Journal of African History, **41** (2000), pp. 127–130. Printed in the United Kingdom
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AFTERWORD

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THE four papers in this collection bring a varied set of perspectives as well as examples to bear on several common themes. The authors describe continuities and changes in colonial policies toward Africans' access to and use of land and natural resources and discuss some of the sources of knowledge that informed colonial officials' thinking about African land use practices. Implicitly if not directly, each poses the question of whether colonial officials learned anything from their interactions with African farmers and/or herders? By bringing together evidence from different though overlapping periods of time (all of them cover the late 1940s and 1950s) and a variety of colonial contexts (colonies under French and British rule, with and without European settlers), as a group these papers invite reflection on the circumstances that led colonial officials to acknowledge, or deny, that Africans might know something about their environments and that such knowledge ought to inform the design of conservation and development schemes.

Each paper examines the implementation of rural development and conservation policies in a particular locality within a larger colonial unit. Hodgson and van Beusekom focus on state-sponsored multi-purpose development schemes – the Masai Development Plan in the Northern Province of Tanganyika and the Office du Niger in the Niger River Valley in Soudan (Mali). Worby's paper on Southern Rhodesia and Fairhead and Leach's on Guinea trace the implementation of general policies of land allocation, agricultural development and/or forest conservation in one region – Sanyati-Gokwe in northwestern Rhodesia and Kissidougou in southern Guinea. In the Niger Valley and Sanyati-Gokwe, agricultural officials worked to promote increased output and productivity among African farmers who had been resettled in these areas at the behest of the colonial regime. In northern Tanganyika and southern Guinea, on the other hand, land use policies were aimed at regulating the activities of African herders and farmers who were already living in the areas in question and had used land and land-based resources (water, pasture, forest, etc.) there long before the advent of colonial rule.

Continuities in development policy were rarely the result of consensus among colonial officials with respect to either the goals of land use management or the methods of achieving them. All four of these essays help to deconstruct facile generalizations about 'the official mind' of colonial rule by describing debates among colonial administrators over development policy and/or changes in particular programs. Fairhead and Leach argue, for example, that while scientists voiced concern about deforestation and the accompanying 'dessication' of soils and climate in West Africa from the early years of colonial rule, the influence of their 'pan-West African orthodoxy' on policy varied a great deal from one colony and time period to another.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853799007586 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Anxious not to discourage upland rice production, officials in Guinea downplayed the dangers of deforestation until the 1930s, when cocoa and coffee began to emerge as significant export crops. The shift in the government's agricultural priorities coincided with the creation of a separate Water and Forestry Service, whose staff both argued the case for forest reserves and provided the administrative capacity to enforce them. As colonial budgets and bureaucracy expanded after 1945, officials paid even closer attention to scientific arguments about the dangers of dessication and stepped up their efforts to prevent it by regulating farmers' practices. Aggressive conservationism retreated in the face of nationalist protest in the late 1950s, but quickly regained its ascendancy after independence.

In Fairhead and Leach's account, changes in both the goals and implementation of development policy are explained primarily in terms of shifts in bureaucratic capacity, political interests and financial constraints within the colonial administration. The authors point out that officials' accounts of the causes and dangers of desiccation sometimes coincided with those of 'local inhabitants' who associated desiccation with human as well as agricultural infertility and blamed it on the movement of Maninka-speaking 'savannah people' into the forests of Kissidougou. But Fairhead and Leach do not suggest that such local ideas carried enough weight with colonial administrators to have had a demonstrable impact on policy; only the threat of nationalist agitation in the 1950s was sufficient to alter administrative practice.

A counter-example is provided by van Beusekom's analysis of interactions between African farmers and colonial officials at the Office du Niger. In contrast to Fairhead and Leach, who focus on fluctuations in the influence of scientific consensus on bureaucratic practice within the colonial administration, van Beusekom argues that administrators in the Office du Niger not only adapted policy directives to accommodate farmers' practices, but eventually acknowledged that European 'science had to build on local knowledge' (p. 81). These changes in officials' thinking and practice came about as a direct result of interactions with African farmers, who both refused to adopt unproductive agronomic practices mandated by the project and 'voted with their feet' by cultivating in their own way outside the project's perimeters. By the late 1940s, after twenty years of low yields and persistent deficits, managers at the Office acknowledged that farmers' method of classifying soil types – according to physical structure rather than chemical composition – provided a better basis for making crop choices than their own and adapted recommended cropping and cultivation methods accordingly. The impetus for change was reinforced by criticism from the colonial ministry, but van Beusekom suggests that such criticism was itself a response to the Office's failure to convince African farmers to adopt its recommended practices.

