and postcolonial states’ weaknesses and in their responses to civil society resistance strategies. Both the colonial and postcolonial state administrations were understaffed, generally incompetent and corrupt, both desperately resorted to the same means to try and submit civil society to the central state rule - authoritarianism and state-violence - and both experienced the limits of this strategy. Although the postcolonial state emerged out of a struggle partly supported by rural society’s autonomous organizations, it was not more able to ensure the support and participation of rural society to its economic and social programmes than was its Portuguese predecessor.

The autonomy of Guinea-Bissau’s rural civil society was thus never successfully challenged by the
country’s successive regimes: “The combination of ethno-localistic political and social arrangements and incorporative, collaborative, interethnic social formations represent twin, reflective sources of social power in rural Guinea-Bissau, contemporarily as in the past” (p. 245).

Although Forrest wisely remains at the level of analysis without risking any policy-relevant conclusion, this raises the question of the nature of the state system, which will be able to efficiently carry out its state duties to a rural civil society mostly eager to retain its autonomy. Whatever the answer to this question, Forrest’s comprehensive work underlines the necessity of a multidisciplinary approach – based on anthropological, historical and political science theories and methods - to address such issues.

Overall, this book is certainly one of the best-written and documented histories of the Bissau-Guinean state. It sheds a fascinating light on Guinea-Bissau’s – and possibly Africa’s - current society and politics for all social scientists. Many other lesser-known African countries could benefit from equal attention.

Marie Gibert
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Michael Siler, an associate professor of Political Science at California State University-Los Angeles, has produced a massive bibliography of African strategic studies literature. Although this work will be a valuable resource and is comprehensive to a fault, its “mile wide and inch-deep” coverage may leave many readers wishing Siler had given more analysis even at the cost of reduced coverage.

This 727-page bibliography identifies books, journal and newspaper articles, governmental and NGO studies, dissertations, and theses that cover a wide range of continental, regional, and country-specific issues. After a lengthy introduction, Siler begins with a giant 194-page first chapter that serves as a broad survey of Africa strategic studies literature, with separate sections focused on continent-wide issues; American national security issues; weapons trafficking, diamonds, and commodities trading; and the role of private security firms and mercenaries. The next five chapters each cover a different region: Great Lakes/Central Africa, Southern Africa, West Africa, Northeast Africa/Horn of Africa, and Eastern Africa. Here Siler covers every African country from Angola to Zimbabwe. About sixty percent of the sources are journal articles, twenty percent are books, fifteen percent are government and NGO studies, and five percent are newspaper articles. Siler concludes with a final chapter covering dissertations, theses, dictionaries, and other bibliographies.

For those looking for literature on a wide variety of strategic studies subjects, this book will be a useful resource. Siler identifies dozens of works on the many African civil wars since the colonial era, the cold war alignment or non-alignment of the various states, the security issues raised by economic troubles throughout the continent, health concerns (especially the HIV/AIDS pandemic), foreign policy debates, civil-military relations, regional security efforts, and the impact of legal and illegal arms trading, ethnic and religious tensions, dictatorships, and corruption. Unique concerns are covered as well, including such issues as Nigeria’s flirtation with a nuclear weapons program in the 1980s. Of course, neither the regions nor the individual countries are covered evenly. The chapters on Southern Africa and Western Africa—with extensive coverage of South Africa, Angola, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Liberia—are substantially larger than the others. But Siler has included sections even on a number of other states that, by his own admission, have “no strategic security literature at all” (pp xxv-xlix).

In fact, in the introduction Siler claims that the following states have no strategic security literature: Burundi, Central African Republic, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Togo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Comoro Islands, Kenya, Mauritius, Seychelles, Uganda, and Zanzibar. Despite this admission, Siler gives each of these states its own section. More surprisingly, some of these sections are pages long, as articles on seemingly unrelated topics are included. In other instances, the inclusion of articles on recent or on-going civil wars (Somalia), internal civil-military relations (Togo), the impact of military rule (Ethiopia), and international disputes (Swaziland), make the reader wonder what the author meant when he claimed these states have no strategic literature.

For a bibliography on strategic security issues, these are significant (although not fatal) shortcomings. Throughout the volume, Siler includes numerous entries whose connections to the strategic security debate are unclear at best, and in some cases hard to even fathom. For example, he includes an article on African librarians and information managers (p. 3), books on African contributions to Western religion and culture (pp. 19-20), and case studies in gender relationships (p. 69). It is possible that these pieces have some connection to a broader strategic security debate, but Siler’s annotations fail to make the connection. This lack of analysis represents the other major room for improvement in this book.
In a bibliography of this size, it is probably not fair to expect more than a sentence or two on each entry, but those sentences should tell us something about the thesis or conclusion of the piece referenced. However, in most instances, Siler merely states what the article is about, and often in no more detail than the title of the entry. For example, Siler’s description of David Kilroy’s dissertation, entitled “Extending the American Sphere to West Africa: Dollar Diplomacy in Liberia, 1908-1926,” merely adds that Kilroy “examines the U.S. use of dollar diplomacy in Liberia from 1901-1926” (p. 672). Occasionally, Siler gives us the significance or the conclusion of a given entry, but those are the exceptions. Siler includes useful lists of abbreviations and journals, as well as an index, but no map is present.

Despite these shortcomings, Siler has produced a unique and impressively comprehensive resource for those interested in educating themselves on the strategic studies literature on Africa as a whole, as well as on its different regions and states. While readers may have to wade through a lot of entries that seem to have little connection to the strategic studies debates, and will have to read the books and articles themselves to learn about those authors’ basic conclusions, they can be thankful to Siler for compiling an impressive list of references that touch on a wide range of African topics.

Mark E. Grotelueschen

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BOOK REVIEW


Sarah Michael's book, *Undermining Development: the Absence of Power among Local NGOs in Africa*, is a powerful in-depth analytical study of NGOs and their power structures. The Book details the importance of power in local NGOs to significantly contribute to sustainable development. Based on observations of Asian and Latin American NGOs, Michael provides a theoretical framework of elements of powerful NGOs and how they operate to sustain and advance development. The book then provides in great length a discussion of African NGOs and how their lack of power undermines development in Africa and explains how power affects NGO sustainability. It shows how a powerful African NGO can look like and identifies policies available to improve power in local NGOs and advises different elements involved with NGOs, including the NGOs themselves, how to refocus their strategies.

This book is based on a qualitative research done on case studies of Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Senegal. The fieldwork of this analysis was undertaken during 1999-2000. Overall, sixty or more local NGOs were interviewed. Across each case study country, over one hundred interviews were conducted with local NGO directors, government officials, relevant donor agencies, key international NGOs, academics, media and other relevant bodies. In addition, the author conducts an in-depth study of one Bangladeshi organization to provide a comparison.

The main focus of the book is why local African NGOs lack power and how development of their power can contribute significantly to development on the African continent. Power is defined as "The ability of a local NGO to set its own priorities, defines its own agenda, and exerts its influence on the international development community, even in the face of opposition from government, donors, international NGOs and other development actors" (p.19). Elements of NGO power are identified by the author as NGO development space, financial independence from donors, solid links to international development community and engagement in political activity in their respective fields.

Based on case studies, the author argues that African NGOs lack consistency and strength in these four elements of power. A very important illustration of this book is the identification of elements that prevented local NGOs from gaining power in Africa. Pushing past traditional understanding of weaknesses of local NGOs of organizational and programmatic shortcomings, the author takes us through historical passages of the NGO development. She then demonstrates the barriers posed by host international NGOs, local governments and donor agencies to power attainment. Lack of support and competition posed by international NGOs for development space and donor funding, intentional and unintentional government policies carried out by local governments to prevent NGO empowerment, shifting donor policies and the competition faced by local NGOs to receive funding are crucial barriers faced.

