

In part two of the book, she uses her investigation of the relationship of the household and the state to address lacunae in the literature on the colonial state in Africa. For example, Osborn offers an exciting comparative analysis of household and state making approaches used by the African rulers up to the 1890s and those used by the French colonial rulers from the 1890s to the early twentieth century. She laments the fact that the masculinist bureaucratic regime, created by the French rulers, obscured complex relations between women's roles and statecraft. Her focus here is on the separation of the social sphere from the political sphere and the reconstruction of gender roles and politics through the creation of households composed of "autonomous men and dependent women" (p. 177). This new social order rendered women completely irrelevant to politics.

The manner in which Osborne presents the history of the Milo River Valley shows beyond doubt that much still needs to be told about how such historical processes contribute to the making of African history.

The demographics of empire: The colonial order and the creation of knowledge

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This book is a useful set of conversations on demography in Africa over the past one hundred and fifty years. One Elder, Dennis D. Cordell, opens the conversations and another Elder, Patrick Manning, closes the exchange of ideas. Cordell locates research on demography in a rich and fascinating historiographical discussion of orthodox African history. He forcefully and systematically takes the discussion of African demography into the fields of postmodernist and postcolonial studies. He reviews his own and other systematic studies of African populations to justify an historical examination of demography. Cordell makes a valid appeal for more studies on the African

population, and Manning's chapter is an instant response.

Manning presents a broad sweep of changes in African population since 1850. He takes 1950 as a bench mark for exploring trends and factors that shaped the population of Africa before and after that date. His chapter is an excellent example of what historians claim is unique to their discipline, namely, that the passage of time and regular interrogations improve an understanding of human experience. I was so impressed by the chapters of Cordell and Manning that I wish to close my reflection on them with a metaphor for the whole book. Cordell's and Manning's chapters are like the succulent covers of a mango. The flesh between the covers and the seed has sweet tasting juice and encourages preserving the seed to plant another good mango tree. The book is demography made simple. It is rewarding to read, and creates the expectation that research on African demography will grow and become central to African colonial and postcolonial studies.

Demography is a study of many interconnected responses to changes within human populations. All the European colonial governments in Africa formulated policies on managing African populations during the early phases of colonial rule. Knowing the numbers was useful for formulating policies on taxation, recruitment of labour, and eventually the systematic establishment of formal colonial rule. Gervais and Mandé explain that the French believed that counting their colonised people was an important step to acquire and impose sovereign power.

Many policies followed the systematic subordination of Africans. Cinnamon examines this subordination systematically in Gabon (and neighbourhood) in a critical study of oral testimonies and written documents. I was fascinated by how Cinnamon aided understanding by recognizing African native (indigenous) explanations of social relations. Cinnamon discusses the dislocating and disorienting effects of French intervention in African polities, but demonstrates also the enduring continuity of African memories and social values. McCurdy recognises similar values and practices in her study of disease, reproduction and German Government policies in Ujiji, in western Tanzania. McCurdy's discussion of the depressing experiences of women is an eye-opener to the range of diseases that prevailed in many parts of Africa during the nineteenth century.

Turshen's chapter complements McCurdy's view of women as integral to demographic studies in Africa. Turshen recognizes a long-established fact that women were objects of public or religious policy of governments that manipulated social reproduction. Managing women was an essential component of colonial policies on population. Colonial administrations' control over women was critical in the strategy of re-organising reproduction and the mobilization of labour in sub-Saharan Africa. Turshen offers a refreshing study of the legal practices and control of women during the colonial era. She shows, in part, how patriarchal values in African societies were transferred to the colonial laws that controlled African women. The colonial officials relied on missionaries, African chiefs and male migrant labour for evidence to manipulate the role of women in social reproduction. Turshen does not recognise matrilineality in many African countries, especially the middle-belt of Africa. Anyway, colonial legal systems also ignored matrilineal social practices with the result that women were the worst losers.

The worst loser in this book, however, is African indigenous knowledge systems. This point could be better explained using the straw-man approach. I should therefore indicate briefly that the contributions are well-written because they are based on solid research that has been carried out over a long period. All the authors also master related and relevant literature. Yet, none of them systematically examines indigenous or African attitudes to the size and composition of families. McCurdy, in particular, raised my expectations of a systematic discussion on how Africans in Ujiji managed disease or environmental afflictions based on local social practices and medicine. Moreover, there are reciprocal relations between clans and communities that have implications for African demographic knowledge. The concern I am addressing becomes more serious when we realize that there is no chapter on the nomads, such as the Masai or Bushmen (who have a variety of names in Southern Africa).

The omissions that I have mentioned may nonetheless be added to the research agenda that this book has begun. This is a good text on general or regional and thematic discourses on Africa over the past one hundred and fifty years. It is an excellent text for special seminar courses. The authors demonstrate the virtue of collaborative research, which must have characterized the wonderful workshop in November 2002 from which the chapters emanated. *The Demographics of Empire* is an excellent example of collaboration and mentorship, and an important addition to African history.