

remain so keen to invoke legacies of struggle in the metanarrative of nation (Herwitz again, and probably others too). Struggle crops up again in Minkley and Mnyaka (Chapter 3), who explore the contestation between citizens and state around a massacre memorial that its opponents angrily read as an attempt to extend state power and propaganda. A memorial to resistance, it has sparked a new wave of resistance from vandals, who are in effect re-making an image they reject. In another stand-out chapter, Rassool examines the centrality of human body parts in debates and disputes about South Africa's 'memorial complex', and the disturbing role of forensic anthropology and scientists in that process. He discusses ethical issues that have resonance internationally: for example, in conflicts between museums and descendent communities around the repatriation and reburial of, and scientific access to, human remains. The bodies just keep coming up.

On the positive side, as a result of these fierce debates and challenges, governments such as South Africa's are moving towards establishing 'national remains' policies, which Rassool applauds as offering 'the promise of decolonising and deracialising museums' in that country (p. 155). A common theme throughout the collection is the myriad ways in which heritage work mirrors the rise and development of the postcolonial nation state, and offers avenues and tools for redress, healing (some scholars would question that), re-memorialising and reclamation in order to counter (Modisane quoting Fanon, p. 234) the ways in which colonialism distorted, disfigured and destroyed the past of oppressed peoples. One may not agree with all the views expressed, but this volume is a must-have for tutors and students of heritage, in and beyond the postcolony.

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Axel Fleisch and Rhiannon Stephens (editors), *Doing Conceptual History in Africa*. Oxford: Berghahn Books (hb £85 – 978 1 78533 163 3). 2016, xi + 243 pp.

'It is in the complexity of a concept that history can be found,' Rhiannon Stephens writes in her chapter of this intriguing collaboration across disciplines (p. 23). Hers is the chapter in which the intellectual debt to Jan Vansina's pioneering work on African historical linguistics is most explicitly acknowledged, not least because Stephens' temporal horizon over a thousand years finds no parallel in this volume. Yet the contributors do more than reintroduce historical linguistics as conceptual history. The promise here is to enrich the two staples of African history as it is currently practised – social and intellectual history – through a reinvigorated interest in language. Reinhart Koselleck's explorations of conceptual history in Europe provide one inspiration, particularly their attention to the uses as well as meanings of concepts on the basis of the widest possible range of sources. The appeal to scholars of Africa lies in the prospect of investigating intellectual lives in a more inclusive manner than would be possible in 'the reductionism of exclusively studying elite thought' (p. 2).

In their introduction to the volume, the editors chart the way by noting, among other things, important differences in how conceptual history has been done in Europe. One is the habit of considering national and linguistic boundaries in Europe as coterminous. While advocating language as a 'historical source' (p. 3), the editors recognize the need for methods that better account for linguistic

complexity in Africa. Such a need is further accentuated by the relative unevenness of written sources on the continent. The contributors to this volume approach methodological challenges according to the specific requirements of their subject matter. While the chapters on Julius Nyerere's uses of *ujamaa* (Str ath) and on decolonization (Fraiture) can contend with policy and philosophical texts, others draw on historical linguistics and diachronic semantics to explore the concepts of 'wealth' and 'poverty' in Uganda (Stephens) and the concepts of 'work' among Nguni-speakers in Southern Africa (Fleisch), and on cognitive linguistics to discuss the domain of 'marriage' in Afrikaans (Pienaar). Yet others turn to oral literature when tracing the conceptual history of 'land' in Equatorial Guinea (S ) and to nineteenth-century newspapers for insights into the same concept in Ghana (van Hensbroek). Sources familiar to most historians also include early colonial dictionaries for the meanings of 'work' on what Mager calls the North-Eastern Cape frontier and early missionaries' ethnographic work as well as oral history on circumcision in Uganda (Khanakwa).