This book illustrates that NGO power is crucial to development because NGOs, due to their special status in the development field, can act as catalyst mobilizing and bringing together various groups in the field of development. The author specifies three unique methods by the NGO sector can uniquely contribute to development. First, due to its local base, local NGOs have a level of local familiarity and expertise that international NGOs do not have. Second, once again due to their "local" status, they can get involved in local political issues regarding development without seeming like outsiders intruding. And finally, due to their status local NGOs are the best group organizations to mobilize local communities to development than any other groups or organization. The author exemplifies through the book that when local NGOs are unable to play their roles due to lack of power, others take their place resulting in drastic consequences for Africa. This book further draws a strong linkage between NGO power and NGO sustainability.

The content of the book is presented in eight chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to NGO activity in sub-Saharan Africa and to their power structures. Chapter two provides a conceptual
framework of power based on experiences of several powerful local NGOs in Asia and Latin America. Chapter three through five consist of case studies of Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Senegal respectively. The sixth chapter observes why power matters to local NGOs and how absence has undermined development in Africa. Chapter seven provides a link between NGO power and sustainability. Finally, chapter eight outlines a range of strategies available to improve NGO power in Africa.

This book provides a very deep conceptual framework of NGOs and power. It is empirically grounded and illustrates very explicitly the complicated historical and existing relationships between local NGOs, international NGOs, their respective governments and donor agencies in Africa. My only concerns are about the broad generalizations made based on three case studies to African, Asia and Latin America. It is true that Michael has studied a few powerful local Asian and Latin American NGOs in-depth, however, to draw the conclusion that these continents are far ahead in NGO power is a stretch, for while these continents may have a few very powerful NGOs, the majority of them suffer from similar lack of power as African NGOs. The book also would have benefited if it had mentioned the bureaucratic barriers to development when local NGOs become too expansive and powerful. Once again, while the author provides a masterful theoretical framework of NGO power, her advice for attaining power is nothing new or too practical. The government issues discussed by the author are very complicated and do not get solved immediately for governments to provide full support to local NGOs. The donor’s contributions are based on larger global priority needs and changes and INGOs operate under their own priorities.

Overall, this is a very conceptual, visionary and highly insightful book. I would highly recommend this book be read by policy makers, donors, NGOs, researchers and academics and local NGO members themselves or anybody else who is interested in working with local NGOs, not only in Africa but any other part of the developing world.

Dheeshana S. Jayasundara
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The little-known career of May French-Sheldon brought her to East, Central, and West Africa, launched an enduring stereotype of the sassy, unflappable female adventurer, and spawned a legion of American admirers for over three decades. French-Sheldon’s unique strength was her uncanny ability to repackage and re-convey her message to the dominant trends of times at the turn of the last century. In her insightful, interdisciplinary text that is part biography, part social history, part feminist theory, Tracey Jean Boisseau illuminates how supposedly philanthropic language and goals may cover a multitude of selfish interests, and how insidiously these interests can intersect with contested meanings about race and gender. The text is a welcome blend of rich historical texture and theoretical exposition that moves the narrative beyond the social location of one privileged woman and her interactions with a marginalized, colonialized world to broader issues of feminist and post-colonial theory.

The book is divided into three chronological periods, each corresponding with an era of French-Sheldon’s diverse and influential career. Part I focuses on French-Sheldon’s 1891 expedition to Kilimanjaro and her “discovery” of Lake Chala. Taking very seriously her not-entirely-accurate title as “the first woman explorer of Africa,” French-Sheldon relied upon an elaborate costume modeled on European royalty to craft a version of American femininity as “White Queen” in order to open doors to the hierarchical world of East African colonial society. Her courtship of local officials, including those from the Middle East, drew upon a savvy construction of gendered identity that relied upon neo-bourgeois notions of “respectability,” including her status as a married woman and a Fellow of the London Royal Geographic Society. “French-Sheldon claimed to have made a significant contribution to the civilizing of Africans merely by being a perfect lady in front of them” (72), but Boisseau also mines French-Sheldon’s journals and published accounts to illustrate horrifically uncomfortable encounters where the intrepid explorer bullied, extorted, and amputated Africans in order to gain access to the “gifts” she felt she deserved. Chapter 4 and 5 provide an extremely penetrating and useful analysis of the strategic rhetoric used by French-Sheldon to simultaneously amplify eroticism of Africans while emasculating African men and rendering African women to an inhuman category of pitiable victims.

French-Sheldon capitalized on her image as an intrepid and respected explorer in the second phase of her international career, chronicled in Part II. Boisseau argues that French-Sheldon worked as a double-agent for both the British press and King Leopold II of Belgium based on French-Sheldon’s lack of corroboration with Protestant missionary reports of atrocities in the Congo. Despite ample evidence of French-Sheldon’s cold appraisal and detached paternalistic perceptions of East Africans in the first section of the text, “this eagle-eyed overseer of the colonial condition found no atrocities to report and only a praiseworthy system of colonial overlordship in place” (116). In 1904, she parlayed her knowledge of the concessionaire system gained in rubber-producing central Africa to buy 12,000 square miles of rainforest in Liberia for a shadily-funded endeavor she called Americo-Liberian Industrial Company. Intent on relocating black Americans to work the land, French-Sheldon’s plans were eventually shut down by the Liberian legislature due to her underestimation of the Liberian elite and her frank insensitivity to the issue of indentured servitude among recently freed slaves. In 1921, her devotion to the Belgian court was finally rewarded when she was awarded la Croix de Chevalier de l’Ordre de la Couronne, the equivalent of a knighthood for her legacy as an explorer and humanitarian, an honor she would bank on heavily in the next phase of her career as an emerging American feminist.

Part III contextualizes the most enduring legacy of French-Sheldon’s career: her impact on the shaping of American feminism and the imperialist images that surrounded and constructed French-Sheldon as a feminist heroine. While Chapters 9 and 10’s specific focus on “drag,” female fetishism, and the development of twentieth-century American feminist subjectivity might not be entirely appealing to all scholars of African Studies, Chapter 8 and the Conclusion effectively contextualize a story of racial
privilege, imperial power, and colonial nostalgia for a pacified Africa that endures to this day. Boisseau concentrates on how French-Sheldon herself became a “desiring subject” (205), and how this innovation of identity re-framed the emerging “lifestyle” (144) for new or modern American womanhood in the 1910s and 1920s. Adored by young women seeking adventurous American heroines during the “flapper” era, French-Sheldon forged the latter years of her career through new forms of mass media. Her deliberately crafted public persona combined a “woman’s point of view” and the exoticism of her African experiences to draw huge audiences to hear her speak on the Modern American Woman. Despite her avoidance of feminist politics in any specific sense, French-Sheldon’s used her trademark “overblown self-presentation” (148) to invent herself anew. Boisseau highlights journalist reports from this period that exaggerate the numbers of African porters under French-Sheldon’s hire for the 1891 expedition from one hundred and fifty to five hundred. According to Boisseau’s analysis, “French-Sheldon’s fantasy of herself in Africa . . . reaffirmed race and national distinctions as a way of compensating for violations of gender hierarchy” (180). Even in America, the experience of empire played a distinct role in providing a structure and language for the middle-class. An oversight of an otherwise amazing section on the emergence of a specifically American identity, within the text Boisseau only very briefly contextualizes the impacts of perpetuating these paternalistic and white-supremacist views for African-Americans living at this time and later (59, 150).

White Queen provides a fascinating study of a largely overlooked American figure that would be a useful text for graduate seminars examining the complicated nature(s) of post-colonial power dynamics. The text would also be suitable for graduate level seminars on the history of feminist thought in the United States.

Erin Kenny
Drury University

Marvine Howe’s objective in her book is to deal with the central question as stated in the preface: “Can an absolute Muslim monarchy embrace Western-style democracy in an era of growing confrontation between the Islamic world and the West?”

Relying chiefly on her own experience since she discovered the Moroccan kingdom in the early 1950s, the author presents a comprehensive review of Morocco, its people, past and present. In addition, her work as a freelance journalist in Morocco and then as correspondent for The New York Times enabled her to gather a huge and various amount of information about Morocco such as interviews with the most influential figures in Moroccan history before and after independence. When reading every passage of the book, the reader gets the impression that Marvine Howe has mastered the history and geography of Morocco even better than the average Moroccan. What makes Howe’s book special is that she raises some issues that were until recently a taboo and mysterious such as “les années de plomb” – the years of lead in the 1970s and 1980s, the private life of the former king Hassan II, L’affaire Ben Barka in 1965 and the two serious military coup attempts which nearly succeeded in 1971 and 1972.

