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Book reviews

The social dynamics of agrarian change

No Condition is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa. Sara Berry, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI, 1993, xiv + 258 pp., US$22.50, ISBN 0-299-13934-4.

This book is an important contribution both to agrarian history and to debates over the role of agriculture in Africa's crisis. It develops a critique of explanations of African agrarian change that are based on the application of simple economic, and other generalising "structuralist" paradigms, the most influential of which identifies the causes of Africa's agrarian crisis in government mistakes of macroeconomic and sectoral policy. Berry notes that economics has not renounced structuralist models, while the inadequacy of quantitative data prevents their being tested. Anthropology in contrast has moved away from general models towards an emphasis on the fluidity of social phenomena and the specificity of historical experiences.

The volume is based is four case studies of local agrarian change, using sources covering most of the century or population to withdraw into an essentially self-sufficient subsistence system. She argues that "changes in African agricultural production have been shaped ... by many-layered struggles over access to resources, in which neither direct producers nor governments have exercised a decisive influence on patterns of production and investment" (pp. 182–183). The state is intrusive, but not hegemonic, as she illustrates in a discussion of the limited impact of rural development programmes as a series of "inconclusive encounters" between the state and the rural population.

Likewise, Berry disputes the view that colonial governments froze flexible negotiable systems and created authoritarian ones. She describes the reinterpretation and creative invention of tradition that was stimulated by the British colonial regime's attempts to codify "native custom" as a way of defining land rights and buttressing the structures of indirect rule. The colonial policy was based on an ideology that interpreted African societies as being disturbed by external contact from a supposedly natural state, and sought to define and re-establish this state. The doctrine of community ownership that official policy promoted dovetailed with the ideology of indirect rule, but so since colonial rule was established. These include two cocoa farming areas in southern Ghana and southwestern Nigeria, the settler economy of central Kenya, and northeastern Zambia, which was essentially a labour reserve. These areas have in common the experience of British colonial rule, the avoidance of severe and sustained social unrest, and relatively favourable agro-ecological conditions, and were selected to "focus on the effects of commercialization and political centralization under different local configurations of power, production and culture" (p. 8).

The core of Berry's argument is that economic models, which derive rational response to incentives within a framework of fixed rules, neglect the pervasive "negotiability" which characterises agrarian society, and which is captured in the book's title. She explores, through the case studies, the role that the negotiability of rules and transactions plays in determining farmer response to the threats and opportunities created by colonial and postcolonial governments. She rejects both the view that the state's action is decisive in

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determining processes of agrarian change, and the view associated with Goran Hyden that it is largely irrelevant because of the capacity of the rural commercialisation led to a proliferation of claims over productive land. The community ownership doctrine and the ensuing land claims, together with the parallel introduction of western legal structures, served to "institutionalize" the struggle and debate over customary rules and structures of authority that has carried on into the post-colonial regime. Property rights in general have not converged toward private ownership by individuals or closed corporate groups.

Berry emphasises the importance of investment in social networks as a response to the need to find ways of securing access to resources, in a period of increasing economic and political uncertainty. She notes that networks have diversified, and differentiation has increased, as economic and political change have opened new opportunities. The postindependence spawning of new rural institutions can be seen as one manifestation of this. Berry also argues that the capacity of networks to secure access to labour has declined, and that this is one explanation for the "labour shortage" that characterises agriculture in all four areas. The capacity to create dependent relationships has diminished both outside the household (which has itself been undergoing constant redefinition) and, to some extent, within the household, as networks and activities have diversified. But this diminishment has accompanied sharply increasing inequalities in land access.

The final chapter examines the prospects for the intensification of agricultural production, and emphasises that intensification does not follow automatically from a logic of commercialisation and population growth. In particular, Berry stresses the importance of constraints on time and labour as an obstacle to intensification. Economic and political instability has placed a premium on flexibility and diversification and investment in social networks to provide protection against risks, just as the capacity of farmers to command labour has been reduced. Berry suggests that this development might help to explain why many African rural economies have simultaneously demonstrated great resilience in the face of stress and failed to show a capacity for sustained agricultural growth. The author concludes that attention to the timing of cultivation tasks is likely to be of critical importance in securing uptake of new agricultural technologies.

