

Reviews

Public Opinion, Democracy and Market Reform in Africa by
M. BRATTON, R. MATTES and E. GYIMAH-BOADI
Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pp. 486. £21.99 (pbk.).
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The democratic and market reforms of the past few decades have generated considerable interest and controversy among scholars of Africa. Optimists assert that reforms are delivering freedom and prosperity, while pessimists are sceptical about the suitability and depth of recent liberalisations. Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi respond to this contentious debate by examining what ordinary Africans say about recent political and economic changes. As the first comprehensive review of public opinion in sub-Saharan Africa, the book makes a significant contribution to our understanding of democratic and market transitions.

The book is based primarily on analysis of the first round of Afrobarometer surveys conducted in twelve leading reform countries. The data collection for this book was monumental and the authors handle the analysis adroitly. Furthermore, the book is written and organised in an accessible manner, beginning with the theoretical framework and then presenting the empirical analysis in gradually increasing statistical complexity.

Part one describes the authors' approach to the study of public opinion and partial reform in Africa. They argue that the degree of consolidation is reflected both in citizen support for the new regime (demand), and citizen satisfaction with regime performance (perceived supply). The authors also introduce five possible explanations for popular support for and satisfaction with reforms: social demography, cultural values, institutional influences, and their two favourites, cognitive awareness and performance evaluations.

The second part provides a wealth of descriptive statistics on popular attitudes towards democracy and the market. Unfortunately, their measures of support for and satisfaction with democracy make it difficult to disentangle attitudes about democracy from preferences for specific governments or leaders. In my opinion, measures that disaggregate democracy into its principal attitudes (such as tolerance and equality) are preferable. Nonetheless, the existing measures allow the authors to refute several familiar pessimistic refrains – that democracy is inappropriate for Africa, and that Africans care about wealth and not freedom. In contrast, the evidence indicates that ordinary Africans define democracy in familiar liberal terms, prefer democracy to authoritarian government, and give precedence to civil and political freedoms over economic goods when evaluating political performance. These results offer new hope for democratic prospects, but the hope is tempered by evidence of lingering contradictions, pockets of authoritarian attitudes, and dissatisfaction with the democratic performance of regimes. The data portrays a far less optimistic assessment about the popularity

of market reforms and the ability for ordinary people to convert supportive attitudes into action.

Parts three and four investigate why some individuals are supportive of and satisfied with democratic regimes and market economies, while others are not. They also ask why some individuals are politically active while others stay out of politics. The authors test the five competing explanations relying first on bivariate relationships, then on multivariate regression models, and finally on path analyses. In sharp contrast to the social and cultural explanations that are prevalent in African studies, Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi argue that Africans form their opinions primarily through a rational cognitive process of adult learning. Attitudes are influenced more by what individuals know and experience, and less by who they are and what they believe.

Arguments about the importance of cognitive processes, information access, and adult experiences may be novel to the study Africa, but they are similar to findings from public opinion surveys conducted in Latin America, post communist Europe, and Asia. We will have to wait for subsequent rounds of Afrobarometer to see if adult learning is a prominent feature of opinion formation only in the midst of change, or more permanently. In the mean time, much can be done to elucidate current public opinion in Africa, especially with regards to economic preferences, which remain poorly understood. Fortunately, the Afrobarometer data is easily accessible and the book illustrates its many potential uses. As a result, Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi will have a dramatic impact on the political economy of reform in Africa and elsewhere.

DEVRA C. MOEHLER
Cornell University

Governing Insecurity: democratic control of military and security establishments in transitional democracies edited by GAVIN CAWTHRA and ROBIN LUCKHAM

London: Zed Books, 2003. Pp. 340. £15.95 (pbk.).

No Short Cuts to Power: African women in politics and policymaking edited by ANNE MARIE GOETZ and SHIREEN HASSIM

London: Zed Books, 2003. Pp. 246. £18.95 (pbk.).

Can Democracy Be Designed? The politics of institutional choice in conflict-torn societies edited by SUNIL BASTIAN and ROBIN LUCKHAM

London: Zed Books, 2003. Pp. 336. £17.95 (pbk.).

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This excellent trilogy of books is associated with a research programme on ‘strengthening democratic governance in conflict-torn societies’, funded by DfID and based at Sussex University’s Institute of Development Studies. As their titles indicate, the three books focus on different aspects of this broad issue, although there is inevitable overlap in subject matter, especially between *Can Democracy Be Designed?*² and the two others. In each case, the books are based on (generally country) case studies, with framing discussions by the editors. The case studies are intentionally drawn from several regions – Africa, the Balkans, Latin America,

the Pacific and South Asia – but with African countries predominant. *No Short Cuts to Power*, the volume devoted to women's political progress, centres on a comparison of South Africa and Uganda.

One of the real strengths of this project lies in the editors' comments. They set up the central questions to be asked with great clarity and perceptiveness, and they also provide valuable reflections on the implications of the case study findings. These sections, even without the case studies, are tremendously helpful for thinking one's way through these difficult issues. For instance, Anne Marie Goetz provides a 'conceptual framework' for examining women's political effectiveness which could be fruitfully applied to a whole range of other contexts. All of the case studies are solid, informative and appropriately tailored to the book themes, even if some are drier and more descriptive than others.