Still, it is worth-mentioning that the title of the book may initially give different or even misleading impressions about the content of the book. The subject matter of the book deals with more than just the Islamic awakening. This issue, despite being thoroughly treated, is only one of the aspects addressed by the author. In addition, the author occasionally deals with some incidents and topics in a simplistic way by giving interpretations not based on profound arguments. Nevertheless, Howe has succeeded in objectively addressing Moroccan history and the thorniest political and social challenges facing this modern and pro-Western kingdom.

Howe’s book consists of four major parts and each part is divided into different chapters. The first part starts with introducing the new king Mohamed VI, who assumed power in 1999 as an unknown person for most people and swiftly tried to correct the violations of human rights, which took place during the 38-year reign of his father, king Hassan II. The author examines the challenges facing this enigmatic country where the gap between rich and poor is growing rapidly. The second part provides a general historical overview of Morocco. Starting with the original inhabitants of Morocco, the Berbers or Imazighen who inhabited North Africa since the second millennium B.C., Howe deals with different invaders and dynasties that ruled Morocco until the modern history. The author ends this part by shedding light on the era of king Hassan II, which is a critical and controversial period of Moroccan modern history. In the third part, Howe analyzes different factors and challenges facing a society in motion. Beginning with Islamic revival, the author concludes that Morocco can no longer tolerate and take Islamic extremism lightly, especially after the suicide bombings against targets in Casablanca on May 16, 2003. Another issue is that of women’s rights movements in the sense that in modern Morocco, women are the most dynamic sector of society. Moroccan women from different social and political spectra are more determined than ever to improve their social, economic and political position. Another topic in this part is that of Moroccan identity. The Moroccan constitution states that the country is a Muslim state with Arabic as an official language and is part of the Arab nation. As a matter of fact, the Moroccan identity is far more complicated inasmuch as Moroccans are a mélange of Berber, Islamic, Arab, Jewish and European elements. The final part deals with the new democratic transfer led by the new king Mohamed VI. Among other things, Howe discusses the main challenges facing the monarchy especially the growing Islamic movements. Again, it is worth mentioning in this respect that the author did not entirely succeed in her analysis with regard to Islamic movements in Morocco. It seems that Howe associates all parties and associations based on Islamic ideology with violence whereas moderate Islamists themselves were the first ones who condemned all forms of violence after the attacks in Casablanca in 2003. Howe concludes in her last chapter that the Moroccan kingdom is at the crossroads.
She predicts a gloomy scenario in which the Islamic movement will massively win the parliamentary elections in 2007. Once more, in this book, all movements and associations with Islamic views are illustrated as antithesis to democratic values, which in reality is not the case. However, in this special and comprehensive work about Morocco, Howe tried to explain why Morocco matters considering its strategic location between Africa and Europe. In addition, Morocco is recently considered by America as a cornerstone in Africa and the Arab world to promote the western liberal democracy and as a loyal ally in fighting against terrorism. Through her first-hand account and her exhaustive review of the historical, social and economic situation of Morocco, Howe has produced a valuable work that is indispensable for everyone interested in this Arab and African kingdom.

Mohammadi Laghzaoui

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San prehistoric art as well as more recent cultural practices reveal clues to the development of human symbolic, spiritual and religious consciousness. To arrive at this conclusion, Lewis-Williams and Pearce operate from a simple yet profound premise: the physical structure of the San brain is no different than anyone else’s. That is, they are anatomically modern humans, therefore have the potential to experience similar states of consciousness that have been documented by modern researchers. With that in mind, the authors combine knowledge of the function of the human brain, particularly during states of consciousness, with ethnographic and material cultural studies of the San.

A particular point of focus is the Howieson’s Poort Anomaly in South Africa. This period during the Middle Stone Age contains tools composed of an increased percentage of non-quartzite material and distinct crescent or trapeze shapes compared to tools made in the time periods before and after in the same region which are predominantly quartzite and of non-distinct shape. Lewis-Williams and Pearce suggest that this variation occurred because the makers or users were attracted to the quality of shine of the non-quartzite material. This quality of shine is reminiscent of the light that is reported to be seen by shamans during altered states of consciousness. Therefore, the tools indicate a perception and application of the symbolic among the San. The authors cite evidence from indigenous shamans in Australia, North America, and South America to support this observation. The shift back to the use of the previous material, quartzite, could be explained by the San finding a new way of symbolically expressing the state of altered consciousness.

Another example in which the functioning of the human brain is mirrored in Middle Stone Age art is in the use of therianthropes. These images in rock shelter paintings echo the altered state of consciousness in which shamans report actually becoming specific animals after merely thinking of them. In the case of the San, the shaman are able to transform into a lion to protect members of the clan against lions who threaten during the night. Conversely, a shaman can also transform into a lion and intentionally inflict harm on people. A shaman also can transform into a little bird, fly to a neighboring settlement and check on the physical condition of familial relations. The trigger mechanism to enter this state of transformation or altered consciousness is the healing or trance dance in which the entire San community participate. It is “the overwhelmingly most important San ritual….which transcends the levels of the tiered San cosmology.” It is also “the hub of San life: from it, radiate spokes that penetrate into other rituals, myths, and into daily life.” (82) The dance, along with its social, spiritual, and cosmological implications, exists as the principle subject of San rock paintings. Once the authors determined this, the paintings offered a wealth of new information about San spirituality. A painting of a dying eland, with zigzag lines emanating from it depicts the potency of eland which the San believe to be a source of their shamanistic power. Interestingly, one image shows the emptying of an eland’s bowels, perhaps a crucial indicator that it is the energy release at the point of death not just death itself that releases this power. Lewis-Williams and Pearce claim that many of the San rock carvings depict what shamans actually perceive and experience in altered states of consciousness.

With such intriguing conclusions, Lewis-Williams and Pearce are critically and cautiously aware of the current limitations of archeological thinking which support a narrow materialistic interpretation of prehistory. However, they are committed to an interdisciplinary approach including the controversial concept of “neurotheology” which seeks to explain religious and spiritual experience in light of physical functions of the human brain. This is blended with archeological and ethnographic studies to form the evidence for their arguments.

As with any work that presents a paradigm shift or in this case arguably, a new paradigm, the evidence has to stand up against the critique of the paradigm itself before it is even applied within its new context. The authors handle this by openly stating instances where the variations in cultural
practices particularly those involving grave preparations, do not reconcile with their theoretical approach.

The tension with this research is that although it is methodologically sound and well conceived, it is ultimately trying to analyze aspects of perception that go beyond the “consciousness of rationality” coveted by Western scientists. Lewis-Williams and Pearce are confident that discoveries in the study of the brain and its function will help lead the way but the tantalizing question lingers: To what extent can the “alert thinking and rational response to the environment” aspect of consciousness meaningfully comment on and engage the rest of the spectrum. As this line of research develops, we will soon have some interesting answers to ponder. Nevertheless, this work is an important step in understanding human consciousness and its relationship to expression and spirituality. For those who consider science and spirituality as being forever or innately irreconcilable, relegated to the mind bending theories of modern physics, or the airy rubric of New Age thinking, this work makes a strong case to the contrary. For those interested in the systematic study of the intersection between the material, historical, psychological, and spiritual, it is a fascinating read.

Denise Martin
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BOOK REVIEW


Since political independence in 1963, Kenya has witnessed five prominent and cold-blooded murders of its political leaders. These are: Pio Gama Pinto in 1965, Tom Mboya in 1969, Josiah Mwangi Kariuki in 1975, Robert Ouko in 1990, and Crispin Odhiambo Mbai in 2003. Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo’s text focuses on the political killing of Ouko “wildly regarded from the 1970s through the 1980s as Kenya’s leading international spokesman and one of Africa’s most effective statespersons” (ix).

