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Publisher Routledge

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## Review of African Political Economy

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title-content=t713443496>

### Book Reviews

Online Publication Date: 01 June 2008

**To cite this Article** (2008)'Book Reviews',Review of African Political Economy,35:116,343 — 356

**To link to this Article:** DOI: 10.1080/03056240802197631

**URL:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03056240802197631>

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rial message. This contributes to a very strange feel to the prose as a whole, which at times reads more like an annotated bibliography rather than a substantive study. Too much space is given over to lengthy quotes from other existing and well-known studies that could have been easily paraphrased. Similarly, the use of bullet points and a disjointed chapter structure do not aid the progressive construction of a coherent argument.

The coherence of argument in relation to the colonial period is further complicated by the fact that Durrani's dissatisfaction with post-colonial political developments is never too far from the surface. This perspective informs much of the work, lending it the feel of an extended, historically informed polemic. Indeed, given the tone of the book it is perhaps a little unfair to review it as a scholarly piece when its audience is so obviously not primarily meant to be found amongst academics. Durrani's commitment to his political beliefs and his insistence that knowledge should be as widely disseminated as possible is supported by his praiseworthy decision to distribute this book as an Open Access publication. It is available at no cost via the internet. However, Durrani would be better served presenting their work in terms that their subjects and their audience would themselves recognise. While trade unionists and the labour movement as whole played important historical roles, it seems a stretch, for example, to characterise the period of 1922-1948 as the 'Consolidation of the Working Class.' To do so is to simply retrospectively impose an abstraction.

By virtue of his courageous, vocal and ultimately costly criticism of authoritarianism in Kenya, Durrani the activist is fully deserving of the praise bestowed upon him in the preface by Ngugi wa Thiong'o. In insisting the dissent to which he claims ancestry be adequately historicised, Durrani cannot be faulted.

He has the scars to prove its significance as a subject of historical enquiry. And Durrani's particular focus upon the role of South Asians, a still much overlooked component within Kenyan society, is laudable. As a guide for future research and indeed as a primary source itself for those interested in late 20<sup>th</sup> century political history, *Never Be Silent* is not without merit. With more time, greater critical engagement with existing secondary material, a more nuanced, analytical approach to its sources and a rigorous editorial process, *Never Be Silent* may have ended up as an important book. Ultimately, however, as a scholarly historical study, Durrani's work suffers from too many significant flaws to be considered a major contribution to the field.

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*History Making and Present Day Politics: The Meaning of Collective Memory in South Africa*, by Hans Erik Stolten (ed.). Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, 2007; pp. 376. £25 (pb). ISBN: 9789171065810. Reviewed by Steffen Jensen, Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims, Denmark; © 2008 Steffen Jensen.

For all who are interested in South African history and historiography, this book should be a must. It features some of the most prominent stalwarts of South African history writing like Chris Saunders, Colin Bundy, Merle Lipton, Martin Legassick, Bernhard Magubane, Thiven Reddy and Saul Dubow, along with a number of interesting contributions from newer or less prominent scholars.

The book concerns the role of history in post-apartheid South Africa, and editor Hans Erik Stolten makes a powerful argument for its importance, as he states

that 'History writing is an important part of a nation state's collective memory and history is not simply a product of the past, but often an answer to demands of the present' (pp. 6-7).

Having established the importance of the subject, Stolten goes on to outline the historiographic development of progressive history writing. Together with the chapter by Dubow, the introduction serves as a competent state of the art of South African historiography. The second purpose of the introduction is to outline the ways in which history has been and is being put to use and abuse in contemporary South Africa. Most important is the multiple history making processes with the memorialisation projects and the Truth Commission as high points. A number of the contribution speaks directly, and interestingly, to these subjects, from Chris Saunders' and Martin Legassick's quite personal accounts to more analytical contributions from Elaine Unterhalter, Anna Bohlin and Gary Baines.

Apart from these obvious (in the good sense) contributions on history and history making, a number of the chapters also opened up new territory for me at least. Merle Lipton's account of business' role in apartheid is succinct and well-balanced. But maybe the most interesting part of it – and we can only guess to the politics of this – is the appendix where Lipton appears to have been asked to answer a number of questions about method and theory. This probably indicates how sore her points still are. Also Wessel Visser's contribution opens up new territory, and although it is hardly surprising that the Nationalists were somewhat negative towards communism, Visser's analysis provides a good and entertaining read. I was also enlightened by Anna Bohlin and Elaine Unterhalter's accounts of land and gender.