Hodgson's and Worby's analyses fall between the two West African papers in the role that African farmers and herders played in shaping colonial policies. Hodgson concludes that the managers of the Masai Development Plan learned little from the failure of many of its key initiatives, but she makes it clear that this was not for lack of interaction between colonial officials and Maasai men. (Maasai women, Hodgson points out 'were completely overlooked'.) Officials, particularly local ones, were well aware

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that Maasai had helped to pay for development projects, such as water supplies, schools and medical and veterinary services, and that their system of seasonal grazing helped to sustain pastures over time. Yet these achievements were frequently dismissed as inadequate or traditional, while others – such as Maasai herders' willingness to diversify into farming or their often trenchant criticisms of compulsory bush clearance and destocking – were derided as retrograde or 'inconsistent' with their essential pastoralism. At times, Hodgson suggests, the continuities in officials' thinking seem to have defied logic as well as experience.

Worby also points to a persistent gap between the continuity of colonial officials' thinking about Africans' capacities for progress, and variations in development practices on the ground. In Sanyati-Gokwe district, Africans who were forcibly relocated there in the 1950s, or migrated voluntarily in the early 1960s, faced fewer restrictions on their farming and living arrangements than they did when living in closer proximity with European farmers and missionaries. Moreover, by the early 1960s, the government's initial effort to confine African settlers to highly regulated ten-acre farms had given way to a program of extension and marketing services designed to promote smallholder cotton production in Gokwe by offering African farmers information and incentives rather than compelling them to follow state directives. In Southern Rhodesia as a whole, Worby concludes, 'the ''lessons learned'' by the state ... were ... unevenly distributed in administrative and social space' (p. 123).

As case studies, these essays seek, appropriately, to explain officials' (in)ability to learn from African farmers in terms of their specific histories of interaction in a particular context. Read together, they also remind us of the extent to which colonial development policies and practices revolved around common themes. Two that feature significantly in this particular set of cases were the questions of money and land. In Southern Rhodesia, northern Tanganyika and the forest zone of Guinea, colonial authorities sought to 'improve' Africans' land-use practices while excluding or removing them from land that they had used and/or occupied long before the colonial era. Officials' reasons for separating farmers and herders from their land varied, of course, from one place to another. In Tanganyika and Southern Rhodesia, African pastoralists or 'squatters' were moved to make way for European settlers and/or private ownership by African farmers. In Tanganyika, Maasai and their herds were also barred from rangelands, which officials considered threatened by overgrazing, and displaced from areas of tsetse fly infestation when the young men (*ilmurran*) refused to clear tsetse bush by hand. Similarly, in Guinea, the establishment of forest reserves meant that rural dwellers were excluded from cultivating within them and often had their gathering and hunting rights curtailed as well. In areas where development went hand in hand with dispossession, officials relied heavily on coercion to change Africans' practices and justified doing so by clinging to entrenched misconceptions about African cultures and capabilities.

African settlers in Gokwe and the Office du Niger were also told what crops to grow and how to cultivate them, but in a context in which land was being made available to them, sometimes in combination with other inputs and services as well. In these areas, farmers had good reason to try to adapt

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or modify the cultivation packages thrust upon them by agricultural officials, rather than criticize or reject them outright – as Maasai warriors and stock owners rejected compulsory labor and destocking or farmers in Kissidougou subverted orders not to fell trees or set fires. Relieved of responsibility for evicting Africans from their land or forcing them to perform unwanted tasks, officials in Gokwe and the Office du Niger seem also to have been more amenable to acknowledging Africans' contributions to effective land management practices and the limitations of their own knowledge of local environments. Although none of the papers in this collection draws an explicit link between policies of dispossession and officials' readiness to learn from African farmers, together they suggest that might be a fruitful subject for further inquiry.

As a group, these essays also remind us that established ideas die hard, even in the best of circumstances, and that the most open-minded officials often suspend their better judgment in the face of financial opportunity or constraint. Project managers at the Office du Niger may have acknowledged the importance of soil structure by the late 1940s, but they jumped on the bandwagon of mechanization when funds became available to buy tractors – abandoning them only when settlers refused to pay to have their soils compacted by expensive mechanized ploughs. Similarly, Reid's policy of encouraging rather than compelling farmers to grow cotton in Gokwe might not have been sustained if it had not quickly paid off, and in Guinea, scientific warnings about the dangers of dessication went largely unheeded until government money and manpower were made available to create and monitor forest reserves. These three cases underscore the familiar point that when money becomes available, bureaucrats will spend it. Ironically, the very willingness of Maasai to help finance local development projects and diversify their sources of income seems only to have reinforced officials' vision of them as intransigent traditionalists who had to be compelled to help themselves.

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