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The Nyasaland Survey Papers, 1938-43: Agriculture, Food and Health by Veronica Berry; Celia Petty

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it surely high time for African governments and overseas donor agencies to accept that their top-down approaches are condemned to failure—a lesson that Gefu's report makes clear in several regards.

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VERONICA BERRY and CELIA PETTY (eds.), *The Nyasaland Survey Papers, 1938–43: agriculture, food and health*. London: Academy Books, 1992, 313 pp., £29.95, ISBN 0 9509470 2 4.

This is a most remarkable work, and one that should be required for any researcher working on African food systems and nutrition, on land and natural resource use, or on the colonial period in Africa.

It presents the hitherto unpublished research papers produced by a multidisciplinary team of agricultural scientists, nutritionists, anthropologists, biologists and medical and other scientific officers who carried out a five-year programme of field surveys in Malawi (then Nyasaland) between 1938 and 1943. The survey was led by Platt, who later became the first Professor of Human Nutrition at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The programme was overtaken by World War II, by Platt's own change of approach and interests, and superseded by a post-war view of malnutrition as a set of specialist health problems rather than a development problem. These multidisciplinary studies, though in large part fully analysed and written up by the individual members of the team, were stored in archives and forgotten. Fifty years later they were unearthed by Veronica Berry, one of the members of the original team, by now in her eighties. Together with her co-editor she has brought to publication the work into which she, her husband and their colleagues put so much. Quite apart from the splendid story of the papers' rediscovery and ultimate publication, the book is fascinating on a number of levels. Firstly it records the development of a multidisciplinary approach now seen as fundamental. While the papers are cast in a colonial idiom, current views on agricultural development and nutrition have come full circle, and in the light of this work current holistic views of and multidisciplinary approaches to nutritional and development problems fall into context as a revival rather than a new departure. Secondly it presents a snapshot of a period in the colonial era that illuminates not only African land use and diets but also expatriate attitudes and impacts. Finally it provides an invaluable database of remarkable relevance today. Here are carefully structured and clearly recorded samples that set out not only a methodology from which we can learn much of interest but also a superb, detailed fifty-year-old baseline of data on nutrition, land use, work patterns, natural resource use and much else. There is considerable material that will allow detailed comparison with contemporary studies. So much development work has suffered from a lack of understanding of past conditions and past initiatives that this type of work represents nothing short of a gold mine.

Following an introduction to the survey and the methods used, comprising both original and editorial material, there are the original papers on the history of the region, descriptions of the three main sample villages and the sample structure, environmental factors, land and crops, agricultural work, wild resources and the work patterns of men, women and children. The nutritional focus of the multidisciplinary programme is then developed through chapters setting out the original reports on food and feeding, food consumption in relation to requirements, food values, nutrient supply and consumption, clinical aspects of nutrition survey, wider health issues, including local concepts of disease and studies of infectious diseases. The book then sets out the reports of the nutrition development unit 1940–43, with sections on rural development and agricultural schemes, and on

demographic and anthropological aspects of growth, maturation, fertility, mortality and disease. The main collection concludes with recommendations on diet, food production and use, land use and broader development and economic issues. There are also valuable appendices on land use and a long and detailed section on local techniques of food processing. The reports are constructed around clear and thorough data tables throughout. Although 1940s data presentation does not include all the information for detailed statistical comparisons with present-day work, the tables nonetheless have tremendous potential for comparative analysis. The editors provide useful linking and explanatory material, set out in a distinct typeface.

The editors have carried out a phenomenal task in putting together the material in this book. Together with the publishers they must be congratulated not only on their achievement but on making a generally very attractively presented book available at an exceedingly reasonable price, despite the great amount of specialist data it contains. This is not a work to read at a sitting. It is a reference work to be consulted by postgraduates planning their fieldwork, by researchers analysing contemporary results and hoping to learn from an historical perspective, by historians of Africa wanting to draw on the best data that first-hand scientific observation could produce at the time. Every researcher working on African food systems, land and natural resource use, development or history should use this book.

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PETER GESCHIERE and PIET KONINGS (eds.) *Itinéraires d'accumulation au Cameroun*. Paris: Karthala, 1993, 393 pp., 160-00 francs, ISBN 2 86537 405 X.

In Africa economic modes of accumulation sometimes follow unexpected pathways. Since independence, hidden or informal ways of enrichment have developed which operate on the margin of circuits controlled by the state. The famous 'tontines' of west Cameroon provide a striking example of this development: so much money is invested in them that they have shaken the country's banking system to its core.

Of late, there has been growing interest in the existence of 'alternative' modes of accumulation operating more or less outside the purview of the state. Particularly after the publication of the 1989 World Bank report on the crisis in sub-Saharan Africa, it has become common to expose the failures of the state in Africa, it has become common to expose the failures of the state in Africa and to insist on the need of by-passing centralised formations in favour of social groups and agencies capable of stimulating real development. It seems to be a precarious undertaking, however, to oppose 'state' and 'society'. Certainly, as regards Cameroon, the articles in this volume show clearly that things are both more complex and more ambiguous. The object is rather to gain deeper insight into the complex intertwinement of state and society since decolonisation. Indeed, the present collection shows that a real withdrawal of the state would be exceedingly difficult to implement. On the contrary, the present crisis in Cameroon calls for forms of co-operation between the state and entrepreneurs.

Two sets of questions form a kind of leitmotif for the articles included in the volume at hand. (1) What is the exact relation between state and accumulation? Do modes of accumulation really take place 'outside' the state or do they constitute informal or even illegal excrescences of the state? (2) What types of regional variation occur in the grafting of new forms of accumulation on to existing patterns of organisation? Not surprisingly, the various chapters of the book provide very different perspectives on this issue. The differences are compounded by the fact that the various authors use the notion of accumulation in a broad, and therefore variable, sense. As it is employed