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Book reviews

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# Book review: A socio-economic study of the Kenya Highlands from 1900-1970: a case study of the Uhuru government

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*Boston University*

Book review: A Socio-Economic Study of the Kenya Highlands from 1900-1970:

A Case Study of the Uhuru Government, by Ng'weno Osolo-Nasubo (Washington:

University Press of America, 1977) 347 p. <sup>3 (including bibliography)</sup> Plus ~~statistical~~ appendix containing maps and statistical data  
The Anglo-American proposals for a 'moderate' government in Zimbabwe

have been praised because they follow the lines of the so-called Kenya model. In this book, Ng'weno Osolo-Nasubo, a Kenyan scholar, exposes the utter failure of that model to meet the needs of the masses of the African population.

In many ways, the current Zimbabwean guerilla struggle parallels that of the Kenyans in the 1950s. In both cases, a tiny white minority had taken over the best lands to create vast estates, shaping the state and associated institutional structures to coerce Africans to work for bare subsistence wages to provide the labor force to run them. In both cases, the African population, frustrated and impoverished, turned ultimately to guns to re-capture their land through armed struggle. The major difference lies in the fact that in Kenya, the leaders of the so-called 'Mau Mau' movement lacked an advanced ideological perspective. They fought in isolation without outside aid, surrounded by nations still governed by colonial regimes. The Zimbabwean liberation movement, in contrast, backed by socialist countries as well as the already independent neighboring states, has become increasingly united around an ideology focused on the necessity for fundamental structural changes in the inherited political economy.

Once again, however, the British, now in close alliance with the United States, seeks to impose a 'moderate' government in Zimbabwe as it did in Kenya, a government dedicated to maintenance of the status quo. As Osolo-Nasubo notes, Sir Michael Blundell, a colonial administrator in Kenya, had explicitly argued that, since Britain could no longer be expected to finance the anti-guerilla warfare required to protect the white minority rule, new methods were necessary to achieve the same end. He therefore urged that, to end the appearance of the issue as one of race, independence should be provided

in a way calculated to bring a few Africans into the 'haves' as opposed to the 'have nots'.

*Insert A* ~~Osolo-Nasubo details~~ the way the Uhuru Government politicians did indeed come to collaborate with the former colonialists who were encouraged to stay on in Kenya as advisors and civil servants by the 'golden handshake' (cash payments much like those proposed for Zimbabwe through the Development Fund). Together, the Kenyan elite and the white minority shaped what Osolo-Nasubo describes as a ~~negatively skewed land program~~ leading to the growing landlessness and impoverishment of hundreds of thousands of Kenyans. Meanwhile, a handful of Kenyan politicians and civil servants have acquired large tracts of land and have become directors of local affiliates of transnational corporations on which Kenya's lop-sided political economy remains dependent.

Osolo-Nasubo cites many Kenyan political leaders, as well as other scholars and experts, who agree with his own conclusion: "(I)f the present Uhuru Government does not bring an end the still prevailing colonial legacy, then it is more than likely that the situation that arose in the 1950's (of large scale guerilla warfare-AS) may repeat itself. And if it did...the magnitude of destruction to the nation may be much more than the one the Colonial Government faced." (pp. 280-81)

This is indeed an important book for today. Those who have any illusions about the consequences of imposing this model of 'development' in Kenya, Zimbabwe, or anywhere else on the African continent, should read it.

*Department of* Ann Seidman  
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Insert A on p. 2  
1's book

Osolo-Nasubo reviews the history of ~~agricultural development~~ land tenure <sup>in Kenya</sup> and agricultural development under the colonialists. He ~~first~~ <sup>first</sup> describes ~~first~~ the traditional land tenure in the Highlands, ~~and then discusses~~ the impact of European settlement and the ~~institutionalization~~ various institutions created to ~~coerce~~ coerce Africans into a low-paid labor force. He pictures the development of African resistance and the introduction of the Swynnerton plan designed to ~~en~~ counter it. On these foundations, he analyzes the post-independence era land policy: the ~~land~~ continuation of the land consolidation and registration program, the "million acre" ~~schemes~~ and other schemes for ~~settlement~~ ~~the Highlands.~~

<sup>is in</sup> In this context, <sup>that</sup> Osolo-Nasumbo details