Although the volume reflects on *doing* conceptual history as well as on what results it may yield, the chapters indicate variable degrees of interest in methodological challenges. While always interesting and well-executed, some read as standard social and intellectual histories with special references to certain keywords. It is in the individual chapters by the editors that we get the clearest vision of what doing conceptual history in Africa involves. Fleisch contrasts his approach with the one taken by Jean and John Comaroff in their account of a borrowed lexical item among the nineteenth-century Batshidi. For the Comaroffs, an adopted concept of work serves to mark a transition to the European labour regime. Fleisch questions such a binary opposition between different regimes and points to a more protracted process through which colonial labour notions came to be adapted locally. He does so by comparing several Nguni languages – especially isiZulu, isiXhosa and isiNdebele – over a long period of time along with contemporary interviews and linguistic corpora. Instead of ending up with an argument about lexical polysemy as such, he emphasizes the kinds of lexical polysemy that competing notions in these languages provide. His somewhat startling conclusion states that 'inherited forms express the novel notions, borrowed forms represent older understandings' (p. 63).

Fleisch's methodological reflections are also instructive. He notes the limited scope of African-language newspapers of the period (1870s and 1880s), which he considers formative in Southern African debates on work. As a linguist, Fleisch brings to bear a sophisticated comparative exercise across language boundaries based on corpus analysis and contemporary uses. Here, conceptual history shows how different it is from historical linguistics. Among other things, conceptual history has ambitions to account not only for lexical semantics but also for the pragmatic enactment of key concepts. One method by which Fleisch pursues this ambition is the careful comparative consideration he gives to the ways in which particular verbs tend to be associated with particular nominal counterparts. The pan-Nguni verb *ukusebenza*, for example, and its derivations have a much wider range of applications than the English 'work' and, when compared across related languages, can yield important insights into different historical predicaments.

Stephens notes that the corollary of this comparative enterprise is the question of translation. Although somewhat under-theorized in the volume as a whole, translation is key to exploring 'the shifts in meaning and use that occur in key concepts across time and across languages' (p. 23). Stephens' analysis of how people in present-day Uganda conceptualized 'wealth' and 'poverty' before the twentieth century shows that she is wary of producing only social ideals and that she seeks in

changing definitions evidence of contestations within and between linguistic communities. Translation is thus integral to conceptual history not only as the scholar's burden but also as a matter of negotiation and contestation among language users. It is, along with other methodological considerations put forward in this rich volume, another domain for doing conceptual history in Africa.

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Tamba M'bayo, *Muslim Interpreters in Colonial Senegal, 1850–1920: mediations of knowledge and power in the Lower and Middle Senegal River Valley*. London and Lanham MD: Lexington Books (hb £54.95 – 978 1 4985 0998 5). 2016, 203 pp.

Discussing the issue of Muslim interpreters in French colonial Africa, Tamba M'bayo follows in the footsteps of a new generation of social scientists such as Benjamin Lawrence, who believe that by placing African interpreters in a central position, the world of academia can generate more positive understandings of them and their roles. Drawing on archival/written and oral evidence, M'bayo attests that from the 1850s to the early 1920s, Muslim interpreters functioned as indigenous intermediaries between French colonial officials and Africans along the Lower and Middle Senegal River.

Due to a lack of empirical studies, M'bayo believes that the functions of Muslim interpreters as transmitters of socio-cultural and political knowledge in the context of French colonial rule have been misrepresented and misunderstood. His book shows, through the intermediaries' perspectives rather than those of the French officials (in the administration and army), how interpreters mediated between French and Africans during a period of military intrusion and economic competition, leading to full colonial occupation by the end of the nineteenth century.

First, he affirms that depictions of Muslim interpreters as collaborators or unscrupulous, dishonest, untrustworthy individuals in previous publications and general accounts have made it difficult to perceive their roles as 'cultural brokers, emissaries, diplomatic hosts, military and expedition guides, and treaty negotiators'. In Chapter 4, M'bayo states his belief that they played central roles in transmitting messages between French authorities and Africans, keeping communication channels open and allowing them to navigate between the two spheres. Because of this role, 'they shaped the power dynamics at play in relations' between the two groups. He also mentions how French colonial authorities recognized their important work, leading certain French governors such as Faïdherbe and Brière de l'Isle to highlight their roles in the success of the civilizing mission. Further evidence of their importance to French elites is the French colonial transformation of the School of Hostages, *École des Otages*, into the School of Sons of Chiefs and Interpreters, *École de Fils des Chefs et des Interprètes*.

M'bayo concedes that certain cases of disloyalty and self-interest did exist. However, most interpreters were men of integrity who were aware of their difficult mission of balancing personal, communal and French interests. For the author, it seems irrational to portray them as a homogeneous group of French puppets or self-seeking career opportunists, given the complex evolution of the