Geffray, Christian. - *La cause des armes au Mozambique. Anthropologie d'une guerre civile* 
Monsieur Patrick Harries

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Document généré le 26/06/2017
intellectuals who have attempted, not only to proselytize as widely as possible, but also, in important ways, to reform the order itself.

Triaud’s and Last’s articles examine, in very different but equally suggestive ways, the “technology of charisma”, to use Last’s apt phrase. Triaud focuses on the practice of *khalwa*, or retreat, as a quasi-institutionalized step towards the achievement of sainthood. Last traces, in historical depth, the changing ways in which rulers and politicians in what is now northern Nigeria have used and continue to use different kinds of Islamic medicine to attain power and to maintain legitimacy. Clarke and Coulon each trace the somewhat unusual careers of two twentieth century Muslim leaders. Coulon, in the context of a broader discussion of the role of women in Sufi brotherhoods in Africa, details the career of Sokhna Magat Diop, who, inheriting her father’s position of Shaikh in the Mouride brotherhood, is “the only Senegalese woman in charge of a Muslim religious community”. Clarke documents the life of Muhammad Jumat Imam, self-proclaimed Mahdi, among the Ijebu of southwestern Nigeria, and who, some thirty years after his death, continues to have a following in the region. Finally, Constantin’s survey of the role of charismatic saints in the diffusion of Islam in the East African interior complements a collection which otherwise maintains a very West African focus.

Overall, the quality of the individual papers in this volume is excellent. Paradoxically, taken together, they tend to underscore the difficulty of reducing the phenomena they discuss to single models or even global concepts. “Charisma”, or for that matter “wilaya”—the substitution of an Arabic term does not automatically entail greater conceptual clarity—turns out on closer inspection to be such a many-faceted object that generalizations tend either to be vacuous or else subject to so many empirical exceptions as to be largely suspect. In this respect, the papers in the volume which point out underlying differences in various contexts—Brenner’s comparison of the ideals of two key eighteenth century leaders; Last’s periodization of the uses of Islamic medicine in changing historical circumstances; indeed Cruise O’Brien’s discussion of contemporary Mourides in urban Senegal—suggest a kind of analytical approach which, eschewing over-arching generalization, is perhaps, in the long run, a more useful way of accounting for the variety and complexity of Sufi brotherhoods and their leaders in Africa.

Robert LAUNAY


In 1983-84 Christian Geffray spent eighteen months in northern Mozambique studying the structure of Macua society. Four years later he returned to undertake an anthropological investigation of the war that had devastated the area of his earlier fieldwork. Completed in April 1990 and printed two months later, *La cause des armes* is very much a report from the field. But the narrow focus of the book, and the haste with which it has been researched and produced, is also its strength for it is the first in-depth investigation of the civil war in one region of Mozambique, the Erati district of Nampula province.

Despite its subtitle, *La cause des armes* is less a careful anthropological study of war than an autopsy of the Mozambican revolution, and its intellectual roots lie with François Furet rather than with David Lan, Terence Ranger or even Göran Hyden. Geffray’s book is a passionate attack on Mozambique’s revolutionary catechism and will not be well received by the urban bureaucrats and development experts, many of them mobile expatriates, whom he targets as ultimately respon-
sible for the crisis in the country. Like the Jacobins, these people believed in a revolutionary tabula rasa, universal principles of equality, progress and democracy, centralised government, a sense of nationhood tied to a common language, and the destruction of 'feudal' bonds of social cohesion and production; these were often good intentions, but they frequently obscured a discourse of power and control.

It is the 'ideology of the blank state' (p. 28) that Geffray holds ultimately responsible for the failure of the revolution. When Frelimo came to power in 1975 the party dismissed regional and social differences as the products of colonialism, feudalism and obscurantism and sought to modernise and unify the country on the basis of a common Marxist-Leninist philosophy. To nudge the peasantry out of their famous passivity, communal villages were to act as centres of development in the rural areas but, as Geffray shows in great detail, these were soon to become a focus of popular dissent.

In the Erati district, democracy was 'killed in the egg' (p. 31) in 1977 when the election to the People's Assembly of respected and legitimate clan chiefs was disallowed by party officials critical of their 'feudal' position. Within a short space of time communal villages became 'political instruments' employed by the party 'to ensure the social control, on a daily basis, of almost twelve million rural people' (p. 36). The discourse of progress and equality disguised the conquest of rural society by the cosmopolitan, lusophone towns. Opposition to Frelimo came from various sectors of the population in Erati; the powerful clan notables, youths whose hopes and ambitions were truncated by the collapse of the economy in the late 1970s, and people forcibly displaced by the government's production strategies and anti-insurgency warfare. Renamo aimed to capitalise on these grievances when it entered the district in 1986 and created 'social and geographical spaces' in which people could 'openly resocialise under the familiar authority of their legitimate chiefs, abandon the hated (communal) villages, return to work on their old lands and celebrate without fear or shame the important moments of their social life' (p. 93).