The text, in my view, is the only available one that presents a panoramic and comprehensive coverage of the circumstances surrounding Ouko’s death and issues that stemmed from that event. Given the towering stature of Ouko as a cabinet minister coupled with his political dexterity during the regime of Daniel arap Moi, the text can also be viewed as an exposé of Kenya’s political terrain during the reign of Moi up to the late 1990s. The text assists one to decipher the trajectory of political innuendos and nuances of Kenya under Moi.

It is noteworthy that the text is not merely expository. It is not just a narrative of circumstances and events leading to the brutal demise of Ouko. The text draws the reader’s attention to “the risks of knowledge” in the heady worlds of contemporary Kenya and Africa (16). The text therefore has epistemological concerns in that it is an erudite study of the social history of knowledge production employing the political assassination of Ouko as its pedestal. In its profundity, the text is not simply an attempt to offer solutions to questions such as: Who killed Ouko? How did Ouko die? Such questions are secondary or banal given the text’s epistemological anchorage. The text’s primary interest are the processes involved in the constitution of knowledge, how individuals and bodies come to “know”, and how certain knowledge has gained authority (18).

To illustrate the epistemological concerns, it is argued that in actuality the formation of commissions of inquiry are not necessarily for the sake of remediation and reform. So, for instance, when the Moi regime constituted the Gicheru commission of inquiry to look into Ouko’s disappearance and murder, the real purpose was not fact-finding and determination of the just course of action, but to come up with “truths” conveniently geared in service of the state’s interests—“truths” that would assist the state in reproducing and extending its own authority and legitimacy (44).

Ouko’s disappearance from his Koru farm on February 12 or 13, 1990, was followed by the government’s announcement on February 16 that his mutilated and smoldering body had been found at Got Alila, about three kilometers from his farm, with a firearm and other objects supposedly belonging to him nearby. The record of Ouko’s last days became dramatically crucial and preoccupied the minds of many and was given formidably space in newspapers, journals, and reports. “In death, his corpse became a text or a library in which many parties could and would prospect for different meanings. These representations would provide richness and depth to the accountings of Ouko’s disappearance and death” (117). The public became consumed with the desire not only to comprehend the behavior of Ouko in his last days, and the behavior of those around him or those he interacted with, but also the behavior of those who would attempt to regulate the interpretation of his disappearance and death.

Two theories emerged regarding how Ouko met his death. These were the suicide and murder theories. For reasons well explained, the text refers to them as the gum boots and white car theories, respectively (50-51). These two theories were the interpretive divide in the investigations and inquiries on Ouko’s death. Moi’s government pushed for the gum boots theory, while the public believed in the veracity of the white car theory. Without engaging in any value judgments with finality, the text exhaustively and refreshingly discusses the rationales of these two theories. The text also explicates some inconsistencies in the narratives on Ouko’s death. These are Hempstone’s account, George Wajackoyah’s story, and Shikuku’s testimony. It also explores the various interpretations of where Ouko actually died;
whether he was killed elsewhere and the body dumped at Got Alila, or if he was killed at Got Alila.

Regarding the political topography of Moi’s Kenya, the text leaves no doubt that its main feature was corruption, and that it was Ouko’s opposition to this feature that led to his death. The text reports in detail how Moi led an oversize Kenyan delegation to a morning prayer in the US on February 1, 1990, hoping to cajole President George H. W. Bush into an official meeting with him, which Bush refused. Instead the Secretary of State, James Baker, questioned Moi about the corruption in his government and commended Ouko for his opposition to corruption.

Given the subject matter of the text, it is bound to attract a diverse range of readership. These would include: historians, political scientists, sociologists, philosophers, and the general readers whose concern hinge on social-political matters within Africa in general and Kenya in particular. Without any doubt, the text lends itself to scholarship given its profundity and the rigorous analytical skills employed. Though some persons would hardly be surprised by the revelation of corruption and extortion, the reader would surely be surprised by the highly conventionalized and naturalized or systematized practices through which men and women in power in Kenya have sought to extend their power and amass their wealth (269).

Frederick Ochieng’-Odhiambo
University of the West Indies
BOOK REVIEW


Emma Guest describes her book on children of AIDS in Africa as ‘un-apologetically anecdotal’. Before her arrival on the continent, she was a marriage guidance counselor in Britain with limited exposure to the appalling human, social and economic consequences of HIV/AIDS in Africa. She was privy to personal stories from her close friend, an African woman living with HIV/AIDS. Upon her arrival in Africa she began to write about AIDS in Africa. Soon she discovered that there wasn’t a book on children who became orphans because of their parent’s death from AIDS. The result of that discovery lead to the birth of this book in which she documents the daily struggles as experienced by orphans and the heroic attempts of well meaning individuals who have tried to make a difference in their lives.

This second edition calls our attention to a number of discouraging aspects of the current fight against AIDS in South Africa. First, the fight against global terrorism has sidelined the spread of HIV as a global problem. Second, promises of free AIDS drugs have brought a new wave of hope to the millions of AIDS sufferers. But this hope may soon well be dashed as governments can no longer sustain an uninterrupted drug supply. Finally, South African leadership failed the public and set the clock back in its fight against AIDS by characterizing the international AIDS program as racially motivated. The second edition provides updated statistics. Apart from this update, the core of this book remains intact from the first edition. In general, the book offers only a limited description of the orphan crisis through statistics. However, it offers interesting qualitative descriptions of the life of orphans as the author perceives it in three different countries; South Africa, Uganda and Zambia.

The book opens with a chapter on Zambian orphans under the care of grandmothers who have very little resources to take care of themselves. The Zambian Public Assistance program is supposed to provide support to these grandmothers. The organization is cash strapped, and therefore mostly ineffective. The second chapter is the story of a woman who took under her care six orphans who lost their parents to AIDS. Child fostering is popular in Uganda as in many parts of Africa. In the age of the AIDS crisis, fostering extends beyond fostering children from blood relatives. The next three chapters provide vivid descriptions of the challenges faced by social groups: foster parents, child care committees, and cluster fostering homes where a group of mutually supportive fostering mothers live in close proximity to each other. Chapter six attempts to examine the orphanage as one of the solutions to the orphan crisis. New orphanages are expensive and many of them depend upon foreign donations and volunteers. Chapter seven highlights the characteristics of the Ugandan success story of HIV/AIDS prevention. Schools in Uganda provide factual information on HIV/AIDS and institutional assistance is often made in kind rather than in cash in order to avoid corruption. Chapter eight discusses the role played by international agencies such as UNAIDS. Here again, the author tells the story of an inspiring UN bureaucrat who has made a difference in the life of Zambian orphans. The last two chapters dwell on stories of children who live alone. In chapter nine we are told of children who have taken on adult family roles in a desperate attempt to stay together. The last chapter is a case study of a very unique individual, a caregiver to street children who are constantly exposed to street violence, sex and drugs.

Through skillful use of case studies, the author examines the role of state agencies, community level initiatives and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in providing solutions to the orphan crisis in Africa. These orphans will face high level mortality, morbidity and malnourishment as they grow up. As families collapse, agents of primary socialization disappear. As a result, crime and lawlessness are likely to enervate the strength of civil societies.

The crisis deepens as state agencies and community level initiatives fail to co-ordinate their efforts. As a result, a large bulk of orphan care is left to a few committed individuals in isolated communities and NGOs. Social workers employed by state agencies are constrained by rules and regulations which appear to be culturally insensitive to the African concept of child fostering. Consequently, social workers have
limited ability to advocate for an expanded model which accommodates unrelated foster children within the African context of child fostering. The author focuses on “stigma” as a major problem limiting the solutions to the orphan crisis. She believes that politicians can play a major role in alleviating stigma through skillful use of mass media. The suggestions she offers are limited. The problem of stigma has to be resolved through programs and policies at the micro and macro levels.

In general the book is well written. It provides a journalistic account of the social, human and economic miseries suffered by African orphans. It alerts us to the formidable task of rebuilding Africa as millions of orphans born to HIV infected parents come of age. The book is a compassionate account of the orphan crisis in Africa to those who want to become familiar with issues of AIDS and orphans in Africa. In addition, this book also offers a critical view of selected initiatives of orphan care, all of which are small, diverse and vulnerable. The author provides very few suggestions on programs and policies to care for African orphans. I recommend this book without reservation to undergraduates, social workers, and any one interested in understanding the African orphan crisis.

