

led to a blurring of distinctions between civilian and military authority, as represented in the cases of the Officers of African Affairs, or the district guards who compared their civilian employment to the conditions in the military (p. 168). These changes mirrored developments in France, where the army played a key role in the return of De Gaulle after the collapse of the Fourth Republic in 1958 (p. 173). The military reacted with anguish to Guinea's independence from the AOF in October 1958 (p. 174), leading to a hasty French administrative retreat that one official likened to an amputation (p. 179). The military was also closely implicated in the collapse of the Mali federation in August 1960 (p. 181), which saw its officers obeying African politicians rather than answering to generals in France (p. 182). African sovereignty over the military 'was gained gradually', with independence in no way eliminating French control, as is evident through defence agreements, military intervention and military assistance agreements (p. 184).

This work marks a major reassessment of military service in Francophone Africa, but its analysis also challenges much scholarship on colonial militaries throughout West Africa. Ginio's emphasis on the diversity of soldiers' motives in choosing military service, the complexity of their political opinions and the intrusion of the military into civilian life raise important challenges to the way in which military service has been conceptualized. Geographically, this book also takes the study of African military history beyond national or continental boundaries; Ginio follows soldiers' experiences to Europe and Asia, while revealing how these regions are indispensable to our understanding of developments in West Africa itself.

Minor criticisms include the relatively scant coverage of soldiers' family lives, as well as of the Islamic intellectual context of French interventions in the Hajj. Arab and African Islamic responses to the French assertion of difference between *islam noir* and global Islam also constitute a fascinating subject at the margins of the present study; but these points in no way detract from the importance of this book. Ginio's discussion of decolonization adopts a more international lens than Mann's and Echenburg's definitive contributions, as it engages with the broader intellectual, cultural and political history of French decolonization, such as Le Sueur's account of Algerian intellectual history and Slight's study of the colonial dimensions of the Hajj, as well as Hall's analysis of race in Islamic West Africa.

*Oliver Coates*

Cambridge University

[orc20@cam.ac.uk](mailto:orc20@cam.ac.uk)

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Alicia C. Decker, *In Idi Amin's Shadow: women, gender, and militarism in Uganda*.

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Idi Amin's fearsome regime is popularly known yet academically under-studied. While most accounts of the presidency of the Ugandan dictator focus on his erratic behaviour and the politics of his administration, Alicia C. Decker reframes his eight-year regime around the role of gendered ideologies and the experiences of Ugandan women. Decker argues that Amin deployed gendered rhetoric and militarized action strategically 'to consolidate political hegemony and maintain a certain performance of power' (p. 93). Rather than a deranged madman,

Decker presents Amin as a savvy showman who used gendered discourse to elicit fear and respect, claim legitimacy on the international stage, and humiliate his opponents. However, Amin is not the only agent in this book. Decker shows Ugandan women as multifaceted and multiply situated, courageous actors who strategically navigated increasingly dangerous circumstances.

Each chapter begins with a vignette about a different woman living in Amin's Uganda to presage the key themes of the subsequent section. After introducing the topic and the broad strokes of Amin's rise to power in the introduction, Decker focuses on different manifestations of gender in the Amin administration. We learn about how a ban on miniskirts was used as a tool of social control and a way of defining femininity in a militarized state. We consider the paradoxical opportunities available to some women as entrepreneurs and economic actors in the wake of the expulsion of the Asian community in 1972 and the use of women as key political appointees in the context of International Women's Year in 1975. We see how disappearance was used as an act of militarized spectacle with profound impacts on women's lives. Finally, we bear witness to the dusk of the Amin regime, which was characterized by 'violent displays of hypermasculinity' (p. 146).

Decker pieces together this history through a range of sources despite a 'lack of documentation about the regime's inner workings' (p. 175). She carried out over 100 interviews, focusing on ordinary women from all walks of life. She also used newspaper articles, tracked down numerous court cases, and relied heavily on testimony reported in the *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Disappearances of People in Uganda since 25 January 1971*. The result of this multilayered research is an engaging and readable text that tells the story of life during the Amin years in a new way, giving centrality to women and their experiences while at the same time engaging with the political history of Amin and his military government.