All three books are concerned with assessing what can be achieved through, but also the limitations of, institutions of democratic governance in new democracies and former conflict-torn societies. *Governing Insecurity* is centrally concerned with how such societies can be protected from sources of insecurity, meaning primarily collective forms of violence. Although this includes measures to contain the formerly overweening military – as discussed with particular reference to South Africa, Nigeria and Chile – as Luckham notes, these days the threat of military coups and intervention is perceived to be receding and its place is being taken by the dangers posed by forms of privatised violence and armed conflict (warlordism, drug cartels, guerrilla and secessionist movements and so forth). The complexities of dealing with these more privatised forms, including the difficulties of establishing institutional mechanisms that are simultaneously 'above' the conflict but endowed with legitimacy and effectiveness, are explored in case studies including Sri Lanka, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Inevitably the rather more optimistic note struck in the military-centred case studies contrasts with a sense almost of hopelessness in the latter cases (perhaps the case of Mozambique would have offered more comfort).

No Short Cuts to Power offers a very interesting, quite subtle, comparison of the ways women have influenced but also utilised political institutions established by new political regimes in South Africa and Uganda. In both cases significant steps have been taken to improve women's political representation (currently they are 33% and 24% of parliamentarians respectively), and to establish women's political machinery. In both cases also, women activists have run up against prejudice, dangers of co-option and still more specifically the prerogatives of the 'traditional authorities' in local government. Even so, the editors argue that ultimately South Africa's multi-party liberal democratic institutional framework offers greater opportunity for women to organise politically to promote and defend their rights than Uganda's supposedly 'no-party' regime, where so much hangs on the system of patronage emanating from Museveni himself, as dramatically revealed in the case of an attempted legislative amendment to strengthen women's rights in land.

The title of *Can Democracy Be Designed?* neatly encapsulates its central question. An initial conceptual chapter sets up a potentially valuable distinction between a narrow or 'high' understanding of democracy that focuses on process and institutions, and a more participatory approach that is concerned with the 'deep

politics of society', although this is not really developed in the case studies, where simply establishing stable representative institutions often seems challenge enough. The authors of this chapter also note that 'democratic' institutions are not introduced in a vacuum but are likely to reflect their framers' short-term interests, and they further contemplate the possibility that democracy in some circumstances actually exacerbates identity-based conflict. The case studies, looking at South Africa, Uganda, Ghana, Sri Lanka, Fiji and Bosnia-Herzegovina, in different ways consider the impact of institutional innovation, for instance through constitutions, electoral engineering and decentralisation. In their conclusion, whilst they concede that sometimes there is simply no choice but to devise new institutions, the editors are at best cautious about what such conscious design can achieve.

Caution verging on scepticism is indeed the tone struck in all three of these volumes. It is really to the authors' credit, and to DfID's, that there is no attempt to avoid uncomfortable findings, let alone to base further simple prescriptions upon them. Characteristically the editors of *Can Democracy Be Designed?* warn against the 'iron law of the perverse consequences of institutional design' (p. 314). More importantly, these books reinforce a message that cannot be repeated too often, it seems, which is the need to relate institutions and institutional innovation to their specific political context.

VICKY RANDALL
University of Essex

Rights and the Politics of Recognition in Africa edited by H. ENGLUND and F. B. NYAMNJOH

London: Zed Books, 2004. Pp. 293. £18.95 (pbk.).

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This wide-ranging and usefully provocative collection was fashioned by the editors from papers presented in two conferences on rights and political cultures in 2001, one in Harare and the other in Uppsala. They have chosen case studies from across the continent (except for the Arabic-speaking north). Every item earns its place, even if I would have welcomed greater emphasis on the ethnography of processes through which non-elite African populations construct and claim their rights, especially in contexts in which rights are most threatened (e.g. in zones of civil war).

The papers range from Francis Nyamnjoh's cogently argued demand (based on a case study of Botswana) for liberal advocates of democratic rights to 'take on board creative responses by Africans, informed by their cultural traditions' (p. 57), to an incisive dissection by Sten Hagberg of the machinations of ethnic associations in Burkina Faso 'and the donor logic that drives them' (p. 211). Several essays touch on what Robert Putnam has termed 'the dark side' of social capital (e.g. Peter Geschiere's analysis of forestry and xenophobia in Cameroonian community politics). Others draw attention to what is missing from the rhetoric of human rights pushed by neo-liberal reformers, e.g. attention to the fact that property distribution in Africa is a product not of free market enterprise but of colonial *force majeure*. Fidelis Kanyongolo points out, for example, that although Malawi has greatly improved its respect for human rights, constitutional reform

has neglected a right many rural Africans would prize above others, i.e. a right to land.

