Book Reviews

An African History. MASAOKI MIYAMOTO & MOTOJI MATSUDA, eds. Tokyo: Kohdan-Sha, 1987, pp. 596 (in Japanese). **Ethnic Groups and Societies in Africa (A History of the World Series, no. 24).** KATSUYOSHI FUKUI, MASARU AKASAKA & KAZUO OHTSUKA, eds. Tokyo: Chuuoh Kohron-Sha, 1999, pp. 534 (in Japanese).

These two books on African history written in Japanese belong to the tradition of marvelous work by Japanese Africanists who have been researching various aspects of African societies since the 1970s. They also show the recent trend of African studies in Japan, albeit in both content and style of presentation the two books are quite different from each other.

The first book *An African History*, written by 16 specialists, covers the chronological history of sub-Saharan Africa from the Stone Age when *Homo sapiens* appeared on the African continent up to the end of the twentieth century, including future prospects.

The editors explain the purpose and characteristics of this book in the Preface. They start by criticizing "colonial historiography", which disseminated the image of Africa as the "Dark Continent" where there was no *history* until the Europeans came. This image also spread a kind of myth that Africa had stagnated for a long period in terms of development. In order to erase these images and myths, they say, historians have been trying to show that there were kingdoms and empires in the African continent just as in the other continents. But, they continue, this historical approach was not right, as this method evaluated kingdoms and empires rather than acephalous societies, which had been existing all over the continent. They insist that there is no universal standard of demarcation between the two in terms of civilization. Instead this book regards cultural history and human activities as important, and includes much of peoples' history rather than chiefs' or kings' history.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of this book is the regional demarcation for historical description. Precolonial history is divided into the four big river regions, the basins of the Nile, the Niger, the Zaire, and the Zambezi/Limpopo, where peoples developed historically by adjusting to both ecology and the impetus from the outer world including Asia, Europe and America.

The editors' ultimate purpose is to erase false images and preoccupations on African history among the Japanese by describing the African peoples as "historical subjects" of their own through structural analysis – it is so-called "new history".

After reading the book, I was impressed by its rich contents, especially about the medieval era. None of the books on African history written in Japanese have offered such comprehensive coverage, in an approachable style and at a cheap cover price. Not all the contributors are history specialists, but they have well researched contemporary historiography both inside and outside Japan.

The second book, *Ethnic Groups and Societies in Africa*, contains three different themes in the three parts: (1) "Nature and Ethnic Groups", written by Katsuyoshi Fukui; (2) "Cities and Kingdoms", by Masaru Akasaka; (3) "Islam", by Kazuo Ohtsuka. The authors, who are all anthropologists, have had long experience of research on Africa, which is well reflected in their writing here.

Prof. Fukui's contribution consists of three chapters: "Symbiosis and conflict of man and nature"; "African history reconstructed by ethnography"; and "Emergence and behavior of various ethnic groups". The contents of the first and third chapters are accurate and comprehensive as the author is a specialist in both agriculture and ethnographic studies. For him new the challenge was the second chapter – a hypothesis of the historical formation of a society through ethnography – based on his own research. He focused on a cow named "Beriyacchi" by the Bodi people in Ethiopia. The ancestors of this special cow were traced back 16 generations. He discovered the coincidence of the source place of this cow and the chief's family. Because of this coincidence, he insists, "Beriyacchi" became the symbol of Bodi identity. Milk from this cow is used for various rituals, especially one for attacks on neighboring agriculturalists. This is exactly what their ancestors had done in the past, and the present generation is

continuing to do now. He concludes that "Beryacchi" has been and still is the symbol of their identity, which he interpreted as the historical ideology of the Bodi, as this identity has crystallized their history into oral traditions. It is very interesting that the author found the "material" evidence for the oral tradition in a "non-literate" society such as the Bodi by paying attention to a special cow whose historical background, according to his hypothesis, has been responsible for regenerating the people's history. For those who are interested in this article, *Ethnicity & Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, edited by Prof. Fukui and Dr. John Markakis, published by James Currey in 1994, is available in English.