Vijayan K. Pillai

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BOOK REVIEW


The study of food in Africa is entering a brilliant new phase. Along with the long-awaited publication of works examining food consumption by Lisa Cliggett and Elias Mandala, the arrival of Karen Coen Flynn's book is good news for those interested in hunger, poverty, and the critical role of food in everyday life. She offers an intriguing and provocative analysis of hunger and food supply in Mwanza, a Tanzanian city located on the shore of Lake Victoria. The careful treatment she provides to the ways diverse communities within Mwanza obtain food is crucial for scholars and policymakers who wish to understand how poor people develop strategies to obtain sustenance in cities. Her theoretical contributions build on the foundation of entitlement theory set by Amartya Sen over two decades ago while adding important nuances, especially on the role of charitable gifts.

One of the major strengths of this study is Flynn's willingness to enter into dialogue with previous work on urban food supply while noting how Mwanza offers a different context than the rural regions and capital cities that usually furnish the settings for scholarly work on hunger and food. The context is brought out by over 200 interviews taken in the early 1990s. Her analysis of food market organization and periurban agriculture fits with previous studies. However, Flynn's research on food consumption in Mwanza is quite innovative. From detailed reviews of the changing popularity of different staple cereals to revealing the challenges that state authorities, market people, and consumers have in buying and selling food in Mwanza, the author's ethnographic approach is quite effective. The evolution of taste reveals much about the evolution of Tanzania from the late colonial period through ujamaa socialism to the present. Flynn has documented the growth of more processed foods, especially certain types of corn and rice, which one often sees in daily life in many African cities.

Another aspect of food consumption in Mwanza highlighted in this monograph is how people buy and prepare food. Chapter Four and Five's consideration of food consumption across the social divides of Mwanza is fascinating. The detailed survey of food preparation patterns and the shifting composition of families seeking to obtain entitlements to food shows how access to food marks social distinctions. Foodways will be quite different between street children and well-off African and Asian families, obviously, but it is rare to see such an approach to urban food consumption so informed by detailed sociological analysis and the mundane details of daily urban life.

Furthermore, the need to commit time and resources to other obligations besides food proves a central challenge for Mwanza people who need to develop an array of resources to feed themselves. Choices by individuals to straddle urban and rural connections to obtain and sell food commonly occur in any African city in the same ways one sees in Mwanza. As economic conditions in the city grew worse in the 1980s and early 1990s, previous strategies to juggle ways to raise income and connections needed to acquire food proved less effective. The image of “balancing on one foot” is a very apt one for how individuals can prove unable to pull together the variety of demands of time and money many city residents face.

Another aspect of eating in Mwanza that Flynn surveys is the daily struggle different groups of destitute children and adults have in obtaining food. This moves beyond other studies more concerned with market organization and agriculture. AIDS, family difficulties, and disabilities led many of the homeless of Mwanza to the city. For many women, “survival sex” was a key way for women to obtain food as gifts or payment. As some women failed to establish a stable residence from where they could turn to sex work, they had to rely on sexual encounters as a form of food scrounging. Street women desperate for food had little ability to resist the demands of their clients or counter male unwillingness to use condoms. Government camps designed to house and employ the very poor often could provide food, but the constraints placed upon their residents (often placed in the camps by police roundups) led many homeless to avoid this kind of living. Street men often appear to have better access to kin and other
networks they could turn to for food, especially through begging. They escaped the stigma placed on street women, who many city residents view as lazy or in violation of gendered norms of women as food providers and members of established family networks. Gendered differences also can be noted among street children: while girls have the dangerous but often unavoidable choice to obtain money and sustenance through sex work, this is not a common option of boys.

All in all, this excellent book would make for a great textbook in undergraduate courses on modern Africa and for courses on food studies. The wealth of detail combined with an eye to uncovering the diversity of challenges in African cities makes for good reading. While theoretical discussions are important, they do not detract at all from the readability of the book. Especially for instructors seeking to provide a human face to master narratives of problems within contemporary Africa, I recommend this text.

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REFERENCES


BOOK REVIEW


Just when one began to wonder if Soyinka criticism had exhausted itself and if anything new could be said about Africa’s most complex and prodigious talents, comes a revisionist study from one of the members of the now moribund ‘Ibadan Ife group’ that offers a novel approach to reading Soyinka by examining the relationship between Soyinka’s literary writings and his political activism. Filling up the hiatus since 1993, when some of the major studies on Soyinka had appeared, Biodun Jeyifo not only brings Soyinka criticism up to date by systematically integrating the different phases of Soyinka criticism, but also provides one of the most exhaustive and insightful analysis of Soyinka’s fictional and non-fictional works constructing a post-colonial, even a postmodern Soyinka.

The tendency in Soyinka criticism is to view the activist writer’s aesthetic and political radicalism in isolation or even to see them as oppositional. Jeyifo’s correlation between the writer’s proclivity for ‘political risktaking’ with ‘artistic gambles’ helps him to resolve one of the most troubling contradictions observed in Soyinka by his critics.(14) He accomplishes this formidable task by making the Nigerian Nobel Laureate’s titanic personality the focal point for examining his literary corpus, thus introducing ‘subjectivity’ not only to Soyinka and African studies but also into literary criticism. Yet Jeyifo’s is not an exercise in sophisticated biographical criticism but a post-structural inquiry into the self-making process in relation to the maverick Nigerian writer’s life and creative corpus. His emphasis on the textual construction of Soyinka’s personality enables Jeyifo to eschew ‘the metaphysics of presence’ without having to pronounce ‘the death of the subject’ as he calls attention to the process of self-making through which Soyinka came to be central to the construction of the ‘highly gendered postcolonial masculinist tradition’ in African writing, which is currently under a crisis.

After stating his central argument in the Preface, Jeyifo proceeds to examine Soyinka’s works in different genres in separate chapters while showing, at the same time, the impossibility of maintaining generic divisions in a body of work that reveals an enormous amount of intertextuality and cross-referencing. The book is remarkable in its sustained intertextual reading that makes the discussion of any particular genre meaningful only in relation to the exploration of the same themes in other genres.

Jeyifo begins by looking at one of the neglected areas in Soyinka studies, namely Soyinka’s three books and essays that have been highly influential in shaping African criticism. Splitting Soyinka’s critical writings into the anti-negritudist, neo-negritudist, and neo-cosmopolitan phases, he shows that in place of a decisive rupture one should view Soyinka’s critical works as ‘a body of postcolonial discourse which neither avoids nor reifies the dichotomies of local and metropolitan’. Considering that ‘the tragic mythopoesis’, which Jeyifo places at the centre of Soyinka’s aesthetic philosophy, has increasingly been interrogated by the post independence generation, the continuing relevance of Soyinkan aesthetics needs to be engaged more critically.

Drama being the genre Soyinka excels in is devoted two chapters, one exclusively to an unraveling of ‘the ritual problematic’ in ‘the weightier plays’. Jeyifo subjects Soyinka’s conversion of ritual formalism into a vigorous theatrical expression to a rigorous critical examination. By showing that Soyinka’s use of the most autochthonous, pristine ritual form and idioms coexists with a view of ritual as emancipatory, Jeyifo attempts to balance Soyinka’s strong faith in the interface between drama and ritual with ‘what one may call ‘anti-ritual’, that is, his interrogation of the values of the rituals he himself employs in his plays. Emphasizing that Soyinka’s drama must be understood first and foremost as theatre, Jeyifo extends the notion of ‘the ritual problematic’ from Soyinka to African dramaturgy and African aesthetics as a whole.

While considering prose as the most uneven of Soyinka’s works, Jeyifo considers prose as singularly important in bringing closer Soyinka’s writing and his activism. The reason he gives for this is that prose is a genre in which Soyinka places his greatest faith in his project of self-constitution as a
visionary artist and radical public intellectual. Lauding *The Interpreters* as a contribution to the genre of fiction, he dismisses *The Season of Anomy* as a dramatic failure for the simple reason that *The Man Died*, which deals with the same themes, offers one of the finest examples of testamentary writing, notwithstanding its flaws. But it is through his close analysis of the three autobiographical exercises, the bildungsroman *Ake*, the exile’s book *Ibadan* and the tribute *Isara*, that he guides us through the self-making of one of the most fascinating figures in contemporary writing.