The dense and subtle argument is a useful counterweight to the tendency to a historical generalisation that economics, and more specifically conventional economic policy discourse, too seldom avoids. (The impact is slightly marred, however, by poor editing: incomplete cross-references, some repetition in the use of case study evidence, and a misprint in the final word of the text.) To economic theorists, the book presents a challenge to develop models that capture more satisfactorily salient features of African agrarian reality. It should also be a stimulus for further comparative historical studies to provide a genuinely long term perspective on one of the most critical problems of Africa's development.

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The failure of food policy in revolutionary Nicaragua

Hungry Dreams: The Failure of Food Policy in Revolutionary Nicaragua 1979–1990. Brizio N. Biondi-Morra. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1993, xiv + 214 pp., US$35.00, ISBN 0-8014-26634.

This book analyzes the failure of the Sandinista government of Nicaragua to achieve its objectives of improving the food security and living standards of the vast majority of the rural population of the country. These were the same rural poor exploited for so many years by Somoza, his family and a small coterie of associates who controlled a large share of the country's better agricultural land and its agroindustrial enterprises. That group had been successful in promoting the production of coffee, cotton, sugar, beef and other export products, but little if any of the benefits had sifted down to the small farmers and other rural residents who had been forced onto more and more marginal land as that elite group appropriated the better land to produce their export crops. Hunger was the common condition for the small farmer and landless rural residents. However, the new regime was not successful in alleviating that hunger and may have actually worsened the situation.

A significant advantage of this study is that the analyses took place during the Sandinista regime and were carried out to assist that government in overcoming its agricultural problems. Thus, the author had access to a large number of documents that are no longer available, as they were destroyed in the transition from the Sandinista to the Chamora government. The author, currently Rector of the Central American Institute of Business Administration (INCAE), worked on a Ford Foundation-supported research and training project concerned with food policy issues that was conducted with the Nicaraguan Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform. The 4-year research included interviews with over 200 officials involved in food policy and production issues, providing invaluable insights into the thoughts and procedures used in policy formulation.

After their revolutionary triumph, the Sandinista government expropriated some 23000 ha of high quality farmland and a large number of agro-industrial firms owned by the Somoza family and their associates. Despite the fact that they had promised land to the peasants during the guerilla struggle against Somoza, the Sandinistas decided to operate both the farm and industrial properties as state businesses, designated as Areas of People's Property (APP). These were viewed as profit machines (as they had been during the Somoza years) which would provide the state with the foreign exchange and other resources needed to carry out the government's ambitious development plans, which included providing food security and eliminating hunger. They turned out to be money-losing machines that considerably hampered the ability of the regime to accomplish its objectives.

While the counter-revolution and later the U.S. embargo affected the economic situation in Nicaragua, the author concludes that these had little to do with the failure of the country's agricultural policies. This failure was a result of faulty policy decisions and the inability of an inexperienced government to implement decisions. Unfavorable impacts were generated by macroeconomic policies affecting foreign exchange rates, prices, wages, and credit, policies that generally followed dependency theory prescriptions along the lines of those that had been used (and that had failed) in many Latin American countries. In Nicaragua, these were carried out in such a way that extremely undesirable consequences were produced very quickly. Results included huge government deficits due largely to losses by the state businesses, rapidly accelerating rates of inflation, falling rates of labor productivity, and a thriving black market for agricultural inputs and outputs.