The second part, written by Prof. Akasaka, tries to show that there were kingdoms and cities of sub-Saharan Africa that were equal to the European or Asian civilizations. Then he proceeds to the eras of slave trading, exploration and colonialism. His purpose is to erase the backward image of the African continent, the same aim as the first book, albeit their approaches are different, as mentioned already. The contents are easily understood by a non-specialist reader as the author's experiences are interwoven with his historical description.

The central theme of the third part, written by Prof. Ohtsuka, is Islam, from the genesis of its precedent religions of Judaism and Christianity up to the so-called present "Islamic Fundamentalism". Geographically the coverage is from the Middle East and North Africa to sub-Saharan Africa, though East Africa is not referred to in the same depth as the other areas.

In the introduction Prof. Ohtsuka, referring to his description as "anthropological history", writes about his purposes and methods as follows: (1) taking up Islam mainly as a culture; (2) describing Islam not only from the rulers' point of view but also the "people's" viewpoint; (3) analyzing the historical dynamics between "syncretism" and "anti-syncretism"; and (4) focusing specifically on modernizing processes and their consequences in the "African Muslim World" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

As the author clearly notes in the introduction, this is not an article on religious history nor on socio-economic history, but a history of various types of reception of Islam in African "pagan" societies. These various forms affected the ebb and flow of the kingdoms and chiefdoms, influenced anti-colonial movements, and merged into the anti-Western politics of contemporary Africa. The writing is full of Ohtsuka's personal experiences in the field, which will help the understanding of Japanese readers who are not familiar with Islam in general.

Prof. Ohtsuka insists on the validity of Ernest Gellner's pendulum swing theory ("A Pendulum Swing Theory of Islam", in R. Robertson, ed., *Sociology of Religion*, Penguin, 1969) based on the "anthropological history" deployed in this book. His hypothesis is that the modern era of Islam has been the era of Islamic "puritanism", starting from the Salafiya and reaching to the recent trend of Islam revivals, which were the counterpart of the Protestantism in Christian history in Europe.

I was asked to do a comparative review of these two books by the editor of *Nilo-Ethiopian Studies*, but as already mentioned, the contents of the two books are too different to compare. Instead, I would like to draw historians' attention to the gender issue in African history, which Prof. Ohtsuka highlighted in the last of his chapters.

I wrote this review at a hotel in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. Every day I was forced to face various kinds of abuse to women and children through the media, most of which do not reach Japan. For example, "South Africa has one of the highest incidents of rape in the world, 49,280 cases reported last year" (*Daily News*, 10 August 1999); "a man as old as 60 can buy a 19-year-old girl for several head of cattle" in Gambela of Ethiopia (*The East African*, 9–15 August 1999); "At least 287 people, suspected of being sorcerers, have been killed in the Shinyanga region" in Tanzania (*Sunday Observer*, 22 August 1999); "Nightmare is mass rape" in a Tanzanian refugee camp (*Daily Mail*, 28 August 1999); "Women got the worst of genocide" in Rwanda (*Daily Nation*, 12 August 1999). News of corruption, mob justice (lynching), drugs, prostitution, domestic violence, FGM and AIDS are also everyday news. Obviously women and children are suffering more than men. Why? Neither of these books explains the cause of women's agonies in the past and present. I would like to ask to the authors: who are the "people", who are the "subjects of history"? I admit that these books contain plentiful information, but it is so one-sided!

CHIZUKO TOMINAGA
Miyagi Gakuin Women's College

Islam in Nineteenth-Century Wallo, Ethiopia: Revival, Reform, and Reaction. HUSSEIN AHMAD, Leiden: Brill, date 2001, pp. 228

Although Ethiopia has a hardly negligible

Muslim population and thus a richness in variety of Muslim popular culture, Islam in Ethiopia has long been an untapped field for research in contemporary Ethiopian studies. Hussein Ahmad, who has spearheaded this field, has opened up new ground for students concerned. *Islam in Nineteenth-Century Wallo, Ethiopia* is not a modest attempt merely to reconstruct a regional history, as may be presumed by its title. On the contrary, this is a work with an all-out ambition to throw light on Ethiopian Muslims hitherto neglected both in the field of history and anthropology, and inlaid with insightful remarks applicable to other Muslim societies in Ethiopia. In this sense, it is to be appraised as a monumental work in its field.