The Chapter on poetry offers Jeyifo a convenient point for steering the debate on Soyinka’s alleged ‘obscurity’ and ‘complexity’ away from the routine polarized approach. He rejects the thesis as a criterion for evaluating Soyinka’s achievement as a poet because, according to him, Soyinka’s works take us beyond complexity to the ‘complex evanescent experience of considerable lyrical forces’. Instead, he suggests that one should take as a point of departure the distinction between poetry and versification in the assessment of the nature of the poet’s output. According to Jeyifo, Soyinka is both a poet and versifier but his critics are preoccupied with versification to the detriment of poetry. While Jeyifo commends the first two volumes for their articulation of personal and public pain with consistently exquisite and polished expression, he marks in the third volume Soyinka’s returns race to the African discourse along with the notion of ‘race men’. While agreeing that Soyinka creates the Promethean hero with great power, Jeyifo interrogates the negritudist strains of the totemic poet speaking for or on behalf of his people.

The concluding section neatly ties up the issues that Jeyifo set out to examine in the preceding chapters, the ‘obscurity’ charges, the burden of representation, the place of violence, the Ogunian archetype, Soyinka’s literary avant-gardism and his political and ideological radicalism, and, finally, Soyinka’s contribution to the constitution of an African and postcolonial discourse. Yet Jeyifo’s voice, while pointing out the grand flaws in the big man, remains that of the celebrant. Coming from one who has been one of Soyinka’s harshest critics, this is a tribute indeed.

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From the third quarter of the 19th century, the different European powers began their scramble for Africa. The 1884-85 Berlin Conference between the different colonial powers formalised this brutal process. By the time the First World War broke out in 1914, almost all of Africa—save Liberia and Ethiopia—had been occupied by the different European powers, including France, Britain and Germany. Defeated in the war, the 1919 Treaty of Versailles knocked Germany out of Africa and the victorious powers insisted on it being deprived of its occupied African territories. The Treaty of Versailles also led to the formation of the League of Nations. These territories were thus to be administered by Britain and France as a “sacred trust” under the mandates system of the League of Nations.

How did the mandates system work from 1929 to the end of the Second World War? Not being the same as pure colonialism according to the mandates provisions, what impact did it have on European colonialism? Since both Germany, which was deprived its colonies, and Italy, which never got any mandated territory, later joined the League, what effect did this have on the system? How did the two main mandatory powers differ in their respect of the legal and humanitarian provisions of the mandates system? These are some of the critical questions that Michael D. Callahan attempts to answer in A Sacred Trust, and does it quite brilliantly.

The author begins by highlighting the moral contradictions of European colonialism in Africa and elsewhere in what is now known as the Third World. Having discussed the racist underpinnings of colonialism, he enquires into the impact of the mandates system on European perceptions of race, development and civilization. He does this particularly in relation to the status and nationals of the two independent African states, Ethiopia and Liberia, both of whom were members of the League and whose nationals were by the virtue of the mandates system allowed to travel within and live in any mandated territory enjoying all the rights that nationals of any other member state of the League, including the mandatory power, were accorded.

Most Africans do not see much difference between colonialism and the mandates system as far as their philosophical underpinnings are concerned. Both derived from the illusory conviction that Africans were not civilized and could not govern themselves and thus had to be governed by white people. There is no better illustration of this than entrusting the German South West Africa (now Namibia) to the Union of South Africa with its desppicable white supremacist regime. Pretoria was to administer Namibia on behalf of Britain. This issue does not elude the author and he provides many quotations and public and private statements by the different European officials of the League supporting this. While acknowledging some breaches of some provisions of the mandates system, especially in French mandatory territories, the author argues that the system was by and large respected by the mandatory powers. He points out, however, that this was mainly because Germany and Italy were pressing for it and failure to do so would have deprived France and Britain of their argument for continuing refusal to return Germany’s former African colonies.

Since Germany, Italy, and also the United States (although not a member of the League), insisted on the full respect of the provisions of the mandates system, the mandatory powers had no choice but to play be the rules though grudgingly at times. This apparently gave more influence to Geneva. There were also some European liberals who joined their voices with those of Germany and Italy, though with different motives, for a strict respect of the mandates system. This too gave some weight to public opinion in London and Paris. The author was therefore expected to take account of the views and activities of all these forces and assess their impact on the mandates system in Africa. Yet not only did he succeed in providing the reader with a detailed account of how life went on in the mandated territories between their African inhabitants and the mandatory powers; but he also looks at how these powers dealt with the system in London and Paris on the one hand, and how both Britain and France acted in

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Summer 2006
concert vis-à-vis Germany and Italy and the wider League membership. In the book’s seven chapters, the author succeeds in providing a truly comprehensive study of the labyrinthine subject that was the mandates system, as it related to Africa.

One could have passed judgment on the book’s frequent reproduction of quite long quotations and statements without an equally rigorous analytical study of these statements or quotations. However, looking at the book quite critically, it becomes apparent that the author could not have done differently and still produce such an outstanding history book. Contrary to the preferred approach of most modern scholars of the League of Nations who tend to concentrate on the organization’s wider political problems, Michael D. Callahan delimitates the purview of his study to the specific case of the mandates system as it relates to Africa. In the volume under review, he further narrows down the scope to the period between 1929 and 1946. I believe this allows the book to have a much focused scope than it may have had otherwise.

In my opinion, *A Sacred Trust* is extremely interesting and well researched. Written in most parts from rare primary sources, Callahan’s book can truly be considered a classical book and one that many historians of the League of Nations’ relationship with Africa and European colonialism in the interwar period would find useful to consult. It should be an essential reference for any researcher on these subjects.

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BOOK REVIEW


This book provides a welcome addition to the Western African Studies series published by the Ohio University Press, several of which have been previously reviewed in this journal. It is important in two ways. First, with the pre-colonial focus on West African history, the author clearly demonstrates that while sources may be problematic or incomplete, much can be understood of the differing African motivations in the slave trade. Second, using Ouidah (Bénin) as an example, the author provides a detailed account of the complex development and decline of one of West Africa’s premier mercantile towns during the height of the Atlantic slave trade, and consequently the uneven shift to ‘legitimate’ trade in the nineteenth century. While much historical and archaeological work has focused on the pre-colonial capitals of African states in Bénin and elsewhere in West Africa, coastal hinterland towns such as Ouidah provide a unique window into the interaction between African and foreign traders and the structuring of the Atlantic trade away from the administrative centers. This work provides an interesting counterpoint to other recent studies of coastal communities in West Africa, in that while the town of Ouidah was part of the Heuda and later the Dahomian Kingdoms, European influence at the ‘port’ was limited, their presence non-military and the trade not monopolized by a single company or European nation.

The author’s primary aim is to provide as detailed a history as possible on the ‘port’ town of Ouidah – from prior to European contact to the beginning of the colonial period. This marks a shift in focus, where the emphasis is not necessarily on the elites in the capital (the area of much of the author’s previous research), but on the lives of the principal traders on the periphery of the Kingdom’s borders at one of the more important provincial centers. To this end, the book is roughly divided into three parts, the first dealing with the origins of the town, when Ouidah was part of the Heuda Kingdom. This brief introduction is then followed by the initial Dahomian conquest over Heuda in 1727, and the period covering the height of the slave trade. Finally, the author deals with the shift to ‘legitimate’ trade in nineteenth century and the continuing illegal slave trade, until the imposition of French colonial rule in 1892. It is this middle portion, and the role of the town and its inhabitants in the Atlantic slave trade while under Dahomian rule, which forms the strongest part of the work. In part this is due to the availability of sources used, which although composed primarily of European accounts, also include oral traditions and local histories. While much archaeological work has been undertaken in Savi (the Heuda capital), only limited work has been carried out in Ouidah itself.