The essay perhaps best illustrative of the book's central focus on a politics of recognition is the analysis (by Krista Johnson and Sean Jacobs) of rights cultures in post-apartheid South Africa. They describe how the South African Human Rights Commission pursued the issue of racism in the media. Newspaper editors – even those who had opposed apartheid – cried foul. What was at stake was a liberal commitment to freedom of expression, versus the economic and cultural rights of the majority. But this was far from being a straightforward confrontation between two radically (and racially) distinct conceptions of rights. The issue was originally raised by professional associations of black lawyers and journalists, seeking equality of opportunity and esteem. Subsequent debate encompassed challenges to the privileges claimed by emergent black elites. A great deal of passion was generated on both sides. Focusing of the emotions (Durkheim argued) evidences social values in the making. Nothing better illustrates the situational specificity of rights discourse in contemporary Africa, and its political not technical (legal) character, than this heartening account of tense and difficult arguments leading to hard-won but progressive compromise.

The case studies are framed by a general essay contributed by one of the editors (Harri Englund) and an epilogue by Richard Werbner, editor of the series – *Postcolonial Encounters* – in which the book appears. The latter is mainly a digest of Werbner's own recent work. Englund's overview essay, on the other hand, is wide ranging in its reference, and serves effectively to establish the book's larger context.

Englund's concern with aesthetics (specifically, with 'a relational aesthetic of recognition') may come as a surprise. It is central to his notion of how to move beyond a frustrating dichotomisation, deriving from two entrenched exceptionalisms – American radical individualism and African patrimonial communalism. A key point of reference is the work of Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, who offers an inter-cultural framework articulating a politics of recognition with a defence of 'universal' values, and Englund explores the applicability of this approach in post-colonial Africa. Aesthetics – in the sense of an appreciation of that which makes an embedded culture of rights appear fitting to its context – seems an especially promising way to flag the kind of debate the editors wish to encourage.

Perhaps Englund might have said more about the background to this cultural turn in the rights debate, in order to open up comparative dimensions in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Turkey and Iraq, as well as Taylor's multi-cultural Canada. The collapse of Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman hegemony left local populations with dilemmas of human values and social integration unresolved until this day, and strikingly similar to some of the issues faced by the African post-colony. In the aftermath of the First World War, a group of left-wing social philosophers in Budapest, including Gyorgy Lukacs and Karl Mannheim, attributed iconic status to the composer and ethnomusicologist Bela Bartok, because he offered a modernist 'relational aesthetic of recognition' running counter to right-wing nationalism.

For Bartok, ethnomusicological analysis told us something important about the role of peasant populations in constituting trans-boundary webs of socio-cultural

inter-relatedness, and in so doing provided a basis for a successful modernist compositional style without giving ground to the insincere cosmopolitan commitments of reactionary post-imperial elites. It was a perspective that helped stimulate the cultural critique of politics developed by the Frankfurt 'school', of which Mannheim later became a member (though the musically oriented director of the institute in later years, Theodor Adorno, was never able to rid himself of the notion that the inventor of compositional systems, Arnold Schoenberg, rather than Bela Bartok, the discoverer of systems inherent in popular practice, was the true musical prophet of aesthetically grounded societal critique).

Englund nods towards Mannheim in his discussion of how communal and cosmopolitan values might be made to inter-relate on a cultural plane, but ignores a second figure arguing a case for regarding rights as complex and historically rooted cultural products – Emile Durkheim. Creolisation theory – advocated by some Africanists exploring the inter-cultural domain of rights and values – is criticised. But it is not clear what Englund considers the proper theoretical basis for an aesthetics of rights. A thorough, comparative 'relational aesthetic of recognition' is currently much needed as antidote to the crabbed and limited functionalist perspective on human rights and freedoms entertained by the neo-liberal imagination, and put into such clumsy and damaging effect in Iraq. Presumably space was limited and we can expect alternatives to creolisation theory or the neo-Durkheimian framework in future work. Meanwhile, the book launches an important debate. Accordingly, it is recommended not just to Africanists, but to all with an interest in cultural perspectives on human rights and political values.

PAUL RICHARDS
Wageningen University

Zimbabwe: the past is the future edited by DAVID HAROLD-BERRY

Harare: Weaver Press, 2004. Pp. 273. £20.95 (pbk.).

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This edited volume provides insight into the analytical frameworks, moral categories, and historical narratives informing the on-going debates, descriptions, and emotions articulated by Zimbabweans since the controversial elections, land seizures and redistribution, and rapid economic decline since 2000. The insight comes from both explicit attention and the particular terms used in the fifteen chapters written by variously situated Zimbabweans: some with well-known profiles in various national, if not, international academic, literary, religious, and political public spheres, and others who would be less familiar in these arenas. Although the intended audience of many of these chapters are other Zimbabweans, as the use of plural first-person pronouns is common, the book is useful both to those wanting relatively easy-to-read insights into the political, economic, and moral analyses and debates in Zimbabwe, and to those more familiar with the social science literature and media representations who are looking for some examples of thoughtful and, at times, new perspectives.

