this name. Racial ‘categorization’ appears once on p. 318; ‘race’ does not appear in the index although dozens of warships do. A third weakness is the failure of the book to address the effects of the war on the future of the Empire. This is attempted in the Epilogue, but it is a thin attempt, and again one would have expected more from a book that purported to discuss the War and the Empire.

Nevertheless, despite these criticisms, Ashley Jackson has written an important book to which readers can turn with the confidence that they will find an accurate account of the contributions made by dominions and colonies, large and small, to the defence of the Empire in the years 1939–45.

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Does the person make the times or do the times make the person? That is an old question, and a very simplistic one, which many history students have grappled with over the years. This edited collection deals with much more sophisticated aspects of this question in relation to the study of Africa. It looks at how people deal with the apparent limitations of their circumstances, which can include economic, political, social, cultural, and environmental factors. The editors point out that all the major social science theories ‘from structuralism to Marxism and world-systems theory that sought to explain the predicament of African societies in terms of structure have been countered and critiqued by perspectives that emphasized human creativity and resilience, in other words “agency”’ (p. 1). The book stresses the strength of people, organizations, and institutions in overcoming the confines of structure in Africa. The editors’ approach begins with the basic notion that Africans have agency and develops to look at how Africans realize agency. The collection aims to challenge the pessimistic views of African development from the 1990s, which tended to portray Africans as hapless victims trapped in an endless cycle of problems associated with poverty, debt, global markets, and so on.

The book presents a dozen empirical case studies from a variety of disciplines – history, anthropology, and sociology are to the fore – which are meant to highlight and explore the role of agency in Africa. Countries of focus include Ghana, Chad, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, and themes include Pentecostalism, street children, nature conservation, and trance rituals. Curiously, despite the breadth of geographic coverage, there is no chapter on East Africa. Given my own structural limitation of space for this review, I will only highlight a few of the chapters.

Inge Brinkman presents an interesting account of the dreams of Joao Jecquetao, an Angolan nationalist insurgent who fought against Portuguese colonial forces in the early 1960s. His written accounts of his dreams were captured by Portuguese soldiers, translated from Kikongo to Portuguese, and are now housed in the archives of the Portuguese intelligence service in Lisbon. Brinkman claims that the Western emphasis on agency, the actions of a person, might obscure the importance in African culture of a person being acted upon – something she calls ‘patiency’. In this context, dreams would be seen as messages of inspiration or warning from God, or perhaps tricks sent by Satan, meant to inform actions in the physical realm. Brinkman demonstrates that the insurgents’ dreams could influence tactical
decisions they made in fighting against the Portuguese. This chapter would be stronger if it presented more evidence and provided additional context with regard to similar conflicts during the decolonization era.

As an historian of Southern Africa, I was impressed by Jan-Bart Gewald’s chapter on the twentieth-century Herero leader Hosea Kutako, who had fought against the Germans during the 1904–7 rebellion, and then became the headman of the Herero in Windhoek immediately following the South African occupation during the First World War. He eventually became regent and leader of all the Herero, and protested against continued South African rule after the Second World War. Gewald sees the enclosure of Herero into rural reserves not just as a mechanism for colonial control but also as providing a venue for the creation of an imagined Herero historical identity in which Kutako emerged as a leader. It would have been useful to compare Kutako to similar leaders who emerged in the early days of South Africa’s ethnically defined homeland system, such as Pondoland’s Victor Poto Ndamase. Gewald’s contention that Kutako, a minor member of the Herero traditional elite, would not have been propelled to a prominent role without colonialism is slightly speculative, as there are examples from pre-colonial African history of leaders rising from unexpected origins. Considering that Gewald sees Kutako as Namibia’s first nationalist leader, it is surprising that there has never been a book-length biography of him.

Otrude Moyo presents a sociological study of family survival strategies in the contemporary urban setting of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe’s second city and industrial capital, where people struggle daily with the realities of economic collapse and hyper-inflation. She examines three very different families – apostolic faith currency changers, a trans-national family, and a smaller mother-child family – and concludes that despite the post-independence government’s promotion of traditional African family values, there is really no such thing as a typical family in Bulawayo.

Overall, this eclectic collection of essays makes a valuable contribution to the study of agency in Africa and the wide variety of topics means that almost every sort of Africanist reader will find something of interest.

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Al Qaeda and its allies actively confront other Somali, Ethiopians, Ugandans, Kenyans, as well as the United States, Britain, and other Western powers for control over the Horn of Africa. What once was Somalia is a particularly prized parcel, but one of Pirio’s unarticulated theses is that the rest of the Horn is also at risk – Sudan, with its many wars; Eritrea, now a despotic state; and part-Christian, part-Muslim Ethiopia.

One of the strengths of Pirio’s book is a compelling narrative: a blow by blow account of the shifting fates of contenders for the Horn. First he situates Osama bin Laden and his embryonic terrorist enterprise in the Sudan, and discusses its links to Hassan al-Turabi and the other early Sudanese Islamists. Pirio shows persuasively how Bin Laden’s base in the Sudan enabled al Qaeda to involve itself nefariously in Siad Barre’s Somalia and in attempting to oust Americans and others from