Geffray stresses that the chiefs who, like Reformation princes, have gone over to Renamo with great blocks of their followers are not the regulos created by the Portuguese. They are not trying to reconquer colonial privileges, as Maputo would have us believe, but are fighting to reestablish their 'dignity and lost identity' (p. 83). But the civil war is only partly shaped by the differences between town and countryside; at the local level it follows the parameters of deep, historical enmities between the beneficiaries of state power and those marginalised by colonial and postcolonial state structures. Hence, ironically, in view of Frelimo's representation of the war, it is the colonial collaborators who support the government in Erati while the old enemies of the Portuguese side with the postcolonial rebels.

Renamo depends on the people in the zones under its control for food and information but it does not try to replicate state structures or construct a political discourse of legitimation. To uncover the movement's aims one has to turn to its military strategy. The wholesale murder of individuals such as village secretaries, teachers and militiamen, who may be identified with the state, has a gruesome logic as it deprives Frelimo of the manpower needed to control the rural areas. The destruction of communal villages and other centres of production, and the strangulation of the communications network feeding the urban population and holding the country together is also aimed at freeing the rural areas from the grip of the towns. In a particularly chilling passage Geffray calls convoys, a prime target of Renamo, 'a detachment of urban society, a circulating fraction of the town, mobile and vulnerable, en route between two cities' (p. 216). He portrays Renamo not as a political movement, or even as a guerrilla force requiring peasant support; it is rather a classical army, a parasite dependent on war for its reproduction.
Although Renamo is in part an army of captives, it functions with deadly efficiency. In the zones under its control young adolescents perform domestic chores for the soldiers and capaceiros act as tribal policemen. More sinister are the disaffected youths who serve the chiefs and Renamo as m'jibas. For them the comrade of war replaces the social cohesion of the extended kin network discouraged by Frelimo, it is a source of adventure and a rite of passage into the adult world of the armed soldier. In many ways Renamo has succeeded in breaking the hold of the state in the rural areas, more particularly as Frelimo, in an attempt to gain support of the peasantry, has been obliged to break up the communal villages and recognise the clan chiefs. So why, if Frelimo has addressed the causes of peasant grievances, do large numbers of people continue to support this ‘sociological monster’? Because pillage, writes Geffray, has become a way of life, a basic means of subsistence in a country destroyed by war.

Geffray will be faulted for drawing too stark a picture in his desire to overturn Mozambique's revolutionary vulgate. He mentions South African aid to Renamo only in passing in a footnote and his prognosis for the future is bleak; he fears that the Mozambican Armed Forces will gradually lose their accountability to government and degenerate into armed bands dependent, like Renamo, on war for their survival. No negotiated settlement, not even a Thermidor reaction or a new rider-on-a-horse. This book is written with great feeling, but Geffray's courage sometimes lapses into depression.

Patrick Harries


Studies of Islam in Africa tend, by and large, to be success stories, documenting the steady spread of the faith before and especially during and after the colonial period. After all, it is the flourishing Muslim communities which are most likely to attract the attention of scholars. For this very reason, Kagabo's account of Islam in Rwanda is particularly valuable as a countervailing example. This is not to imply, by any means, that it is the story of failure. Still, Rwanda's Muslim community has never been more than a small, and in important respects marginal, minority. Virtually non-existent in Rwanda before the colonial period, Islam predictably faced the combined hostility of the White Fathers and the colonial administration. Paradoxically, the very success with which Catholicism took root in Rwanda helped to determine the social space which Rwanda's Muslim community would ultimately occupy.

The focus of Kagabo's book is not really on Islam per se, but rather on the constituting of a specific community in Rwanda, a community which was defined, and defined itself, largely in opposition to the minority of the country: Muslim as opposed to Christian; Swahili-speaking as opposed to Kinyarwanda-speaking; urban as opposed to rural; commercial as opposed to agricultural. These were the “Swahili” of Rwanda, originally outsiders of heterogeneous African origins, but increasingly comprised of native Rwandans. As Kagabo describes it, Islamization in Rwanda is essentially the process by which individuals have been incorporated into this “Swahili” community.

The way in which Kagabo has chosen to analyze and to depict the “Swahili” community of Rwanda was dictated in part by circumstances. A political refugee from the country since 1974, he was not able to work from first-hand observation, but had to rely instead on the (very slender) written record and, more particularly, on interviews with Rwandan Muslims collected outside the country, in Burundi for example. That he was able to write the book under such circumstances is