divided between a European firm-oriented capitalist sector and an Algerian bazaar-oriented pre-capitalist one, largely overlooks the roles of Algerian labourers who helped build and run the railroads, ports, mines and plantations, thereby contributing to the development of the ‘European’ capitalist sector.

In the fine chapter on the political history of colonial Bône, Prochaska unravels the forces leading to a settler-dominated civil regime that utilized the ideology of assimilation to gain dominance over Muslim Algerians. His illuminating description of a system in which electoral fraud, scandal and patronage politics perpetuated caste and class inequality invites comparison with similar systems elsewhere. It may also help to explain why many twentieth-century Algerians remained skeptical about the virtues of ‘liberal democracy’.

In the most original chapter of the book, the author masterfully unlocks the mentalité of the pieds noirs by identifying the shared symbols that fostered settler unity and that served as the cultural prism through which they viewed a mythical past. ‘Reading’ settler culture through its street names, its picture postcards, its distinctive language and its literary figures – the most notable being Albert Camus – illustrates vividly a colonial ‘reality’ disconnected from the lives of the majority of the population. The symbols that proclaimed settler hegemony, whether street names or public statues, were more fragile than the pieds noirs could have imagined, a fragility dramatically demonstrated when they were replaced wholesale in 1962.

Literary vignettes throughout the text serve to connect the colonial past with the author’s first-hand experience in post-colonial Algeria. The epilogue returns to the historiographical debate that began the study, the reader now equipped to place the book itself in the ongoing flow of competing interpretations and institutions. The final vignette underscores the author’s reflexive approach by tracing the shaping events of his life leading up to this study.

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ETHIOPIAN RESISTANCE

Ethiopia in the Anti-Colonial Wars. By

Roubles 3.50.

Within a generally weak and derivative national tradition of African historical studies, Ethiopia has always been a special case for Russian, and later for Soviet scholars, who have been able to draw on a comparatively rich hoard of primary materials, both published and unpublished, dating as far back as the 1840s. This situation derived in part from Tsarist Russia’s curiosity about what was then perceived as another Orthodox Christian country, as well as from the more usual materialistic European motives for interest in Africa.

Now that the Soviet Union and its client regime under Mengistu Haile Mariam in Addis Ababa have both disappeared, this may be fairly assumed to be one of the last works, if not the last, in the most recent and possibly least interesting phase of this tradition. Tsypkin’s book, which deals with three-quarters of a century of Ethiopian military history, from the British intervention of 1867 up to the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1935, bears all the marks of the restrictions under which Soviet scholars were compelled to operate. These range from the obligatory and pointless list of citations of Marx, Engels and Lenin’s few passing references to African affairs, through the use of such – perhaps anachronistic – terms as ‘people’s war’ to describe Ethiopian resistance to European colonialism, and into the structure of the book itself.

Thus, the book follows the usual pattern of an introductory chapter on political
economy – in this case, of mid-nineteenth-century Ethiopia – followed by narrative chapters. Interestingly, however, Tsypkin includes a discussion of the ‘traditional military organisation of the Ethiopian feudal state’ (pp. 63–82) which makes extensive use of materials in the Russian Central State Military-Historical Archive, as well as of such early Russian works as K. Arnol’di’s Voennye ocherki Abissinii (St Petersburg, 1907).

This is followed by chapters on the Napier expedition of 1867–8; the resistance to the Egyptian and Sudanese threat in the 1870s; and the first war against Italy in 1895–6. The fifth chapter discusses the changes brought about in the early twentieth century by the country’s territorial expansion, as well as the impact of Haile Sellasie’s modernization campaigns on the army.

In the final section of the book, Tsypkin looks at the 1935 campaign against Mussolini’s invasion. In a long section on the Ethiopian guerrilla resistance to the Italian occupation between 1935 and 1941, to which he attributes a key role in the eventual defeat of the Italians, he looks at the republican ideas which emerged among the Patriots and at the influence of such ideas on the country’s later intellectual life.

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COLIN DARCH

KENYA’S CONTRADICTIONS


The colonial state has attracted Africanists ever since its post-colonial successors began to show signs of falling apart. On the whole, concern has generated heat but little light, and now, like the state itself, the debate seems to have been overtaken by events. In Control and Crisis Bruce Berman may well have had the last (and very substantial) word, at least as far as Kenya is concerned. This is an ambitious book which tries to breathe some empirical life into what, as the author sharply points out, has too often been an aridly and obtusely theoretical exercise in which participants have been content to regard the state itself as either an ‘epiphenomenon of an epiphenomenon’ or as a kind of ‘black box’ with a rigidly determined output and no discernible internal processes. The book has been some ten years in preparation and if readers find themselves traversing rather familiar terrain this is largely because much of it has already been mapped out by Berman himself and his collaborators – notably John Lonsdale. However, the sweep is impressive, and in places, in the last chapter especially, Berman reveals the essential contradictions of state power and function with brevity and skill.

Control and Crisis focuses on contradictions and examines how these drove the state through successive stages of partial transformation in a cycle which spiralled upwards towards decolonization and beyond. The problem with the colonial state was that it was simultaneously both ‘weak’ and ‘strong’. It attempted to mediate between a host of acrimonious and ultimately incompatible interests, which included fractions of both metropolitan and local (white and black) capital while also developing and following its own priorities and managerial functions, which were often in conflict with those of the interest groups that it supposedly served.

Its main concern was with its own reproduction and survival and, in order to ensure this, the state had to attempt two ultimately incompatible tasks, summarized by Lonsdale as ‘getting things done and keeping people quiet’. ‘Control’ precipitated ‘crisis’ which, in turn, required reform and yet more ‘control’. How