Brian Raftopoulos provides an insightful sketch of the key moments that have led to the current political crisis, situating it within historical changes and trends of state formation, including the role of political violence. Eldred Masunungure complements Raftopoulos's chapter, as he details the emergence and activities of opposition political parties since Independence in 1980, and the often brutal responses from the ZANU (PF) government to them. The chapters by David Kaulemu and Fay Chung intersect with these, by also making observations on the political culture of Zimbabwe, but more explicitly drawing on moral frameworks. Kaulemu examines the narrow, zero-sum game of politics in Zimbabwe and its extension through many spheres of life and livelihood, while Chung, a former ZANU (PF) cabinet minister, argues that personal greed has undermined the previous legitimacy of the ruling party, and demands that the old guard step aside to let the younger generation within ZANU (PF) try to lead the nation. Geoffrey Feltoe and Anthony Reeler offer thorough analyses of, respectively, the subversion of the 'rule of law' since 2000, and how the culture of impunity for political violence since the guerrilla war of the 1970s continues to haunt the political culture of Zimbabwe. Godfrey Kanyenze lays out an excellent analysis of the overall decline of the Zimbabwean economy, particularly from a trade union perspective, situating it within its colonial heritage and regional and international dynamics. Lloyd Sachikonye and Emmanuel Manzungu examine some of the negative implications of the land occupation and redistribution activities since 2000 – analysing the active discrimination and further impoverishment of the majority of farm workers who had been living and working on the redistributed commercial farms (Sachikonye), and extensive environmental impacts of the on-going land-use changes (Manzungu). In contrast, the Zimbabwean novelist Alexander Kanengoni views his receipt of a farm as a veteran of the guerrilla forces as the positive culmination of his personal journey of struggle and sacrifice during the 1970s war and, allegorically, as the liberation of the nation at large. This heroic, nationalist narrative is challenged by the chapters by Duduzile Tafara and by the Zimbabwe Liberator's Platform, both drawing on different experiences as veterans of the guerrilla forces, emphasising power dynamics and inequalities between leaders and different guerrillas during the 1970s war and since 1980. Finally, Dieter Scholz, Paul Gundani and David Harold-Berry himself each provide different moral analyses of the crisis in Zimbabwe, giving thoughtful examples to bolster their larger points.

While at times I was concerned that some of the contributors rely on reified racial, ethnic and national terms rather than, say, viewing how these terms are themselves contested and deployed in different political and moral projects, I recognised that many of these contributors are engaged in such projects and not simply academic analyses. In short, this book is rich in insightful empirical examples, historical facts, and the very divisive moral terrain that Zimbabweans are marking out, as they examine and struggle through varied understandings of the past and the present to try to achieve a better future.

BLAIR RUTHERFORD
Carleton University

Histories of Namibia: living through the liberation struggle: life histories told to C. LEYS and S. BROWN

London: The Merlin Press, 2005. Pp. 165. £14.95 (pbk.).

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The volume compiles eleven interviews recorded between 1989 and 1992, about life in the 'struggle days' before Namibian Independence. Sovereignty was finally obtained in March 1990, after a long and protracted anti-colonial resistance by means of both an armed struggle organised from exile under the liberation movement SWAPO, as well as various forms of internal opposition to the continued occupation by South Africa and its local allies. The eight men and three women of a particular generation present a wide panorama of personal commitment, sacrifice, and achievement within the spectre of anti-colonial resistance closely related to the liberation movement.

While some decided to remain at home (most of them studying in South Africa or elsewhere abroad and returning to join the struggle inside), others went into exile to return only before the transition towards Independence. They were in different forms exposed to the internal contradictions of the liberation movement and the struggle within the struggle. This certainly is the most interesting and thought-provoking dimension of this volume, which according to the compilers was originally not planned as a publication. The idea matured only later, and it took more than a decade until the summarised accounts went into print.

The compilation adds to the few sources offering direct access to documentary evidence on experiences and mindsets within the social movements contributing to Namibian Independence, by the many (and mostly unknown) people who were motivated to put the political and social visions above individual safety and security under a humiliating system of oppression. In this sense, this is a helpful and welcome enrichment of the existing literature, which allows access to biographically oriented social history within a crucial stage of the struggle for Namibian sovereignty.

There is a strong bias towards those local activists and those who had experienced exile who in one way or another suffered under the authoritarian structures and rigid centralised control of the liberation movement. This particular focus is similar to other compilations or testimonies currently available. It suggests that the sobering, often painful experiences these activists had to come to terms with include as an almost therapeutic approach the need to talk about it, and to share their traumatic past with a wider audience. Or put differently, they illustrate the relevance of the old slogan that the struggle continues.

The exception in the volume is Ben Mulongeni, who after exile during the late 1990s for a few years held the position of director general at the powerful state broadcasting company. He downplays the so-called ex-detainee issue, which refers to thousands of SWAPO members in exile. They were accused of being South African spies and kept for years from the early 1980s in ever-increasing numbers in dungeons in Southern Angolan camps. Many among them never returned. Mulongeni refers to one of the main perpetrators among SWAPOs 'securocrats', who made a career at the top of the Namibian army in independent Namibia despite being known as the 'butcher of Lubango', as 'just a victim of the situation, just a victim of the time he was living in'

(pp. 36f.). If he 'was torturing people, he was trained to it, he couldn't do anything else' (p. 37).