After a brief history of pre-Sandinista Nicaraguan agricultural policies (Chapter 2), the author uses a series of case studies (Chapters 3–6) to analyze the effects of the regime's macroeconomic policies. In Chapter 3, the case of the State Cotton Farm is used to show how overvalued exchange rates made it virtually impossible for the enterprise to earn profits from the export of agricultural products. Milk and beef farms are used in Chapter 4 to illustrate the impacts of price policy. The regime adopted a system of "social prices" under which wages were to be held constant and benefits to workers achieved by low (controlled) and subsidized prices for basic needs. As a result of the failure to "get prices right", workers sought to increase their earnings by selling their farms' products on the black market. Many state farms also sold a portion of their output in the parallel market as the only way they had to meet mounting operational costs. Wages were set under the social price model, and the effects of this policy on the State Rice Farm are analyzed in Chapter 5. Worker productivity declined as workers would only put in 2–4 h of work while receiving a full day's pay;

many left so that newer, less experienced workers, including a large number of women, had to be hired as families pursued strategies to increase their incomes. Credit policy, analyzed in Chapter 6, followed a classic pattern of controlled interest rates that turned negative in real terms as the rate of inflation accelerated. State farms were forced to borrow large sums to meet their expenses and to carry out planned investments. Ordinarily, inflation would have enabled repayment with cheaper money; with official, controlled prices and delayed payments by state purchasing monopolies, typical state enterprises were not able to repay their loans from the state banks (private banks also had been nationalized). The decapitalized banks were forced to continue to lend money to the farms and other enterprises through credit lines from the central bank, that is, by printing money.

The final two chapters first discuss the overly weak measures that the Sandinista regime used after 1985 to try to correct the policy failures of 1979–1984, then draw conclusions from the analyses of the previous chapters. The author concludes that there was an immense schism between the country's micro- and macroeconomic policies, and that the latter were the primary causes of the failure of the Sandinistas in achieving their agricultural policy objectives. Plausible explanations for the schism include inappropriate ideological predispositions, managerial shortcomings or a combination of the two.

The case study approach used for the analyses helps to illustrate why so many of the government interventions, as reported in the Krueger, Schiff and Valdes World Bank studies, for example, were harmful to the agricultural sector. The case studies demonstrate how the policies adversely affected farms, processing firms and individuals. Thus, the details provided by Biondi-Morra makes the book a particularly valuable addition to a growing volume of literature on agricultural policy in developing countries.

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Ghana under structural adjustment

Ghana Under Structural Adjustment: The Impact on Agriculture and the Rural Poor. Alexander Sarris and Hadi Shams. New York University Press, New York, 1991, xxiv + 228 pp., US$29.95, ISBN 9-2907-2001-8.

Ghana's response to the economic decline of the 1970s and early 1980s is perhaps one of the most discussed and most interesting efforts at macroeconomic adjustment in sub-Saharan Africa. As rightly noted by Alderman (1991), the number of studies of the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) may be sufficiently high to drive the marginal value of an additional study toward zero. Most of these studies have, however, focused on the macroeconomic performance and social costs of structural adjustments in Ghana, with relatively little work being done on the impacts on agriculture and the rural poor. *Ghana Under Structural Adjustment: The Impact on Agriculture and the Rural Poor* is justified less as an examination of the short-term impacts of economic reforms, and more as an examination of the poverty alleviation potential of adjustment programmes. It is largely based on the findings of a study funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development that develops a framework and strategy for future involvement in rural development in Ghana, taking into account the objectives and concerns of the Government.

What sets this study apart from practically every other study on adjustment in Ghana is that it not only examines the impacts of short-term economic measures in Ghana, but also identifies the structural problems confronting the rural economy of the country, draws a profile of the rural poor, outlines the dynamics of rural poverty, analyzes the initial impact of the ERP on smallholders and the rural poor and proceeds to propose a framework and strategy for future rural development projects in Ghana.

The book contains 12 chapters organized around six major themes. The first two themes examine the macroeconomy as it effects the agricultural sector and the events leading to adjustment. Sarris and Shams present detailed and convincing evidence to show that economic reforms were inevitable. They discuss the successful macroeconomic performance achieved under the Economic Recovery Programme. The authors also take on the issue of national food security, arguing that the cereal food deficit is not covered by the production of the other starchy staples. According to Sarris and Shams, this gap has resulted in the financing of food imports requiring an increasing share of the foreign exchange receipts from total merchandise exports. They note that the ability of Ghana to finance an increasing amount of cereal and other food imports will depend on the growth of foreign exchange earnings compared to the growth of the food import bill. A broad overview of the technological possibilities available for agricultural development in Ghana, and an examination of the environmental implications of current practices, are also presented. Sarris and Shams document how problems of environmental degradation become apparent when the bush-fallow cycle is altered, either by shortening the regeneration phase or by changing land-clearing methods, such as clear-felling of forest areas for mechanized crop production.

