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Review of Nativel D.: 'Maisons royales, demeures des grands à Madagascar: l'inscription de la réussite sociale dans l'espace urbain de Tananarive au XIXe siècle'

Ellis, S.

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of its bureaucracy, while 'I.T.T.' linked neo-colonialism with the failures of the African bourgeoisie. 'Shuffering and Shmiling' criticized Christianity and Islam as foreign imports offering ill-gotten riches for religious leaders and a useless ideology of submission for common people. Other songs confronted such topics as sex, gender, class and oppositional politics; the city and citizenship; democracy and disempowerment; music and pedagogy; history, memory and cultural identity; authenticity and hybridity; language and cultural imperialism; and nationalism, afrocentrism and cosmopolitanism. Throughout his examination of such themes, Olaniyan gives full play to the contradictions and paradoxes (or 'antinomies') of Fela's life and work, using these as entries both into the psyche of one intriguing individual and also post-colonial modernity in a much larger sense. His culminating analysis of the relationship between Fela's seemingly opposing 'political' and 'libidinal' selves is both persuasive and strikingly insightful.

Like *Afrobeat* itself, *Arrest the Music!* is 'intellectually dense' – multilayered, theoretically sophisticated, demanding thoughtful engagement. But in what may be his best tribute to Fela, Olaniyan has also written a book that is a delight to read, full of linguistic verve and outrageous humor. Crank up your Fela recordings, settle down with this book, and enjoy!

LISA A. LINDSAY

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

DIDIER NATIVEL, *Maisons royales, demeures des grands à Madagascar: l'inscription de la réussite sociale dans l'espace urbain de Tananarive au XIX^e siècle* (with preface by Françoise Raison-Jourde and postface by Faranirina Rajaonah). Paris: Karthala (pb €29 – 2 84586 539 2). 2005, 377 pp.

Madagascar's capital city, Antananarivo, is full of character. Whatever angle it is viewed from, the city is dominated by the long, high ridge that is crowned by the carcass of the old royal palace, destroyed by arson in 1995. The winding streets and narrow alleys of the old town are lined with two-storey buildings of an original style. The older churches in particular have a distinctly Victorian look, easily recognizable for anyone who has ever lived in the suburbs of an English industrial town.

Didier Nativel examines in detail the architectural history of nineteenth-century Antananarivo, showing how the royal palace, completed in 1840, inaugurated the spread of new styles of building and living among a new bourgeois class – if that is the right word – that clustered around the court and the government. Previous authors have tended to study the royal palace Manjakamiadana (the name means 'tranquil rule') as an object divorced from any social context, and they have generally been drawn especially by the role of its architect, the extraordinary Jean Laborde. Nativel, by contrast, gives full attention to the work of the thousands forced to labour on the building and considers this and other royal buildings in a much wider context. Above all, he places the construction of the royal palace and other monumental buildings in the political and social milieu of the capital. After the conversion to Christianity of the queen and prime minister of Madagascar in 1868–9, Antananarivo's grandees affected a style of life that reflected both traditional modes of being and a Victorian sense of decorum. Drawing on the example of the royal palace, they built their own residences in an emerging new style. It was not only the architecture that changed, but also the world-views and social milieu of an

emerging city. This is, therefore, also a study in social history, investigating the growth of a domestic category of architects and artisans.

Immaculately researched and presented – with no fewer than 133 illustrations – this book is essential reading for historians of Madagascar and a significant addition to the field of urban history.

STEPHEN ELLIS
Afrika Studiecentrum, Leiden

JOHN EDWARD PHILIPS (ed.), *Writing African History*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press (hb £45.00 – ISBN: 1 58046 164 6). 2005, 552 pp.

In 1854 the Royal Geographical Society of London published a set of instructive articles in their *Journal* collectively titled 'Hints to Travellers'. In the introduction, readers were warned that 'a few general remarks of an elementary nature would be superfluous to an individual of moderate attainments, while it could not possibly impart the necessary qualifications to one who had not other knowledge or experience of the subject'. Indeed all collections which intend to provide an overview of disciplinary methods should bear the same caveat. *Writing African History* is no exception. Compiling an impressive set of topics, Philips intends to help historians of Africa understand the types of sources available to them. These range from the fractured gleanings of archaeology and historical linguistics to the nebulous evidence of oral history; in between lie the varied findings of biology, anthropology, art history and 'traditional' research performed through reading written records. Historians regularly employ multiple strategies in their craft, though few would regularly use all those surveyed here.

Philips addresses the question 'What is African History?' in the first chapter (and the conclusion). His initial answer is apophthegmatic: 'History is not (necessarily) written by the winners'; 'History is not lies agreed on'; 'History is not bunk'; 'History is not just twenty-twenty hindsight' (pp. 26–8). It is unclear what the target is here. Philips is careful to distinguish between the events of the past and historiography, but at times this important distinction is overlooked in statements such as 'History involves development over time. The interest in change almost defines history' (p. 40). Events occur over time and our understanding of them changes with each generation, but which of these is 'history'? Although Philips wants to uncover the practice of 'African history', he is indeed discussing the universal issues of historiography, regardless of geographical limitation. And this is where we encounter difficulties. Throughout his writing here, he emphasizes that the essence of history is the identification of causes for historical change. Many historians will find difficulty with imposing this limitation on their practice. Historiography in its most fundamental sense is the exposition of the past and thus may or may not include the identification of causes for change. Indeed, many may find that the identification of past causes will never be free of presentist assumptions and thus deny causality as an essential theme in historiography. Jordanova's excellent study *History in Practice*, which is not cited here, avoids setting such essentials while providing a comprehensive overview of History and what historians do.

That said, some of the authors in this volume, especially in the second section on 'Sources of Data', prepare readers well for dealing with the problems and pitfalls of particular historical sources. Cooper's and Henige's chapters on oral sources are excellent introductions to further methodological studies in an area that historians of Africa can certainly claim to know best. The