Wallo is a controversial region, for its complexity in ethnic and religious composition, a legacy of continual immigration, conquest and invasion. This complexity is illustrated in the genealogy of Wallo Muslims, which is, more often than not, a mixture of Christian, Muslim, and Oromo names. This might be one of the reasons why Hussein deliberately leaves some of the historical actors unstated in respect of ethnicity. This may be an honest approach, since an excessively articulate statement would entail a hypothetical narration of a false history.

In this respect, Hussein's choice of a regional perspective has an advantage in illustrating the dynamism in the political and social domain, which is characteristic of nineteenth-century Ethiopia. The nineteenth century is a crucial period in the making of modern Ethiopia. It is a period when the so-called "Zemena Mesafint" (Era of provincial lords) ended, with the advent of two successive emperors, Tewodros II and Yohannes IV. The common feature of the two emperors is that they paid a high price in expanding their realm of influence, and this inevitably entailed a destructive action response to societies perceived of as obstructive to their political scheme of building a centripetal empire. The impact of this action on the Wallo Muslims was the persecution and emigration of religious scholars to other Muslim societies. This emigration effected the diffusion of a certain trend in Islamic thought. It is in this sense that nineteenth-century Wallo is a focal point of reference in the history of Ethiopian Muslims nationwide.

The main part of this book consists of six chapters.

The first chapter deals with the demographic and historical setting of Wallo. Here, Hussein exerts sensitivity in dealing with the names of regions and ethnic groupings as a historical construct changing its range of reference over time. He also selectively articulates the process of assimilation of the Oromo immigrants to the indigenous population, and its influence on the ethnic diversity in the region and the formation of Islamic polities.

Chapter 2, "Islamization of Ethiopia and of Wallo", discusses the introduction and expansion of Islam within Ethiopia and Wallo. Here, Hussein first demonstrates how popular and scholarly tradition stereotyped Islam as an external and marginal factor in the making of Ethiopian history and society. He argues that the introduction and expansion of Islam has been excessively attributed to traders who used a route through Zeila and Harar, and asserts that focus should be turned on Muslim clerics who came through a northern route, via the Dahlak Islands, which dates back to the ninth century. He also argues that the mode of expansion is more complex than can be explained using either Horton's two-tier model for conversion in Africa or Fisher's three-stage model. Hussein rightly refutes as speculative the received hypothesis that traders were the vehicle for the expansion of Islam.

Referring to cases from Wallo, he argues that merchants and traders were involved only indirectly to the spread of Islam by extending financial and material assistance to Muslim clerics. In contrast to Trimingham's view, which places three steps of gradual acceptance and infiltration of Islam which argues for the adoption of Islamic dogma and religious laws at a later stage, Hussein asserts that it was Muslim scholars and local Islamic educational centers, financially sustained by traders and merchants, that contributed most to the spread of Islam.

Chapter 3, "Sufism and Revival of Islam (1800–1850)", discusses the roots of reformist Islam that found expression in the expansion and consolidation of the mystical orders, and in the establishment of centers of Islamic education and local shrines in Wallo during the first half of the nineteenth century. Hussein treats these developments through the careers of a number of prominent religious scholars. The focal point here is the intellectual route that sustained these reformist trends and the religious aspects on which these indigenous scholars took issue with the local people and the rulers. He describes the scholarly and mystical careers of a number of religious scholars, who are popularly venerated as "saints", i.e. transmitters of *baraka* and possessors of *karama*. As reformers influenced by general trends in the Islamic world, they

contested certain rituals and customs claimed as unIslamic such as the *zar* (cult of spirit possession), drum beating, and excessive consumption of *chat* (*Catha edulis*, leaves of which are chewed for stimulating effect).

Chapter 4, "Islam and Local Dynasties in Wallo", discusses the emergence and development of a number of regional political entities in Wallo in the first half of the nineteenth century. A similar process of the use of Islam as the ideology in building up a regional polity can be argued for in Jimma region, where the immigrant Oromo adopted Islam as the process of creating the Gibe kingdoms took place. A close similarity can be found between the dynasty of Mammadoch of Warra Himano and the kingdom of Gomma (one of the Gibe kingdoms), both of which claim decent from Shaykh Nur Husayn, a prominent "pre-sixteenth century mystic" based in Bale.

