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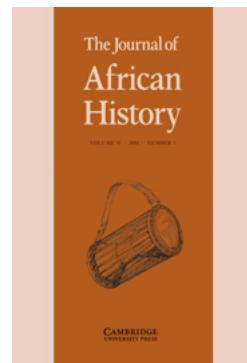
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A STUDY OF THE KIKUYU WHO FOUGHT AGAINST MAU MAU *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War, and Decolonization.* By Daniel Branch. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pp. xx+250. £55 hardback (ISBN 978-0-521-11382-3); £17.99 paperback (ISBN 978-0-521-13090-5).

TIMOTHY PARSONS

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expelled from Eritrea after that country's separation from Ethiopia in 1991, or displaced by the war between the two states in 1998–2000, as well as the 'demobilization' of soldiers from the Derg's massive army after its defeat in 1991. Melesse Getu's study of the impact of a large-scale agricultural concession on the livelihoods of the local inhabitants is also of far more than local interest, given the disturbing level of land alienation, especially to Asian and Middle Eastern companies, that has recently taken place in several African states, including Ethiopia.

The strength of the book, indeed, lies largely in its case studies, and opportunities to link these to broader historical processes and conceptual insights have been missed. There is, for example, an underlying assumption that 'resettlement' is a phenomenon characteristic only of Ethiopian governments since 1974, ignoring the very extensive settlement of immigrants from northern Ethiopia (and especially of retired soldiers known as *neftanya*) in southern Ethiopia under the imperial regimes from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. This classic colonialism, deliberately instituted in order to impose imperial rule on recently conquered lands, greatly contributed to the fraught linkages between settlement and state consolidation that likewise underlay the more recent schemes. The concentration on forced displacement similarly bypasses the population movements that have taken place in Ethiopia, as elsewhere, as part of 'normal' processes of economic and political change, and ignores the question of whether these either avoid or replicate the difficulties created by explicitly state-imposed migration.

More generally still, the book fails to explore the clash between the rival grand narratives of developmentalism and preservationism that underlies many of the individual studies. From a developmentalist perspective, enthusiastically (and often counter-productively) adopted by the Ethiopian state, the optimal use of resources such as land is to support the largest number of people with the greatest degree of welfare possible, and if this means destroying much of what is there already, that is a price to be paid: one need only envisage the great plains of North America as they existed two centuries ago compared with their appearance today to make the point. From a preservationist perspective, evident in the discussions here of the effects of dams, agricultural concessions, and (paradoxically) wildlife parks, existing patterns of land use and the societies that these sustain have a value in their own right, trumping (or at any rate severely constraining) any claims that might be made for alternative usage. Only within a conscious examination of these narratives would it be possible to generate a coherent analysis and critique of the various schemes that this admirable volume examines.

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A STUDY OF THE KIKUYU WHO FOUGHT AGAINST MAU MAU

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Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War, and Decolonization. By DANIEL BRANCH. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pp. xx + 250. £55 hardback (ISBN 978-0-521-11382-3); £17.99 paperback (ISBN 978-0-521-13090-5).

KEY WORDS : Kenya, civil wars, decolonization, nationalism, violence.

The Kikuyu insurrection of the 1950s, colloquially known as Mau Mau, is one of the most well-covered topics in Kenyan history. Part anti-colonial uprising and

part Kikuyu civil war, the unrest has drawn the attention of a great many historians over the past fifty years. More recently, books in the commercial press by Caroline Elkins and David Anderson have introduced what the British termed 'the Mau Mau Emergency' to a much wider, non-specialist readership. This was particularly true for Elkins's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya*, which simplistically depicted the conflict as a struggle between anti-colonial rebels and the collaborationist Kikuyu allies of a genocidally inclined imperial regime. This sensational charge resonated strongly with contemporary Kenyans seeking to recall Mau Mau as a unifying nationalist struggle, but it did not mesh well with the Mau Mau historical canon, which emphasizes that the violence that gripped the Kikuyu community was primarily intimate, local, and fratricidal.

Daniel Branch's meticulously researched and carefully argued *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War, and Decolonization* can be read as a corrective response to both Elkins and popular Kenyan nationalism and as a reconsideration of the Emergency within the framework of counterinsurgency studies. His central argument that 'as many Kikuyu fought with the colonial government as did those against it' will come as no surprise to Kenyanist historians, and the book itself traces the standard narrative outline of the Emergency (p. xii). But in providing a systematically detailed study of the Kikuyu who fought against the Mau Mau, Branch adds a much-needed element of ambiguity into Kenya's complex and troubled colonial history. Challenging the popular notion that these 'loyalists' who opposed Mau Mau were self-interested traitors or Christian elites, he demonstrates that most of the people who sided with the government were motivated by personal and local concerns rather than affection for the imperial regime. By telling the stories of common men and women, many of whom died at the hands of their own Mau Mau-allied family members and neighbors, he shows that most loyalists were peasants who were alienated by the violent tactics of the insurgents and sought nothing more than security during dangerous times.