Others like Johannes 'Mistake' Gaomab, who survived the dungeons, looks at it differently. He argues that exposing injustices within the ranks of the liberation movement 'is not a question of destroying SWAPO, it is a question of ridding ourselves of pollution' (p. 75). And Ilona Amukutuwa, another ex-detainee, maintains: 'What SWAPO has done, I think it will nicely follow them in the future' (p. 84). Indeed, 15 years after Independence, the issue remains a festering wound among those who had survived the ordeal, largely ignored by the government. Phil ya Nangolo, among those accused of being a traitor, established after his return the National Society for Human Rights. Since then, he has courageously (and sometimes too agitatedly) advocated fundamental human rights positions against all odds in the public sphere. As he states: 'Now is the era of ballots, not bullets' (p. 124).

Lindi Kazombaue, a fearless woman activist inside Namibia, organised under the South African regime the autonomous Namibian Women's Voice, as part of the efforts towards emancipation, not only from colonial rule but also other forms of oppression. For this she was labelled a traitor, since the organisation was considered an unwanted forum outside SWAPO's direct control and sphere of influence (p. 137f.). The Women's Voice was destroyed through other female SWAPO activists. The sobering lesson was that liberation is also about securing and exercising power as a struggle within the struggle, and not about unconditionally promoting emancipation from all forms of exploitation and domination at all fronts.

Paul Vleermuis, a grassroots activist, had to learn a similar lesson in his efforts to organise from within and below, as it was considered a reason for mistrust by the liberation movement if people operated outside its direct influence and sphere of full control. While Lindi Kazombaue opted out of politics, Paul Vleermuis is now promoting the interests of communal farmers through an institutionalised lobby group. But Swapo politics has for them both, as for some others in this volume, been a disappointment and source of frustration, even if they were spared the detainee experience.

Given the emphasis on the less bright sides of the struggle, this documentary evidence will not meet approval by all. In particular, not those who are currently busy constructing the post-colonial patriotic history. The book therefore offers a relevant and necessary counterweight to the ongoing efforts to mystify the history of the national liberation movement acting now as government in power.

It is regrettable that the edited texts reflect the relative distance that the compilers seem to have gained in the meantime from their subject-matter. Their Introduction, clearly with an intention to summarise the background to Independence in a popular way, lacks analytical depth and offers no cross references for further reading. More painful, a series of misspellings and petty mistakes must be disturbing to those who are more knowledgeable (it is NANSO and not 'NAMS0', Frantz and not 'Franz' Fanon, Mburumba Kerina is not 'Murumba', Hadino is not 'Halina', the archives of the Basler Afrika Bibliographien are not the 'Basler Afrika Archive', the armed struggle started on 26 and not 27 August, UNTAG translated into United Nations Transitional Assistance Group and not 'Action' Group, the United Nations Institute was

established in 1976 according to the introduction, but – correctly so – in 1974 according to the glossary, and so on). The romantic conclusion from the compilers is also a bit disturbing: ‘The human cost had been high, but the victory was sweet’ (p. 12), which does not reflect their earlier critical assessments when it comes to the high price that had to be paid by too many (as the testimonies following their introduction also document).

These minor flaws do not, however, reduce the powerful accounts of those who are now able to share their experiences with a wider audience. For this the compilers and the publisher have to be applauded.

HENNING MELBER
The Nordic Africa Institute

The Politics of Transition in Africa edited by G. MOHAN and T. ZACK-WILLIAMS

Oxford: James Currey, 2004. Pp. 278. £14.95 (pbk.).

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This book is a collection of articles from the *Review of African Political Economy*, the debut of a series of readers which aim to bring together the distinctive political debates that the journal has carried into edited teaching texts. Before I make any further comment, I should state that I am one of the editors of *ROAPE*, although I was not involved with the creation of this book, which enjoys a QUANGO-like status *vis à vis* the journal.

Having read *The Politics of Transition*, perhaps I should rephrase the last sentence replacing the simile ‘QUANGO-like’ with the phrase ‘relatively autonomous’. Both phrases generate similar images, but in a way they reveal how academic languages and interests have changed since the year of the first chapter in the book – 1976. Infused with the conceptual terminology of the new left, Marxist scholars relied on Marx, Lenin, Gramsci, Poulantzas, and Miliband to generate critical analyses of the post-colonial state. Reading these chapters in retrospect is a vexed business; there are many different ways in which one might interpret the enduring value of these interventions, which are focused around a debate on the nationalistic properties of early post-colonial bourgeoisie, and the class nature of the early post-colonial state. But, whatever one makes of the first section, it is difficult to see how this would translate easily into a teaching environment, not necessarily because of the merits of the chapters, individually or collectively, but because they constitute an *archive*; the most recent chapter was originally published in 1987. How might this first section be used in a course on African politics, Africa and development, or Africa and international politics? My impression was that a more expansive introduction or, better, introductions to each section would have been useful in this respect.

Section two contains texts on The Politics of Violence. Here we find a set of articles written in the 1980s. Bearing in mind the significant changes in peace studies and security studies over the last ten or so years (‘new’ wars; complex emergencies and, if you like the terminology, collapsed/failed states), an introductory section which comments on the contemporary relevance of the chapters would make it easier to use these as texts on a course handbook. Charlton and May’s chapter on warlordism certainly speaks to issues of conflict in

contemporary Africa, and one might read Shindo's chapter on militarism and hunger in light of, say, Uganda's burgeoning military budget and declared pro-poor policy making. The third section considers the politics of cultural pluralism. The chapters deal with gender and the state, historical sociology and modernity, village-level power, state theory, the nation-state, and decentralisation respectively.