A third theme, which the authors discuss in Chapters 3–5, is an analysis of the economic and social profile of smallholders and the rural poor. Using both secondary and primary data from the IFAD mission, Chapter 3 examines the extent and nature of rural poverty and describes the numbers and functions of the rural poor. The authors show how rural poverty increased gradually between 1970–1986, with the increase in poverty being highest in the northern region. They infer that large pockets of rural poverty are to be found in all regions in Ghana. Chapter 4 focuses on the social dimensions of rural poverty, particularly the land tenure system, health and nutrition, education, water and sanitation. The discussion in this chapter brings to light the dynamics of land tenure and how the size of landholding affects the pattern of poverty. The authors further show how cocoa development changed a relatively undifferentiated rural economy into a socio-economic hierarchy where access to cocoa land, capital and labour became crucial. Although women are an important economic force in Ghana, they do not share equally in the benefits accrued from overall national efforts, and remain disadvantaged in certain aspects. The role of women in rural development and the constraints facing them in enhancing their productivity are highlighted in Chapter 5.

Another major theme deals with the structure of rural institutions. The effectiveness of government support services, agricultural credit, agricultural marketing, and grassroots institutions and non-governmental services are discussed. Sarris and Shams argue that there has been little national coordination of research priorities and programmes, and that links with extension services are practically nonexistent at most levels. The impact of research on agriculture production is therefore slight. Agricultural research does not receive the priority it deserves in a country whose mainstay is agriculture. The chapter on agricultural credit shows that financing of small farmers is still unsatisfactory, despite government efforts to set up rural banks to facilitate credit availability to farmers. The authors suggest that projects that provide storage credit to smallholders could substantially improve their earnings.

Agriculture and rural smallholders are bound to be influenced by the Economic Recovery Programme, since agricultural performance was strongly and negatively affected by the pre-reform policies. The fifth theme focuses on these issues. Agricultural production has generally picked up since 1983, but as the authors rightly assert, given the substantial shocks to the economy, it is difficult to indicate which part of the recent improvement is due to the ERP. The programme gives strong emphasis to increasing the production of cocoa. The incentives provided since the initiation of the programme have boosted cocoa output. However, a number of constraints face the cocoa sector. While replanting rates are apparently increasing in response to higher producer prices, the average age of trees in Ghana is still high. International competitiveness is also hindered by high transportation and marketing costs. A more serious limitation of the policy measures is the falling global price of cocoa. The prospects for the sector's revitalization is therefore more limited than may appear in the first instance.

Most gross cocoa income in Ghana in the late 1980s was received by one-third of the farmers. This supports the authors' assertion that relatively better-off tree crop farmers cannot be termed smallholders. With careful analysis, the authors show how devaluation and liberalization of the foreign exchange market have turned the terms of trade against smallholders and the rural poor, and have drastically increased the cost of inputs as well as labour. A number of points deserve to be noted here. First, the availability of inputs and rural consumer goods has been greatly improved as a result of liberalization. Second, since smallholders participate in the labour markets to a large extent, the increase in labour costs in way brings additional income to them. As documented in several other studies, the authors also mention the adverse impacts that the decline in public expenditure for agriculture under the programme have had on the smallholder.

The last two chapters, which together constitute the final theme of the study, outline a strategy for rural development operations in Ghana consistent with the major constraints that face the rural economy and the government's overall objectives. Chapter 11 summarizes the major hurdles facing smallholder development, while Chapter 12 deals with a strategy aimed at alleviating some of these major constraints. The authors argue with the support of available data that the current system of food marketing seriously impedes small food producers, and conclude that measures aimed at helping the farmer to improve his marketing strategy could significantly improve his realized returns and income. The crucial point of the final chapter is that the issues of poverty alleviation and food security should be addressed within the context of balanced economic growth which effectively focuses on the structural problems prevailing in rural Ghana. This reviewer particularly shares the authors' view that overall government policy in the medium term should give priority to agriculture in general, and food production in particular.