The town of Ouidah was not a port in the traditional sense, in that it lay 4 kilometers inland. The ocean, while of religious importance, had little commercial significance prior to the arrival of Portuguese vessels in the Bight of Benin beginning in 1472. Though it is difficult to precisely date the foundations of the town without archaeological data from the oldest portions of the settlement, they probably lay in an agricultural community that made use of lagoon resources, rather than a strong maritime economy. Initially the French West Indies Company (1671), then the English and Portuguese (1670s) and the Dutch (1690s) set up factories or forts in, or near, the expanding town. These forts served as warehouses for goods and slaves, but did not exercise military power and were subject to strict indigenous control from Savi, the capital of the Heuda Kingdom through which all international trade was conducted. By 1720, it was estimated that the town was divided into at least 4 quarters, and had a population of approximately 2000. The author suggests that Ouidah’s success as a ‘port’ was partially due to the Heuda Kingdom’s desire to keep the port neutral, and taxes on trade lower than elsewhere on the coast.

In 1727, Dahomey conquered Heuda, and Ouidah is brought under the administrative control of the former, though this political control is undertaken, it would initially seem, by officials not resident in the town itself. One of the more interesting elements of the book is the discussion of how this conquest also altered the ethnic composition of the town, with the introduction of new settlers, including those...
from Dahomey itself, slaves from further inland, traders and canoemen from the then Gold Coast and, to a limited extent, Europeans. Dahomian commercial and political control in the town was formalized with the position of Yovogan (‘chief of the whites’) from 1745, though earlier individuals may have performed similar roles. The Yovogan was responsible to the Mehu, one of two chiefs who reported directly to the king in Abomey. This marked an important change in focus, where under Heuda rule, trade was organized from Savi, whereas under Dahomian rule, the business-side of trade was now organized in Ouidah itself. What becomes increasingly clear, however, is that the international slave economy of Dahomey was integrally tied to the local market in several ways, the most obvious being the rise of independent slave traders in the town of Ouidah who worked outside of the Royal market. The most famous of these, who operated during the illegal trade of the nineteenth century, was the Brazilian-born Francisco Felix de Souza.

This well written and researched work, clearly showing the author’s familiarity and mastery over a wide range of disparate material, will be of great interest to those studying the transatlantic slave trade and the various roles Africans played in it, both in terms of its political economy and its legacy. The author critically, yet seamlessly, integrates varying strands of data to present a complex picture of the slave and legitimate trade from the perspective of the traders, administrators and to some extent the enslaved themselves, all of whom passed through the ‘port’ town of Ouidah.

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Shea butter, produced from the fruit of the shea tree, has long been a staple of the domestic economy in the West African savanna. It has many household uses and was also prominent as a long-distance, luxury trade good in the pre-colonial era. First identified by the colonial administration as a useful tropical export, it is now also a global commodity. Until recently, however, it was very much a ‘hidden’ product, incorporated into chocolate as an unidentified cocoa butter substitute or used as a cheap, industrial raw material. In the past ten years it has risen to public notice as an ingredient in high-end cosmetics, where it is touted for its ‘natural properties.’

In this book Chalfin traces the variable commodity paths of shea butter and highlights the interplay between local rural production and shifts in the global economy. She seeks to demonstrate that the way tropical commodities are drawn into the world market is by no means an automatic process in which global demand determines the participation of suppliers. Chalfin argues that shea is uniquely suited to answer these questions precisely because it is not typical of tropical commodities as a whole. Unlike cocoa, it is indigenous to West Africa and remains central to the local rural economy, while its consumption patterns differ markedly from coffee and sugar. Also, it is not a plantation crop but is derived from the fruit of a wild tree. Supply is thus dependent on a network of procurers. The author draws on a wide range of sources in constructing her ‘economic biography’ of shea. These include: documents pertaining to the colonial era in northern Ghana; months of interviews and participant observation in shea butter-producing communities in and around Bawku in Ghana’s Upper East Region; as well as copious reference to macro-economic data, internet sources, marketing materials and trade policy documents.

Over six chapters Chalfin provides a fascinating account of the ins and outs of shea production and trade as seen against the background of the various economic transformations – colonialism, liberalization, privatization – that Ghana experienced in the twentieth century. She demonstrates the centrality of shea to the domestic economy and its continuing role as a local commodity despite its fluctuating fortunes on the international market. Also examined is the degree to which global demand impacts on the access that local producers have to their required raw material as they enter into competition with buyers for the export market.

This book also serves as a useful study of the gendered nature of production in West Africa and the place of women in the rural economy. Since her study encompasses shea production in both rural and town settings, it examines the different levels of shea production, whether for home use or sale in the market. Chalfin highlights the strategies used by women to gain access to the labor and capital required for bulk shea butter production, including the formation of cooperative work groups, negotiation with female kin and the use of credit arrangements. The most important point that Chalfin raises here, is that contrary to the prevailing perception, rural women’s labor is not solely at the beck and call of their male relatives. Notably it is women who collect, process and sell shea for their own profit, even though the land the trees stand on ‘belongs’ to the men in their families. These gender relations have changed along with the new pressures of the export market as many men also seek to take advantage of the new opportunities. They find themselves, however, dependent on female expertise in entering this economic realm.

This book also contains an in-depth discussion about the wider economic and political contexts that have a bearing on shea. This discussion highlights the degree to which these ‘out of the way’ rural markets are in fact implicated within global economic processes. What links the two in this case is the machinations of the Ghanaian state in promoting and regulating international trade. In the 1980s shea featured as a key product in the Ghanaian government’s negotiation of market reforms promoted by international financial bodies, and in their attempts to involve their northern constituency as economic
citizens. The trade was opened up to private buyers in the 1990s as the state first withdrew and then re-entered the shea market. Chalfin discusses the implications of these changes in economic policy for local producers and examines the manner in which governments can negotiate IMF-induced market reforms.

Where Chalfin is most skillful is in highlighting the contradictions of the globalized world in which we live and the implications for the people at the beginning of the supply chain. She explores this through a discussion of consumer trends in the modern world and the degree to which modern states can exploit global directives to serve their own interests. This is seen most clearly in the relationship between cocoa and shea, both key Ghanaian exports and both products that have been affected by global consumption trends that favor ‘natural commodities’, whether chocolate or cosmetics. It is still an open question as to what these global economic trends hold for the continued importance of shea in the local economy.

In short, Brenda Chalfin’s book is a masterful treatise on globalization, the movement and marketing of commodities, and the interaction of local and global economies. This book will appeal to anthropologists, historians, economists, political scientists, historical archaeologists and anyone who is interested in how commodities become globalized. Those teaching a class on consumption, globalization, work, gender or rural economies would find Chalfin’s work a welcome addition to the reading list.

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BOOK REVIEW


Carolyn Nordstrom is one of the academics who has led the way in conflict zone ethnography and has conducted detailed fieldwork in spaces riven by war. In doing so, she has opened up interesting insights into the nature of contemporary conflict in Africa and, as she phrases it, has entered into the shadows war. These shadows, very often clandestine and “illegal”, stake out the bulk of Africa’s wars, although perhaps not recognizable at first glance. Yet they are surely there and as “real”, if not more so, than “normal” war. Indeed, the types of economies being established in the shadows of conflicts link up well-placed individuals and groups within Africa to outside interests, creating a milieu where a wide variety of networking involving states, mafias, private armies, “businessmen” and assorted state elites from both within and outside Africa has developed. These linkages may start locally, then regionally and finally encompass international connections or, they may develop in a variety of combinations. Nordstrom’s volume is excellent in exposing these networks and connections.

Crucially, the forms of shadow networking, based essentially on a form of kleptocratic political economy, not only undermine coherent developmental projects but also radically destabilize the prospects for peace and stability. As Nordstrom quotes an Angolan youth, “Peace? Forget it, there’s too much money being made here” (191). And in her various discussions of Angola, Nordstrom quite convincingly throws into sharp relief the involvement of international interests in helping perpetuate the continent’s disorder. Meanwhile, influential voices, ignoring such roles, throw up their hands at the “hopeless continent”.