By drawing on gender theorists Joan Wallach Scott and Judith Butler, Decker accounts for the actions of Idi Amin and the state apparatus that surrounded him in ways not previously considered. Gender was 'a crucial organizing factor within Amin's military state, indelibly shaping who he was as a man and how he governed as a ruler' (p. 5). Decker conceptualizes gender as 'discourse, identity, and practice' (p. 6) and provides manifold examples of gender operating in each of these spheres throughout the book. Most striking is the performativity of masculinity that Amin himself enacts. Constantly positioning himself as the father of the nation, or as a fearless warrior, or as a powerful statesman, Amin used his own gender performance to pursue his goals.

Rhetoric about femininity and the role of women in Uganda was also central to the Amin regime, though it was often conflictual. While women were to be keepers of traditional culture and morality, they had important responsibilities as mothers of the country and were increasingly given public acknowledgement as adept businesspeople. However, Amin also regularly used women as symbols of weakness and inadequacy within the political class that surrounded him. These contradictions point to Amin's strategic use of gendered expectations and aspirations as a means for achieving his goals.

Decker relies on a diverse set of Ugandan women as interlocutors, ranging from national-level figures to teachers, market women and petty traders from numerous parts of the country. She is attentive to structures of religion, ethnicity and age when she presents their narratives. However, one shortcoming is the lack of attention to regional and rural–urban divides. Although Decker includes rural women as subjects, the difference between their experiences and those of their urban counterparts is never explored directly. What were the differential effects of Amin's

militarized regime for women in urban versus rural locations, and how did gender operate differently across spatial divides? For example, did the discourse of acting as ‘mothers of the country’ have different meanings for rural and urban women? More attention to these dividing lines would add complexity to the intersecting systems that Decker so capably analyzes.

Through Decker’s engaging book, we are given new ways to understand the violence and supposed chaos of the Amin years. With an attentive eye to detail, a deep knowledge of Ugandan history, and a useful engagement with feminist theory, Decker tells a story of a dictator who used gendered ideology to wield power, and of women who asserted power of their own – sometimes in concert with and sometimes in opposition to their president’s ideas about gender. Amin may be long dead, but the gendered and militarized rhetoric of his era lives on in many ways. This book grapples with that history and allows us to contemplate its meaning for the future.

Lauren Parnell Marino

University of Wisconsin-Madison

[advising@africa.wisc.edu](mailto:advising@africa.wisc.edu)

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Øystein H. Rolandsen and M. W. Daly, *A History of South Sudan: from slavery to independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (hb £59.99 – 978 0 521 11631 2; pb £18.99 – 978 0 521 13325 8). 2016, xix + 171 pp.

This book offers a conventional chronological overview of South Sudan since the nineteenth century. I should declare an interest at the outset, in that I have recently published *South Sudan: a new history for a new nation* (Ohio University Press, 2016). In it, I take a very different approach from the book under review, by attempting an outline of the history of indigenous South Sudanese societies and correcting the stereotype of South Sudan isolation by reintegrating it into a wider regional history. In many ways the two books are complementary. Readers seeking to understand the current state of affairs in South Sudan will welcome Rolandsen and Daly’s tighter focus on the evolution of administration, government and politics, and their useful summaries of older studies. In adhering to conventional explanations rather than proposing new interpretations, however, there are blind spots that make this book more a history of South Sudan as a region than of South Sudanese peoples.

The ‘Land and People’ introduction does much to dismiss both the land and the people. The authors accept the stereotype of South Sudan as ‘among the most remote [lands] of the planet’, a place that ‘hardly seems “on the way” to anywhere and remains a geographical dead end’ (p. 2). This view is the perspective of someone more used to flying over South Sudan than travelling through it, and leaves unexplained how so many different languages came to be indigenous there, or how its peoples share connections with others across a wider region. The ethnographic and linguistic references are brief and not entirely accurate, justified by an essentialist dismissal of ethnic groups as ‘by and large territorial’, with little internal mobility, maintaining ‘cultural homogeneity within their defined territories’ (p. 3) (a claim flatly contradicted by many of the sources listed in the bibliography). The writing of indigenous names and places throughout the book is sometimes inconsistent and inaccurate, a product of more than just careless proofreading, and unfortunate in a book intended to introduce South Sudan to a new readership.