The book provides a well-written and in-depth overview of the historical and economic forces that have affected the rural poverty problem in Ghana. Few books have attempted a combination of such an exhaustive analysis of Ghanaian agricultural economy with an examination of the effectiveness of government efforts at poverty alleviation. Another major contribution of the book is the bold and successful attempt it makes to show, with empirical evidence, the impacts of adjustment on smallholders and the rural poor. The book provides valuable lessons applicable to a number of other countries. It is useful not only for policy analysts interested in recent developments in Ghana, but generally for researchers and policy makers dealing with agricultural policy and the issues of poverty alleviation and food security.

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The agrarian origins of commerce and industry

The Agrarian Origins of Commerce and Industry. Yujiro Hayami and Toshihiko Kawagoe. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1993, £40, ISBN 0-312-08621-0.

Rational economic behaviour in peasant society has long been the subject of empirical investigation based on different perceptions of prevailing economic structures, socio-cultural relationships, and the political hierarchy among marketing intermediaries: wholesalers, village middlemen, retailers, down to peasant farmers.

In reviewing the controversies on the economic behaviour of peasants facing markets for their products, Hayami and Kawagoe trace previous works that deal with the effects of colonialism and commercialisation on traditional mutual help and patron–client relationships. These include the non-responsiveness of peasant farmers to economic incentives beyond subsistence (as elaborated in Geertz's theory of agricultural involution), and the exploitation of peasant producers by marketing agents or middlemen, often tinged by ethnic overtones. While subsequent research works have essentially debunked various marketing myths and stereotypes, Hayami and Kawagoe believe that the question of whether peasant farmers have the capacity for entrepreneurship beyond the level of farm production to commerce and industry has not been fully investigated. Starting from this premise, The *Agrarian Origins of Commerce and Industry* is the product of their empirical research on the peasants' capacity for entrepreneurship in their marketing and processing activities within the setting of peasant relationships and social institutions.

A case study approach has been adopted for the investigations into the myriad intricate relationships and traditional institutions governing the organization of peasant production, marketing and processing in Indonesia. Three villages, growing a mix of the non-rice crops that typify upland agriculture, such as corn, soybeans, cassava and tobacco, were selected for investigation. Except in the case of soybeans, the marketing of these products is not subject to the pervasive interventions that have surrounded paddy cultivation and rice marketing in much of Asia. Some of these crops, such as soybeans and cassava, are easily amenable to on-farm processing for end consumption at the village level. The special case of commercial cultivation of vegetables was also undertaken to illustrate how the introduction of new technology induces innovations in the marketing system and deepens the entrepreneurial skills of the intermediaries.

Indonesia, with emphasis on Java, was chosen because the authors felt that in this region, the traditional mode of peasantry has been best preserved in the sense that small independent peasants, bound by personal ties and village institutions, have persisted as the basic unit of rural production and life. For comparative purposes, the more easily accessible village of Garut in West Jaya was selected over the more remote transmigration village of Lampung in Sumatra. The third case study, in Majalengka village in West Java, provides an example of the intrusion of commercial vegetable production and its impact on increasing farm income and employment. Together these three case studies shed light on the evolution of peasant marketing institutions as they adapt and respond to structural and policy change. The ground is set for the authors to convincingly illustrate the dynamics of agrarian development which is only limited by the scope of the markets.

The major hypothesis on the existence of entrepreneurship in peasant societies is validated in the case studies, regardless of the remoteness of the village, as indicated in the comparative study of Garut village in East Java vs. Lampung in West Sumatra. The hierarchical structure of the marketing system in these villages has its basis in the small volume of marketable surplus and the scale economies associated with transport costs and distance from the metropolitan centers. There are only a small number of village collectors in Lampung village because of the better employment opportunities resulting in higher wage rates. These traders are constrained from extending their activities to cover transshipment to other villages and districts as they have yet to obtain titles to their land, which they could pledge to raise loans.