The final section is concerned with neoliberalism: familiar territory for *ROAPE* over the last twenty years. Consequently, this section contains some more recent, lively and critical interventions. It is probably here that the reader can see *ROAPE*'s distinctive imprimatur most readily: not only critical of the expansive free market liberalism that has been driven by external agencies, but also concerned to link the political and the economic. The articles hang together well and, bearing in mind the way the journal has developed over the last twenty years, could have been expanded to constitute a separate reader.

In sum, this book is a welcome addition to teaching materials on African politics. It brings together a distinctive approach to African politics which clearly remains extremely relevant to the present-day. Those who teach African politics will be able to find chapters in the book that will be most useful for students in undergraduate courses.

GRAHAM HARRISON
University of Sheffield

Versions of Zimbabwe: new approaches to literature and culture

edited by ROBERT MUPONDE and RANKA PRIMORAC

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As authoritarian nationalism enjoins Zimbabweans to sing from the same 'revolutionary hymn book', contributors to *Versions of Zimbabwe* have conspired to disrupt narratives of a cohesive national identity. Refusing to endorse the notion of 'one people, one nation', various authors focus on rupture. The editors contend that their book 'places a deliberate emphasis on plurality, inclusiveness and the breaking of boundaries' (p. xviii). The essays collected in this volume succeed in giving Zimbabwean literature a broader outlook. Various authors provide new perspectives on the black novel in English, white Zimbabwean writing, literature in indigenous languages, film and poetry. However, it remains to be seen whether these different categories can or should be flattened in favour of a broadly inclusive narrative of Zimbabwean literature, as the editors envisage.

Following a useful introduction by the editors, in Chapter 1 Kaarsholm explores the treatment of violence in Zimbabwean creative writing. In Chapter 2 Bryce revisits the controversy surrounding the war film, *Flame*. In Chapter 3 Gagliano focuses on Marechera's sophisticated patriotism. Rooney examines Hove's poetry and his resistance to the abuse of language in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5 Musiyiwa and Matshakayile-Ndlovu dwell on ethnicity in Shona and Ndebele literature. They maintain that while some artists celebrate ethnocentrism, others seek to nurture a broader Zimbabwean identity (p. 88). Unfortunately, this is the only essay on literature in indigenous languages. In a combative mode, Vambe interrogates what he sees as the poverty of theory in the

study of Zimbabwean literature in Chapter 6. He takes exception to the dependence on sociological theory by his predecessors, devoted as he is to the liberating potential of orature as an analytical tool.

In Chapter 7, Harris locates memories of childhood as central to the construction of Zimbabwean whiteness as she analyses Godwin's *Mukiwa* and Fuller's *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*. In Chapter 8 Muponde examines 'how the space of war converts the symbolism of childhood into a social structure within which is rehearsed the imaginings of the foundational moments of the Zimbabwean nation' (p. 120). Chennels discusses white autobiographies in Chapter 9. In Chapter 10 Wylie reflects on poetry and ecology in eastern Zimbabwe. Primorac transcends the canon of the black novel in English by focusing on the thriller *Detective Ridgemore Riva* in Chapter 11. Nuttall draws attention to how Vera's fiction constructs the city in Chapter 12. In Chapter 13 Muchemwa reflects on history, memory and writing in Zimbabwe. In Chapter 14 Christiansen traces Vera's rethinking of nationalism. Ranger's earlier essay on patriotic history is reproduced as Chapter 15.

Versions of Zimbabwe is an impressive collection of essays. Although it does not give ample space to scholars based in Zimbabwe, it charts new ways of understanding Zimbabwean literature. It is refreshing and should appeal to all those who seek to understand the 'imagined community' called Zimbabwe.

EZRA CHITANDO
University of Zimbabwe

The Power of Continuity: Ethiopia through the eyes of its children by EVA POLUHA

Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2004. Pp. 217. £18.95
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Children are a mirror for their society – in Ethiopia as elsewhere. They sense what society expects of them, they reflect how the world surrounding them expects them to behave, to act, to think, to grow up. This mirror can indeed give us a fascinatingly new understanding of how Ethiopians think and react to political, economic and social change.

Eva Poluha shows us how Ethiopian children learn their attitudes in life, their values, their concepts of order, of right and wrong, of friendship and hierarchy, of proper and improper behaviour. And why they obey their parents, teachers, and authorities, even when such obedience is clearly out of touch with today's realities. She shows it with very specific examples and evidence, illustrated with many fascinating quotations from the children themselves.

Poluha has followed a school during half a year, collecting children's own perceptions and testimony about their life situation at home, in school and in their community. She involved children in dialogue, challenging them to think about their relations with their parents, reflect on their brothers and sisters, their teachers and community leaders. She meticulously recorded their responses, their reflections, and their views of their own situation.

The result is a fascinating story, not only because it brings the world of these children close to us. Even more, it demonstrates how tradition is inculcated in children, and why they are not able – nor even would be willing – to challenge

the proliferated order and the hierarchical relations between people. The book shows us what makes children adapt to the demands of a traditional culture, what forms the character of a people.

