

Colonialism in Madagascar

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tribute or clientage systems, for example – but has almost nothing to say about people. It would have been interesting to know something of the relationships between the younger progressive chiefs and their more conservative predecessors, or between displaced Bahutu and newly installed Baganwa, or about the Belgian officials. The interview material might have been revealing here: on the whole it is not used very imaginatively. The other regret is that the elaborate charts and statistical data about tax revenue and the like are of limited help without some indication whether the value of money was changing during the period, and this is never discussed. Nevertheless, these are criticisms of what is otherwise an important book based on thorough research for which Dr Gahama should make us all grateful.

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COLONIALISM IN MADAGASCAR

Le Menabe : histoire d'une colonisation. By BERNARD SCHLEMMER. Paris: Éditions de l'Office scientifique et technique outre-mer, 1983. Pp. 267. No price given.

Menabe is an area of the central west coast of Madagascar. Inhabited mainly by the cattle-herding Sakalava people, it owes its regional identity originally to the Maroseraña dynasty which established its dominance in the seventeenth century. Menabe submitted to French colonial government in the first years of the twentieth century although, as Bernard Schlemmer demonstrates, the Maroseraña continued to exercise a measure of political power during the colonial period.

Dr Schlemmer uses methods of analysis drawn from history, economics and anthropology. But one may classify his book as history in that it has a central thread of chronology. Its subject is colonization (or rather the colonial process) in Menabe up to 1947, with a few pointers towards further developments up to the independence of Madagascar in 1960. For his sources Dr Schlemmer has consulted the archives of the colonial administration, from which he quotes extensively. But he does so without ever forgetting that the most erudite of colonial administrators often ignored aspects of Sakalava society to which their colonial mission made them blind, and historical trends which became evident only in the fullness of time. As important as the written sources are the oral testimonies and cultural insights acquired in five years' residence or travel in Menabe.

This book is divided into three parts. The first is a narrative of the French occupation of Menabe and a description of colonial policy towards the Sakalava in the early years. The second part is an analysis of the structure of Sakalava society. This contains many original observations which are themselves an important contribution to the literature on the area. Part three is a description of successive colonial attempts – all more or less unsuccessful – to introduce cash crops. Thus the author's approach is dialectical: having learned the outlines of colonial policy in the first part, and of Sakalava society in the second, the reader then sees how the two synthesised or clashed in the context of production for the market. This dialectical method is particularly effective in explaining some of the contradictions characteristic of the colonial period. For example, there is much of interest on the problem of procuring wage-labour. We learn of the competition between French settlers and Sakalava peasant farmers, taking different forms at different times and in respect of market conditions for various crops. We understand more fully the strife between noble, commoner and slave groups among the Sakalava, once the cement of their common interest had been weakened by colonial government. The study of the historical dynamics of Sakalava society leads Dr Schlemmer to describe the formation of an introspective 'idéologie de refus'. That is, the Sakalava resisted

colonial economic and political demands by maintaining a culture based on kinship and the rearing of cattle, which the author terms a 'lineage mode of production'. The Sakalava were not unique among Africans in adopting such a strategy towards the colonial state, or indeed the post-colonial state.

No doubt there remains much to discover about Menabe between 1900 and 1947. Dr Schlemmer is not primarily concerned to narrate events, although he has a proper and meticulous regard for historical facts. His main concern is to analyse the political economy of Menabe, and it is hard to imagine an analysis more authoritative and profound than this. But, as the author explicitly recognizes, conditions in Menabe were such that it was quite easy for the Sakalava to resist colonisation in the way they did. In particular, they had an abundance of land, which permitted newcomers to instal themselves alongside their Sakalava neighbours with relative lack of friction. Moreover, the French colonizers never considered Menabe of prime importance either for settlement or as a labour reserve.

London

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PERAMBULATIONS

West African Passage: A Journey through Nigeria, Chad and the Cameroons. By MARGERY PERHAM; edited and with an Introduction by A. H. M. KIRK-GREENE. London: Peter Owen, 1983, Pp. 245. £12.

As the more unpleasant aspects of British rule in other continents begin to fade from the national consciousness, to be replaced by a certain nostalgia for the brave travellers and even the administrators of bygone days, so the market grows for books on the social history of the British in their overseas Empire. While not all Africanists may approve of the nostalgia boom, most are bound to take an interest in the books which result. This is especially true of books which touch on the history of their own specialism, either by tracing the evolution of British thinking about Africa or by illuminating the lives of distinguished Africanists. Margery Perham's last book belongs to the latter category: it is a journal of her travels through Nigeria, Chad and the Cameroons in 1931-2.

While the diary is fascinating in itself, its value for the social historian is greatly enhanced by A. H. M. Kirk-Greene's sympathetic Introduction and Notes. We are provided with brief biographies of all the main characters in the text, together with a fuller account of Margery Perham's own career and a brief comment on her encouragement of the editor's entry into African studies after sixteen years' work as an official in Nigeria. This material highlights the importance of the author's extensive personal contacts with colonial officials, both with such luminaries as Lord Lugard and Governor Cameron in the 1930s, and later with the new generation who were turning to African studies in the 1960s. We are further reminded that women led the field in the early development of professional African studies: only as the colonial period drew to a close did men begin entering this field in large numbers and developing specialisms in geography, history, administration, economics or the natural sciences. Margery Perham was a pioneer who was largely able to make her own rules, to draw path-breaking conclusions and to transmit these with authority to the next generation.

This diary enables us to follow Margery Perham through the six months of fieldwork which laid the foundations for her first major study, *Native Administration in Nigeria* (1937). It shows clearly that while the next generation could easily learn from her conclusions, vividly expressed here as elsewhere, her working style was surely unique. Her vivid personality rapidly won her friends even among those who, like the Governor of the French Cameroons, were initially unimpressed by her