All in all, the volume stands as a competent and thorough state of the art contribution to South African historiography. However, this is also its biggest problem. It is so 'state of the art' and so heavy on historiographic stalwarts that it becomes somewhat stale. Particularly two elements annoyed me. First, there is a 'once-we-were-important-now-we-are-not' feel to it. Clearly, progressive South African history writing had an almost disproportional political importance and it did turn the tables on a number of issues, like bringing in new, especially African voices and Afro-centric accounts – both by African and white scholars. But to lament the present insignificance extensively as it is done here is somewhat excessive for my taste. Second, the book is organised along, and speaks to, the long-rehearsed debate between liberals and Marxists, that is, it reproduces the race-class debate with a few add-ons from feminism and African scholarship. It is fair to say that this debate more than anything else has organised what is relevant to discuss in South African history, to the exclusion of most other approaches. It is a typical example of how a disagreement can determine relevance.

It seems to me that there is a larger point to be made here about methodology. Most of the contributions are quite traditional in approach to the study of history. Apart from Bernhard Magubane – who does question the salience of the liberal-Marxist debate – there is no attempt, in the words of Jean and John Comaroff, to read against the archive. Although Van Onselen's book *The Seed Is Mine* is quoted, no chapter attempts to write history from a subaltern perspective to any great degree. Although one should not judge the value of a book from what is not in it, it is a pity that perspectives like Isak Niehaus' fascinating study of witchcraft and politics or Jeff Peires' analysis of the cattle-killing movement are absent. The consequence is that politics is reduced to high politics – or

indeed white politics. Clifton Crais' analysis of Eastern Cape politics is a good example that an analysis, reading against the archive to elucidate African politics, is possible. Crais' work also points to another omission of a more theoretical nature, that is, the absence of inspirations from Michel Foucault's work on governmentality. By focusing only on the race-class structures, the productive sides of apartheid and colonialism seem to disappear from view. History writing is reduced to accounts of structural oppression and not accounts of how subjects were produced and how they in turn took up the task of challenging the regime from these very subject positions. Hence, post-colonial studies à la Mahmood Mamdani, Clifton Crais, Achille Mbembe and the Comaroff's could have added additional insights to an otherwise competent and interesting volume on South African historiography.

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*Everyday Corruption and the State. Citizens and Public Officials in Africa*, by Giorgio Blundo and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan with N.B. Arifari and M.T. Alou. London: Zed Books, 2006; pp. 298. £18.99 (pb). ISBN 1842775634. Reviewed by Laura Routley, University of Aberystwyth; © Laura Routley 2008.

Corruption in Africa is a subject which has received a lot of attention, has it not? Denouncements of corruption and protestations that 'good governance' offers an answer abound in the discourses of NGOs and wars on corruption have been announced by numerous African governments. Yet there has been little empirical research done on corruption at the 'everyday' level. *Everyday Corruption and the State: Citizens and Public Officials in Africa* is therefore original, timely and significant for all who research in this area. The book addresses this yawning empirical gap in the literature through

detailed examinations of the interactions of users with various state bodies: law courts, health systems, police road blocks. For Blundo and Olivier de Sardan these 'everyday' interactions open up questions about the informal privatisation of public services and, indeed, about the nature of these states. This, 'everydayness', also demonstrates that in the countries examined 'corruption has become rooted in the daily lives of their citizens' (p.106).

Blundo and Olivier de Sardan's book is the result of research undertaken in three West African francophone states: Benin, Niger, and Senegal. The breadth and depth of the research is obvious and the geographical spread of the undertaking allows for more general trends to be drawn out. The examination of similarities of corrupt practices between African states is something which other contributions based on local anthropological empirical research such as Daniel Jordan Smith's (2007) excellently observed work on Eastern Nigeria does not allow. Blundo and Olivier de Sardan analyse the examples of corruption and from this identify and define types of practices of corruption. These observations are then systematised as practices are categorised and examined not only as a type of corrupt activity, but by their degree of legitimacy within local discourses. Discussion of these practices also sites them within 'socio-cultural logics', which operate more broadly but 'communicate' with corruption (p.96).

The empirical research focuses particularly on the legal system, public procurement, and transport and customs, all of which have their own chapters in the second part of the book. These chapters offer much corroboration of the points made in the first part of the book, as well as being new work in their own right for, as the authors point out, there is a lack of study on specific sectors. Nassirou Bako Arifari's descriptions of some of the customs 'scams' read almost like com-