Using the experience from Ethiopia, the book tries to answer a series of questions with a more general reference, such as: Why do people submit to authority, even if they do not consider it legitimate? Why did and do people act the same way as their fathers did? Why do they accept the whims and wishes of people in authority under a government calling itself democratic, just as they did under its socialist predecessor and the earlier imperial rule? What makes children adapt to the demands of a traditional culture? What forms the character of a people? Why do children submit to the authority of their elders and elder siblings, why do they not revolt against outdated, strict and often useless rules and orders, or against meaningless and severe punishment?

In 1965, Donald Levine described the culture of the Amhara as hierarchical and authoritarian. He has been violently criticised for his explanation: in his book *Wax and Gold: tradition and innovation in Ethiopian culture*, he ascribed authoritarian personality to the upbringing of children, in particular to the traumatising effect of an abrupt weaning of infants. Eva Poluha, with her rich and convincing empirical material, makes the children's reproduction of authoritarian values and behaviour visible and understandable, she makes us feel it almost physically creep into our minds. She demonstrates how authoritarian values are transferred from generation to generation, so children have no choice but to learn to adapt to the unquestioned authority of elders and those higher in rank, and to respect traditional rules in their homes, in play, in school. She comes to a rather pessimistic conclusion: because of the way Ethiopian children are brought up, she concludes that continuity is the 'normal' pattern, change is the exception rather than the rule.

SIEGFRIED PAUSEWANG
Chr. Michelsen Institute

Famine that Kills: Darfur, Sudan (Revised Edition) by ALEX DE WAAL
Oxford University Press, 2005. Pp. 288. £11.99
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I finished reading the revised edition of *Famine that Kills* on 5 July 2005. That same day, the Khartoum government and the two major rebel groups in Darfur, the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), signed a declaration of seventeen principles designed to encourage peace between them. In that sense, whether or not the declaration leads to real peace, the re-publication of Alex de Waal's insightful book about the 1984–85 famines in Darfur could not have been more timely.

The second edition has not altered the original 1989 text. Instead, a substantial new preface has been inserted, in which the author discusses the strengths and deficiencies of his original book, the origins of Darfur's current crisis and whether or not it constitutes genocide. To deal with the current crisis first, de Waal suggests that its origins lie in a combination of four main factors. First, land-rights, especially the using-up of free cultivable land and the steady degradation of the range in Darfur. Second, the way in which Darfur's systems of law and

order have functioned at best spasmodically since the 1980s, leaving a region without consistent mechanisms to resolve its disputes peacefully. Third, national politics, particularly the ways in which Darfur has been caught up in wider struggles between Sudan's ruling Islamist elites, is crucial to understanding the current crisis. Here de Waal notes how the emergence of the SLA in early 2003 was the product of 'Darfur's radical secularists' who revived the resistance movement that had been aborted in 1991. Finally, ideology was significant but its influence has often been misunderstood by outside observers. Crucially, for de Waal, it is important to note that 'no Islamist legitimation has been attempted for the Darfur campaign – not least because the JEM has better Moslem credentials than the government forces' (p. xviii).

On the question of genocide, de Waal suggests that recent events are 'not Genocide (capital G) in the sense of the absolute extermination of a population.' They do, 'however, fit the definition contained in the Genocide Convention, which is much broader and encompasses systematic campaigns against ethnic groups with the intention of eliminating them in part or whole. ... Genocidal intent can be shown' (p. xix). Of particular importance for a book about famine, de Waal stresses that in Darfur genocide and famine are not unrelated: militia have destroyed livelihoods by cutting down fruit trees and wrecking irrigation ditches as a way of eradicating claims to land.

In relation to the original text, de Waal successfully demolishes his primary target: the myth that famine is about mass death through starvation. Instead, he listens to the locals to identify and analyse three types of famine: 'those that involve hunger, those that also involve destitution and social breakdown, and "famines that kill"' (p. 6). Based on several interrelated studies of how inhabitants of different settlements in Darfur defined and experienced famine in 1984–85, de Waal concluded that, contrary to the received wisdom, hunger was something locals were prepared to put up with. Even in the worst famines, he argued, their priority was not to buy food but to preserve their way of life and avoid destitution in order to return to a normal or acceptable way of life after the famine (p. 141). The biggest killer in Darfur's case was not starvation but 'health crises' (localised outbreaks of disease, particularly measles and diarrhoea, and lack of sanitation and clean water). As a result, de Waal arrived at the damning conclusion that there is no evidence that the 3 million sacks of grain delivered by relief agencies saved any lives. The main reasons for this monumental misdiagnosis lie in a phenomenon de Waal labels 'disaster tourism'. Disaster tourists (essentially outside relief workers) suffer from a variety of biases that exaggerate poverty. Specifically, they tend to see things that reinforce their own prior (mis)conceptions of what famines are (i.e. mass death from starvation), but which obscure local realities and the risk-minimisation strategies of local people.