Nordstrom’s work bolsters the existing literature on the real political economy of Africa, the political, private, social, ecological, and informal/illegal aspects, alongside the formal institutional (or what remains of it) and economic realms. These combinations of political, economic and socio-cultural forces are linked to the international and transactional. In many respects, the actors involved share an inter-subjective understanding of their own roles and norms of exchange and alliances. Nordstrom’s book is valuable because it reinforces the need to transcend the traditional boundaries taken for granted by African Studies, which invariably see state boundaries as frontiers of knowledge, converting geographic frontiers into epistemological ones. The dynamics that have driven the shadow networks are not confined to Africa. Indeed, what is intriguing about these networks is the way that they are not restricted by notions of state or continental boundaries, but are regional, continental and global: the continent’s boundaries are now truly transnational in scope.

In this light, Nordstrom’s book examines the forms of networks that are currently reconfiguring various spaces in Africa and aspects of the global political economy. How and in what way can international interests be understood to have contributed to the current malaise in the continent? How have international business networks worked to make things worse in Africa? Obviously, this is not to suggest that the continent is simply acted upon by “imperialism” or broad outside interests. Clearly, all the actors within the continent posses varying degrees of agency. How and in what ways in which there are varying convergence of interests between outsiders and internal actors is absolutely key to understanding how global forces may be thought of as contributing to the scenarios that we may observe in today and which Nordstrom draws out.

The recognition that violence and power in Africa are multi-layered and can and do involve transnational networks that may or may not be legal, or that reflect the “criminalization of the state” is fundamental. Such networks involve the participation of a multitude of actors, both “state” (whatever that may actually mean) and non-state players. This is essential, particularly in Africa, as much of the social and economic interconnectedness remain at the nexus of formal/informal, legal/illegal, national/global etc. In such a milieu, formal activities, quantifiable through orthodox analyses, only tell one part of the story, if at all—there is a conceptual gap that does not allow us to analyze the informality
of networks that are typical of much of Africa’s political economy, for instance. Linking this to international profiteering, as Nordstrom notes, is crucial.

Indeed, outside involvement has stimulated a set of structures that now criss-cross Africa, some new but many with a decidedly older pedigree. Working hand-in-hand with global networks of extraction, local big men have openly advertised the economic motivations underlying their participation in conflict and war. Such activity has built up a series of inter-linking connections in collaboration with outside, i.e. extra-African forces, that have constructed what may be seen as a set of transnational networks centered in Kinshasa or Luanda and extending outwardly to Geneva, Brussels, Lisbon, Paris, Washington, etc. These shadow the type of networking and linkages that already exist “from below” vis-à-vis the trading interactions between central Africa and Europe.

Such developments are not necessarily new per se—international forces have helped mould and influence domestic outcomes in Africa for a very long time. What is new in the contemporary post-Cold War era however is that the emerging shadow networks are managing to develop their own links and ties to the international arena, often on their own terms. While we should not overly exaggerate this agency, it has increased the space available to the type of shadowy manipulators and elites involved in the process and in tandem with diverse international actors. During the immediate post-independence period aid relationships granted donors a degree of latitude and influence over the receiving elites, but in an era where Africa continues to be “marginalized” and aid is rolled back in favor of (elusive?) “trade”, this patron-client linkage is dissipating. In addition, in a liberalizing world, the ability of the dominant powers to manipulate the global market has somewhat declined, granting even greater agency to those actors involved in such networking. Such involvement in war-ridden spaces reflects the internationalization of African conflicts, not only through “normal” state-to-state (or rather “state”-to-state) relations e.g. Paris with Kinshasa, but also through global business networks. These mesh outside interests with local elites’ stakes. Making sense of these complicated systems of accumulation and profit is needed now more than ever. Nordstrom’s book is an excellent advance in this field and is enthusiastically recommended to all interested in conflict and security in Africa.

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In this book Cati Coe sets out to understand the role that schools play in propagating and/or creating a national culture. She does this historically and ethnographically by looking primarily at the primary, junior secondary, and secondary schools in the Akuapem region of Ghana. By examining culture via the roles of various actors such as the church, the state, the schools, and local elders, as well as how these roles have changed over time, Coe gives a perspective that is informative and intriguing. She avoids simplifying the culture debate to a modernity versus tradition perspective, but rather problematizes such simplistic views and shows the complex ways in which culture and modernity are viewed, and used, via discourses which may coincide, overlap, or be in opposition to one another.

The book is divided in two sections. The intention of the first is to show historically how “culture became the property of the state.” From the work of early missionaries in Ghana, who also, not incidentally, were the first to start western-type schools, we see the initial conflict of traditional culture and a new cultural discourse from the church. Coe then shows the ways in which the state, especially in the immediate post-colonial era of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, sought to capitalize on Ghanaian culture as a tool for developing nationalism among the youth in schools. According to Coe, some of these state efforts, as opposed to more recent efforts, were relatively successful because the state provided a cultural discourse that was in line with what the people desired.

The second section, which is the bulk of the book, examines “how culture is reclaimed by its citizens.” Although it could be argued that culture per se was never out of the citizens control at all, but rather that the state was more or less successful in matching the cultural desires of the people at various points in time, the point is nevertheless well made that a new cultural tension between the state, the people, and the church has arisen in more recent times. Coe exposes these tensions by exposing a number of cultural discourses: culture as nationalism, as Christianity (or as anti-Christian), as a way of life, as “drumming and dancing,” as national development, as inheritance, as ideological, or as hegemonic. Each of these discourses is interesting in its own right, but the complex interactions of these discourses is where the real story is told. For example, the state has created cultural competitions for students, whereby the state intends to be seen as the provider and the judge of national culture. However, a Christian discourse does not approve of some parts of traditional culture, and so a new form of cultural expression emerges in the form of drama-dances. Students perform on themes that are in the interests of national development (state discourse) but which are also morally appropriate for Christians (church discourse), such as teenage pregnancy or drug abuse.

This example is at the core of two main questions in the text: where is culture located and how is the meaning of culture defined? In teasing out answers to these questions, the author touches on several other broad themes: the appropriation of social spaces, appropriate school pedagogies, local participation, social reproduction, the role of power, the changing relationship of youth and elders and/or teachers and students, the role of globalization, and how top-down policies are actually put into practice at the local level. Each of these themes could be a book of its own, but they all successfully inform this study of culture in Ghanaian schools.

The text is at its best when it uses such themes to not only show conflicts between cultural discourses, but also to show the paradoxical nature within some of these discourses, such as the simultaneous rejection and appropriation of traditional culture in an effort to change the meaning of culture. For example, early missionaries and current charismatic Christians both rejected many of traditional cultural practices. However, they each also sought to use select parts of the traditional culture to give themselves legitimacy. Missionaries sought to use local language as a tool for teaching God’s word. Modern African Christians may attempt to use drumming as a method for praising God, though that same drumming at traditional festivals may be rejected. The state’s actions often also result in
paradoxes. The state seeks to use schools as the vehicle through which to teach a national, standardized view of culture. However, due to teachers’ lack of experience or cultural knowledge, this often means that the view of culture as a possession of the local elders is actually strengthened and the view of culture as a state commodity is not ultimately successful.

Some might say that, at the edges, the book sweeps a bit broadly. In studying one region of Ghana, Coe states that she hopes to generalize to Ghana in general. However, the title of the book refers to African rather than Ghanaian schools, and in the conclusion she stretches the findings to multicultural education in the United States. However, since she stops short of drawing any definitive conclusions for these wider groups, I feel that the themes uncovered here most certainly can inform issues of schooling and culture beyond Ghana and even beyond Africa.

Coe also gives limited attention to some of the themes mentioned above. For example, educators would be interested in a deeper discussion of the effect that various pedagogies have on cultural transmission. The way in which globalization seeps through all aspects of culture could also be examined much more deeply. Although it leaves me wanting more, or perhaps because it leaves me wanting more, her approach works for me. Though I would like to see many of the universal themes mentioned above drawn out further, attempting to do so here would have bogged down an intriguing glimpse at school life and cultural traditions in Ghana—a glimpse that shows the complexity of cultural dynamics in our modern world.

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