This does not mean, however, that *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya* is an apologia for the loyalists. On the contrary, it rightly depicts the loyalist militia, known as the Home Guard, as an instrument of 'state-sanctioned and sponsored terror' (p. 87). Moreover, the second half of the book explains how loyalists came to dominate postcolonial Kenya even though most Kenyans recall their Mau Mau opponents as the true heroes of independence. And it is in these later chapters that Branch makes a significant and original contribution to Kenyan history because the story of how the loyalists used their dominant position in the civil administration and security services to acquire a lion's share of the former White Highlands is not as well known as the narrative of the Emergency itself. Similarly, Branch's counterinsurgency frame is helpful in putting Mau Mau and its eventual defeat within the broader context of post-war independence and revolutionary movements.

Nonetheless, it is impossible not to see the primary thrust of this book as a direct and intentional challenge to Elkins's *Imperial Reckoning*. There is no mistaking Branch's meaning when he writes: 'It is not simply that histories of the Mau Mau war are incomplete by excluding loyalists, but that they are profoundly flawed' (p. 209). This argument is persuasive, but it is worth noting that most Mau Mau debates ultimately reflect differences over evidence. Elkins's extensive use of compelling oral histories was both the great strength and the fundamental weakness of her book. Branch, in contrast, cites only 16 informants and admits, interestingly, that several of these former loyalists did not see the value in revisiting their roll in the Emergency. At its core, *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya* is a work of social history, but most of its evidence comes from letters, petitions, and

legal records gleaned from the Kenyan and British archives. Branch does a fine job of teasing compelling personal stories out of these official and semi-official colonial era records, but it is frustrating that he does not spend much time considering how the violence and danger of the Emergency might have influenced how his subjects articulated their 'loyalism' in conversation with, and in reference to, a foreign and autocratic imperial regime. This problem of evidence is precisely why it has been so hard to write the definitive history of the Mau Mau Emergency, and it is very much to Branch's credit that he has done so well in restoring the loyalists to their central place in the story. Moreover, his book's sharp and clearly written narrative account of the revolt and its aftermath means that it is accessible to lay readers and could serve as an introductory text in African history courses.

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WEST AFRICA AND THE UNITED STATES IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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The United States and West Africa: Interactions and Relations. Edited by ALUSINE JALLOH and TOYIN FALOLA. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2008. Pp. ix + 477. £45/\$80 hardback (ISBN 978-1-58046-277-8); £17.99/\$24 paperback (ISBN 978-1-58046-308-9).

KEY WORDS: West Africa, culture/cultural, economic, politics/political.

The historical relationship between the United States of America and West Africa is a subject that is complex and has evolved over time. In that sense it is no surprise that it has received mixed attention from historians. *The United States and West Africa: Interactions and Relations* is a collection of essays emanating from a conference held at the University of Texas at Arlington in 2005, and it fits into the tradition. The book contains a total of 22 essays divided into five chronological/thematic sections: 'Trade and politics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', 'Forging cultural connections: Africa and America', 'Forging cultural connections: Africa in America', 'U.S. political and economic interests in West Africa', and 'Looking towards the future: U.S.–West African linkages in the twenty-first century'.

Part One deals with several historical topics, with articles on the start of an official American involvement in the region through its consulate in Sierra Leone (1850–80), the repercussions of Liberian colonization plans for the black population in Virginia, and economic relations between the United States and Nigeria in the colonial era (1900–50). All three are gems of original research, with lots of new information, providing valuable insights and avenues for debate in the respective areas of research. In this respect, the article on Marcus Garvey, by Ibrahim Sundiata, deserves special mention. Garvey and his pan-Africanist political movement have been studied extensively, including his influence on West African thinking. Nevertheless, Sundiata shows a whole new side to the movement by setting its activities in the context of Liberian independence politics. The article is a joy to read.

Parts Two and Three deal with culture, a hot topic in African American studies, more specifically in relation to the history of the Atlantic slave trade and its cultural heritage (including roots tourism and African American identity formation). Five