In the new preface, de Waal admits his original argument ignored the importance of nutrition. Nevertheless, he stands by his conclusion 'that food consumption failures cannot account for famine mortality in the absence of analysis of disease'. Consequently, he also reaffirms his 'practical recommendation that measles immunization, malaria control and clean water supplies are at least as important as emergency food relief' (p. xi). Ultimately, de Waal hopes that relief operations can be designed which meet the needs of insiders experiencing

famine, rather than slavishly following the (mis)perceptions of outsiders. Crucially, this will require 'humanitarian outsiders' acknowledging that they 'can only make a positive difference if they realize they can only make a small difference' (p. xii). What de Waal's study shows so admirably is that it is the efforts of local people, 'made possible by security in rural areas and health services', that will reduce the worst effects of famine (p. xiii). As a result, the key is to support the ongoing risk-minimisation strategies of rural people, which in turn means constructing more democratic systems of governance.

Overall, *Famine that Kills* is an excellent book well worthy of a second edition. It is a timely reminder of our collective lack of knowledge about mortality levels in humanitarian crises in Africa; the problems with a food security paradigm focused on food to the exclusion of livelihoods, health and social cohesion; and the importance of history in understanding Darfur's current crisis.

PAUL D. WILLIAMS
University of Birmingham

Reasonable Radicals and Citizenship in Botswana: the public anthropology of Kalanga elites by RICHARD WERBNER

Bloomington, IN: Indian University Press, 2004. Pp. 254. US\$24.95 (pbk.).
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A key methodological danger associated with anthropology is the risk that observers can get so completely submerged in their subject of study that they overlook who they are and their relationship to the subject. In such cases, the observer loses the capacity to be objective about the subject he or she is studying. The book under review is an example of this, but one that has implications beyond anthropology.

This is not least because it deals with Botswana, a country which, because of its high economic growth rates and liberal democracy, has been showered with praise and been repeatedly dubbed the 'African Miracle'. The bulk of the literature on Botswana is heavily imbued with celebratory positions and uncritical praise. The book under review falls into this category.

This is problematic, particularly as Botswana's politics are in a state of flux, and critical accounts are needed as perhaps never before. Unfortunately, Werbner's account of an open society with benevolent elites bears little resemblance to reality. In fact, Botswana is a highly elitist society where presidentialism and high-handedness is the norm. When criticism does occur within the political system, official reaction is swift and uncompromising. Botswana who dare speak out are labelled as 'abusive' and 'malicious', even 'traitors', by their government, whilst foreign NGOs involved in protecting the indigenous San Bushmen have been labeled as 'racists' and 'terrorists'. Most recently, Professor Kenneth Good of the University of Botswana was deported after fifteen years' service for daring to mildly criticise the government. During Good's legal hearing the Attorney-General remarked that Botswana did not embrace 'avant-garde' rights such as freedom of expression.

Werbner's portrayal of Botswana makes no reference to this intolerance (he instead calls the independent press in Botswana 'muckraking critics', p. 14), but rather focuses on his claimed relationship with Kalanga elites. This relationship

quickly becomes too close for comfort as the book progresses. One large section (pp. 146–87) is basically a hagiography of a civil servant, Gobi Matenge. While providing interesting (if wholly uncritical) information on a senior civil servant's career, the section does not tell us much about Botswana's society or politics. Instead, we are treated to accounts of Werbner drinking with various Batswana elites where, we are told, they referred to him as 'Professor', 'when not addressing me by one of my Kalanga nicknames or my clan honorific, *Nkumbudzi*' (p. 24). In return, Werbner, he tells us, 'responded, as expected, in a mutual recognition of honour and distinction, CJ for the Chief Justice, AG for the Attorney-General, and so forth' (ibid.). He goes on: 'We were always given rosettes, clearly marked V.I.P.' (ibid.).

Such cosy chumminess undermines the book's value as an academic study, as it is pretty clear that there is little detachment between Werbner as an anthropologist and Werbner as an unbridled enthusiast of the Kalangas. What is remarkable is that I was at a University of Botswana seminar when this lack of critical reflection was pointed out to the visiting Professor Werbner by a number of Batswana academics. It appears that such criticism has been simply ignored.

It is not good enough that visiting foreign academics to the country seek to fit snugly into place as cheerleaders for the dominant elites. Whilst it is true that Botswana's record is better than most of Africa, this is also a country where 50% of the population survive on less than \$2 daily, and where a quarter of the population suffer from undernourishment. It is also a country which is officially the second most unequal in the world. But for its elites and their academic enthusiasts, Botswana remains unthinkingly the African Miracle. For Werbner, people who point out such anomalies are in his words 'Afro-pessimists' (pp. 1–3).

Remarkably, according to Werbner, Botswana is currently 'a new polity exceeding past expectations and largely, if not wholly desirable. The country's postcolonial development is hopeful [and] in being full of potential and capability is welcomed by citizens' (p. 3). If this is true, why was it that in the October 2004 elections a divided and chronically under-funded Opposition won 48% of the popular vote – their highest ever? The ruling party's vote was in contrast a historic low, and the voting pattern since 1994 clearly indicates a trend against the happy milieu portrayed by Werbner. I suggest it is perhaps time that academics caught up with how the average citizens felt and delved a bit deeper. Talking to elites in the Notwane Social Club tends to give a rather one-sided picture of the situation.

IAN TAYLOR

University of St Andrews (ex-University of Botswana)