Chapter 5, "Trade in Southeastern Wallo", is an attempt to reconstruct the patterns, organization, and extent of the internal and long-distance commerce in southeastern Wallo. Here, Hussein articulates the major market centers and trade routes in the region and the interdependence of traders and local chiefs. Among these market centers, he describes how Dawway, a well-known area for the concentration of Muslim religious scholars, developed to become an entrepot of commodities coming from the hinterland and from the Red Sea coast in the first half of the nineteenth century. Thus Islam, trade, and chiefdoms, the three main themes of this text become interconnected.

However, Dawway declined in significance from the 1870s owing to a political atmosphere that increasingly became hostile to Islam. Chapter 6, "Islam in Wallo (1850–1890): Containment and Reaction", casts light on the impact on the local populace of the religious policies of two monarchs of that period: Tewdoros II and Yohannes IV. The two emperors are well known both for their allegiance to Christianity and for their hostile policies towards Islam, which was perceived as a challenge to their struggle of territorial expansion and centralization.

The contribution of this book to the study of Islam in Ethiopia is considerable in several ways. First, it reconstructs the regional history of one of the most controversial regions in Ethiopia. And secondly, Hussein presents a number of useful themes and methods possibly applicable to other Muslim societies in the country. A regional perspective has advantage in Ethiopian Muslim studies, where ethnic diversity is a common feature. His argument centers on individual Muslim scholars, as student, educator, thinker, and reformer. He articulates the relationship between Islam and trade. However, although he aims at a perspective from the "local populace", his discussion mainly centers on the ideological "producers" side of the story, i.e. scholars and chiefs, instead of the "consumers" side, i.e. the local masses. This rather one-sided discussion may have come from an academic tradition that places less importance on the "ignorant masses". But if Hussein had included the perspective from the "ignorant masses", he could have illustrated a much more dynamic regional history, which he had attempted here. However, this does not reduce the value of this book, which is surely inviting for those concerned both in Islamic studies and Ethiopian studies.

MINAKO ISHIHARA
Nanzan University

Conflict, Age & Power in North East Africa. Eisei Kurimoto & Simon Simonse, eds., Oxford: James Currey, 1998, pp. 270.

How can we treat "age systems" in North East Africa in this postcolonial world? With their wide distribution and their variety of forms, age systems of North East African societies have fascinated many anthropologists. Some anthropologists have compared and classified age systems according to forms and regulations. Others have considered them to be an indispensable social organization, to which functions such as mechanisms of social integration, military mobilization and ecological adaptation were attributed. However, as we came to know the histories of these societies, we realized that they had been fluid, and interacting and influencing each other much more often than once we had thought. Thus it is difficult for us to consider an age system as a functional unit that contributes to maintaining and integrating an independent social system. Moreover, since the penetration of colonial power, their societies had changed drastically. And today, even the "most remote societies" of this area once thought to have maintained "traditional age systems" have suffered from political disturbance and civil war. Without considering the influence of colonial and postcolonial administration, and the penetration of the market economy, we cannot describe the present state of African societies. So is "age system" a subject worth considering in anthropology? If it is so, how can we do it? *Conflict, Age & Power in North East Africa*

addresses this problem and tries to locate "age systems" in a new theoretical context.

In the "Introduction" the editors propose that age systems should be regarded as a political arena. This idea is opposed to the view that the function of age systems is essentially ritual, which most preceding studies held. Firstly, they point out some areas where different ethnic groups share common age systems. They are the *monyomiji* system of southern Sudan, the *gada* system of southern Ethiopia, the generational system of the Karimojong type, and the age system of the Karenjin peoples. Then, referring to the Harrisons' study of indigenous warfare in Melanesia, they emphasize the importance of enmity and antagonism for creating unity and community. In Melanesia, war is an integral part of social life, and it is conducted between those who share a variety of friendly exchanges. The role of war is not to defend existing community, but creating community identity itself. Based on this idea, they suggest that African age system is the agent creating antagonistic as well as peaceful relations, as it also creates ethnic identities in each area. Furthermore, the age system is important in that it is the arena of political struggle. Such political struggles may sometimes cause a fission, and create a new ethnic group. In some colonial contexts, it offered an arena where elders and newly emerging prophets struggled for political hegemony.

Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the *monyomiji* system of southern Sudan. In Chapter 2 Kurimoto points out that similar age systems cross-cut different ethnic groups in this area, and this inter-ethnic system offers them the framework to get along with each other. He also suggests that this "resonance" in the wider regional setting is achieved through its "goodness to be copied", like the "modern state" in Benedict Anderson's sense. Kurimoto's approach is profoundly stimulated by Schlee's provocative idea of cross-cutting ties among different ethnic groups. Schlee himself develops this idea in Chapter 6. He compares the *gada* system of the Gabra and Borana, and shows that the *gada* of the Gabra, which might be seen as a borrowing from the Borana, is, in fact, said to have been introduced intentionally. The *gada* of the Gabra is slightly different from that of the Borana, and plays a role in giving them ethnic identity as well as maintaining equitable relationships with the Borana.

In Chapter 3 Simons focuses on the dynamics of power contestation between elder and younger age sets in the *monyomiji* age system. He shows the unique characteristics of this system, such as its free play of age antagonism, and the relative youthfulness and compactness of power holders and its organization. A similar theme of age set contestation is dealt with by Tornay in Chapter 5 concerning the generational system of Nyangatom, one of the groups of the Karimojong cluster. Having pointed out the confrontation of elders and younger groups over transmission of power, Tornay suggests that the difficulty may lie in the officiation of *asapan*, a human sacrifice in Nyangatom, necessary at the transfer of power from one generation to the next, and that the chairman of the district, who might come from the lineage expected to officiate at the human sacrifice, holds the key. The Rendille age system, described by Sato in Chapter 10, shows sharp contrasts to the former two cases. In Rendille the age system and patrilineal clan system play an important role in organizing the division of labor, by which young men and elders depend on each other.

Historical change of power structure and age system is one of the important issues of this book. In Chapter 4, Lamphear compares the evolutionary processes of military organization in three pastoral groups: the Maasai, Turkana, and Jie. All the groups developed new military systems in the nineteenth century, which stemmed from a period of severe drought, but the processes were different. The Maasai and Turkana established centralized control over their age grade systems, but with the Jie, the war leader acted within pre-existing structures. Komma also studies political change in Kipsigis society since the latter half of the nineteenth century in Chapter 9. Spencer's argument in Chapter 8 integrates the perspective of the historical development of an age system and the oscillation in power balance between elder and younger generations in a more abstract and theoretical way. He adds that the strongest factor that undermines the age system is the expansion of the market economy. The Iteso of Uganda and of Kenya, described by Nagashima in Chapter 11, may be an instance of the demise of the age system in the face of colonial administration and penetration of the market economy. Nagashima reconstructs the two different age systems, one called the Eigworone system and the other the Asapan system. But the former became defunct at the turn of the twentieth century, and the latter in the 1950s. In addition to their incompatibility with modern life, Nagashima suggests that the age systems of the Iteso did not have any significant politico-military characteristics, and they have vanished for that reason.

Kawai's contribution in Chapter 7 is unique in this volume in dealing with a women's age grade. In Chamus, the women's age grade system is demarcated according to social criteria such as marriage and biological criteria such as menarche. Kawai suggests that new categories are emerging as the discrepancy between social and biological criteria expands with the influence of the Catholic church and state administration.

As is shown, the approaches the contributors take are diverse. But the focus of analysis has apparently changed from preceding studies, as the editors term it, from intra-ethnic to meta-ethnic, from stability to struggle, from traditional to political change.

The influence of the nation-state and the market economy in the postcolonial situation has been widely discussed. However, it is quite difficult to analyze the causes of political disturbance, ethnic conflicts, and pervasion of violence in African states solely through general political theories, based on and developed from Euro-American experiences. Studies based on African political reality are needed. This book is an important contribution in shedding light on such an African indigenous system.

YUKIO MIYAWAKI
Osaka Prefecture University