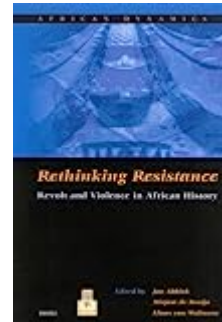


Jon Abbink, Mirjam de Bruijn, Klaus van Walraven, eds. *Rethinking Resistance: Revolt and Violence in African History*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003. x + 368 pp. \$44.00 (paper), ISBN 978-90-04-12624-4.



Reviewed by Martin A. Klein (University of Toronto)

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This is an interesting collection of articles originally given in a seminar held at Leiden's African Studies Centre. It is marked by the diversity of questions asked, areas studied, and theoretical orientations. It deals with conflict in pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial societies. It is, however, marked by an effort to transcend and question earlier typologies of resistance, starting with an analysis by the editors in the book's introduction of the focus in early historiography on resistance to colonialism. They then ask what resisters are resisting and emerge with an approach to resistance as a reaction to many forms of domination. The editors then look at the challenges to early models of resistance posed by recent scholarship and by the emergence in post-colonial Africa of movements that defy the categories constructed earlier. Thus, we have to look at warlords, child soldiers, terror, and movements that destroy the state itself. Of the twelve chapters, half deal with resistance to colonial rule; however, these involve cases often linked to tensions and contradictions within tradition societies. Three chapters deal with post-colonial conflict, two deal with the question of memory, and one deals with slave resistance. A number of the most interesting articles involve established scholars re-visiting terrains they have previously studied and then asking larger questions of causation.

One of the most interesting articles is by Mirjam de Bruijn and Han van Dijk on "Resistance to Fulbe Hegemony in West Africa." A pastoral people spread across West Africa, the Fulbe were particularly vulnerable to instability and predation, and thus they turned to radical Islam, which made possible the creation of polities which could protect the Fulbe. The states created by the Muslim elites often divorced those elites from the mass of Fulbe pastoralists or got caught up in conflict between different state-builders. These regimes were thus often unstable and were seen as oppressive by many of those they originally promised to protect. The result was a renewed cycle of resistance. This model of regimes built in revolution against oppression, which come to be seen as oppressors themselves, is played out in several articles dealing with the post-colonial revolutionary regimes.

If De Bruijn and Van Dijk lay an approach for understanding patterns of precolonial conflict, others describe the precolonial roots of resistance to colonial rule. For example, in an analysis that is critical of much earlier historiography, Stephen Ellis describes the Menelamba (the Red Shawls) revolt of Madagascar as being opposed more to Merina hegemony than to French colonialism or capitalist economic penetration. If Ellis sees the real issue in Menelamba as discontent with the Merina state, Aregawi Berhe argues that the Patriot resistance to Mussolini's in-

vasion of Ethiopia articulated concerns for equality and social justice, which were squelched when the British reimposed Haile Selassie. Other articles deal with clearer resistance models. Idrissa Kimba argues that the Kaouasson revolt of the Tuareg in Niger was a result of the threat French policy posed to pastoral life. Robert Ross revisits the Kat River Settlement, a colony of Khoi set up as a marcher community, but doomed by the hostility of British settlers and the racist attitudes of South African political and military authorities. Though trying to resist the bifurcation of the Cape frontier, the Khoi ended up fighting on both sides of South Africa's Hundred Years' War. Ineke van Kessel looks at mutinies among African slave soldiers who served the Dutch in the East Indies. The mutineers had a number of grievances, but were mainly shaped by the Dutch failure to make good on their promise of equality with European troops. They were not, however, resisting the Dutch colonial states, but rather trying to protect their place in it. Jan-Georg Deutsch looks at slave resistance in German East Africa, arguing that it was often invisible because the dominant mode of resistance was flight.

Several articles deal with post-colonial revolts. Klaas van Walraven deals with the Sawaba revolt in Niger in 1964, in which a left-wing party that lost out in the struggle for power at independence deluded itself that it had in the peasantry a base for an attack on established power. In a more disturbing article, Gerhard Seibert describes Renamo's revolt in Mozambique. Though he describes the roots of Renamo in efforts by South Africa and Rhodesia to destabilize Mozambique and their brutal tactics, he also argues that Renamo's success in entrenching itself was often a result of Frelimo's alienation of the peasantry.

Two articles on memory, both in Namibia, deal not

so much with violence itself as with the way it is remembered. Jan-Bart Gewald writes of the memories of the German effort to exterminate the Herero between 1904 and 1908, memories which are complicated by the effort of nationalists to exploit them and by the fact that many Herero served in South African forces during the struggle for independence. Henning Melber deals with efforts to construct and edit memories of the liberation struggle. Such efforts inevitably involve an effort to present a highly idealized view of things that happened during the armed struggle. Memory thus often becomes propaganda and is treated with disbelief by those too young to have fought or those in cities where colonial authority maintained itself. Finally, an article by Jon Abbink on Somalia, deals neither with resistance nor memory, but with patterns of segmentation and violence that make the constitution of a state difficult. Thus, he sees in the failure of Mohammed Abdulle Hassan's attempt to transcend clan loyalties early in the century the same problems that bedevilled the coalition to oust Siyad Barre.

What emerges from the collection is a sense of dialectical process not limited to class relations, within which there are (in any situation of domination) tensions and contradictions that become the motive force of history. Power, no matter how it is ideologized, serves entrenched elites and is checked only by different forms of resistance. The collection is also important in that implicit in many articles is a view of the colonial state restrained by its limited funding and dependent on alliances with traditional elements, which in turn means that the colonial state is caught up in the oppositions and tensions that marked traditional polities. African societies are seen as highly differentiated. Conflict is constant, and where the oppressed have no legal channel to protest their oppression, violence inevitably results. It takes diverse forms and has diverse effects.

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