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Paris, L'Harmattan, 2001, 619 p.

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- 1 With the historiography of Togo as minimal as it is, this new work by Schuerkens should by all accounts be of importance and originality. With the exceptional recent flourish of Ewe and borderland studies, particularly the three excellent works by Emmanuel Akyeamong¹, Sandra Greene² and Paul Nugent³, there is otherwise comparatively little written about the post-1914 colonial history of Togo. And while the majority of that which does exist is francophone, there is nothing at all, with the sole exception of my recent doctoral thesis⁴, that does what Schuerkens attempts to do, that is to reunite the partitioned former Germany colony as a unit of anthropological cum historical analysis.
- 2 In a simple sequential style, the author examines first the German colonial period (1884-1914) with an emphasis on German colonial ideology, the chieftaincy, and the introduction of currency; second, the sojourn of France in Togo (1914-1960), following the traditional historical concern with the implementation of *la politique d'association*; and finally, the mandate of Britain in Togoland (1914-1957). After extensive deliberations, Schuerkens arrives at the conclusion that as each of the colonial powers had their distinctive interpretations of how to develop their colonial projects, the impact of each regime was marked but distinctly different. In an addendum just as perplexing as it is unexciting, she adds that the regions of German Togoland that came under British "tutelage" maintained a distinctly British developmental model after independence, while those under French mandate tended toward the French model.
- 3 Reuniting the former German colony is certainly a laudable scholarly objective. Few historians, and sadly even fewer Africanists of a non-historical bent, realize the extent of the implications and the impact of the rapid change in colonial administrations in Togo,

and to a lesser extent Cameroon. Between 1884 and 1960 certain southern-dwelling Ewe communities (*dukowo*) lived under six different regimes in the course of one lifetime: 1. German; 2. British occupation; 3. French mandate; 4. Vichy France; 5. French UN Trusteeship; 6. French Union followed by independence. In fact even today there remain alive a few elderly men and women who can recollect the arrest and imprisonment of the German governor in 1914. Indeed an historical study sensitive to the implications of the historical developments on the ground for the our understanding of the “colonial encounter” would be hard pressed to look further a field than southern Togo as a site of complex social historical narratives.

- 4 Scheurkens displays little interest in the more important historical struggles in colonial Togo, however. How else can one account for the complete absence of any discussion of the Lomé women’s revolt of 1933, the Kabre migrations, the growth of cocoa farming in Akposso/Buem, or the Lawson-Adjigo chieftaincy dispute? Moreover, while the historiography of Togo is limited and thus a reluctance on the part of the author to engage might otherwise be excused, the historiographical debates concerning the impact of colonialism are rich, rewarding and deeply contested. The recent work of Berry⁵ on chieftaincy in Ghana, for example, directly pertains to the wider objectives of this study. While Miles’, Asiwaju’s and Nugent’s research⁶ on borderlands and the choices faced by colonial subjects in frontier zones is another example of a set of key historical debates for which the experience of Togo, and in particular the ethnic groups divided by the mandate border, namely the Ewe, Akposso, Dagomba, Mamprussi and so forth, sheds new and important light.
- 5 Unfortunately Schuerkens does little to bring to the foreground the complexities of the colonial experience in the very unusual colonial situation afforded by Togo and the lessons learned from it for wider Africanist scholarship. The key fault lies in her exclusive use of colonial archives produced for the League of Nations and United Nations Organization, all of which post-date German rule. Neither archival deposits in Togo and Ghana (which are extensive and accessible) nor oral interviews conducted in the field form part of the analysis. This negligence, coupled with the superabundance of Appendices (pp. 371-603) the vast majority of which are but reprinted official texts, demands that Schuerkens’ work be relegated to old-style positivist colonial history. Furthermore, the organization of the narrative and its heavy emphasis on colonial administrative divisions and justice means that this volume is much better situated among administrative sociology than historical anthropology.

NOTES

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2. S. E. GREENE, *Sacred Sites and the Colonial Encounter*, Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2002.

3. P. NUGENT, *Smugglers, Secessionists and Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier: The Life of the Borderlands since 1914*, Athens, OH, Ohio University Press, 2002.
4. B. N. LAWRENCE, *Shaping States, Subverting Frontiers: Social Conflict and Political Consolidation among the Ewe dukowo in the Togoland Mandates, 1919-1945*, Ph.D. Thesis, Stanford University, 2002.
5. S. S. BERRY, "Unsettled Accounts: Stool Debts, Chieftaincy Disputes and the Question of Asante Constitutionalism", *Journal of African History*, 39, 1998, pp. 39-62.
6. William F. S MILES, *Hausaland Divided: Colonialism and Independence in Nigeria and Niger*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1994 ; A. I. ASIWAJU, "The Alaketu of Ketu and the Onimeko of Meko: The Changing Status of two Yoruba Rulers under French and British Rule", in M. CROWDER & O. IKIME (eds.), *West African Chiefs: Their Changing Status under Colonial Rule and Independence*, New York, Africana Publishing Corp, 1970; and P. NUGENT, "Arbitrary Lines and the People's Minds: a Dissenting View on Colonial Boundaries in West Africa", in P. NUGENT & A. I. ASIWAJU (eds.), *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities*, London & New York, Francis Pinter, 1996, pp. 36-41; P. NUGENT & A. I. ASIWAJU (eds.), *Western Yorubaland Under European Rule: A Comparative Analysis of French and British Colonialism*, London, Longman, 1976.