An integral link of peasant marketing is the processing of farm produce, which is an important source of farm income and employment. Processing of soybean into tempe is undertaken on the homestead, while tofu making is carried out by small local factories. The processing of cassava into gaplek and opak is also undertaken at home, often by the wives of landless laborers. In the case of tobacco factories, the operations of grading, packing and branding are no different from that of a modern business. The processing of soybeans constitutes an average of 23% of value-added on the farms; and 35% of labour income. The processing and retailing of these products for end consumption in the village provides ample evidence of the flourishing of entrepreneurship in the peasant economy.

Hayami and Kawagoe effectively demonstrate that village marketing agents optimize their resources in response to the differential locational advantages of the villages in which they operate and the transaction costs associated with the collecting, storing and transporting of agricultural products. The many layers of intermediaries are due to the small size of the marketable surplus on each farm such that recourse to direct marketing by the farmers is not undertaken in the more accessible Garut Village. In the more remote Lampung village, where farm size, and therefore marketable surplus, is larger, the recent completion of a highway has enabled farmers to bypass local town traders and transship their commodities directly to metropolitan markets. While joint marketing of soybean and corn is common, in the case of tobacco, in which price depends importantly on quality, marketing becomes more specialized.

A related issue examined in this study concerns the cost of capital in an Islamic society, where interest payments are haram (forbidden). The land tenure system in such peasant economy is closely linked to the sewa (rental) arrangements, either on the basis of fixed rental, crop share or gadai (mortgage), under which a tenant deposits a sum with the landlord for the right to cultivate the land until the deposit is returned by the landlord. The "hidden" interest rate was computed by the writers to be lower than that charged by government banks. Owing to the high rates of interest prevailing in the market, traders have to achieve a high rate of turnover; and normally larger traders advance trade-credit to the smaller collectors who are unable to obtain credit for lack of collateral.

There is no credit flow from traders to farmers, because the cropping pattern ensures harvesting on a continuous basis. Only in the case of commercial vegetable production in Majalengka is production credit advanced by the trader in order to ensure delivery. No deductions are made to the crop price for this advancement; the interest arrangement calls for greater coordination and marketing skills in shipping perishable commodities to distant markets. Such credit-tying contracts take place within the village community but are not advanced by town-based traders because of the information costs and risks associated with lending not backed by collateral. Peasant credit practices based on long term trading relationships need not necessarily be exploitative; rather they minimize the costs of contract enforcement.

Thus the findings in this book have contributed fresh insights into several interesting hypotheses on peasant agriculture: (1) that contrary to Geertz's pessimism, entrepreneurship does exist in peasant societies; (2) that the size of the agriculture surplus does determine the efficiency of the marketing system, which in turn contributes to improvements in agricultural productivity; (3) that, contrary to popular belief on market exploitation, the middlemen are not from a social group alienated from the peasants; rather marketing agents are from the peasantry (usually the larger farmers) and perform useful developmental functions as extension agents in introducing new crop technologies to peasant economies.

From the perspective of policy implications, the study points out the powerful impact of investment in highway construction on agricultural development and modernization than a policy of direct intervention could ever hope to achieve. This is particularly critical in the introduction of non-traditional, high-value but perishable crops such as vegetables (and the transportation of live animals, one might add); and in contributing to the elimination of marketing imperfections. The accessibility of the peasant economy increases the scope of economic activity and generates the synergy needed for rapid transformation of the rural economy. The study also highlights an important impact on marketing efficiency arising from supporting marketing infrastructures and institutions such as the prompt issuing of land titles to settlers in the transmigration village; and in research and extension services. The authors are also optimistic that the system of peasant marketing has the capacity to evolve, as in the Japanese experience, to resemble the sub-contracting system that eventually supported Japan's industrialization drive.

Overall, the authors are innovative in adopting a "pedestrian" approach, actually walking round with the marketing agents as they go about their chores, in getting to the roots of commercial relationships at the village level. This is a more painstaking effort in understanding the reality behind the economic models. The process of development and modernization is not gleaned from faceless statistics and causal relationships that shape peasant societies and govern the economics of production and consumption.

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Famine and food security in Ethiopia

Famine and Food Security in Ethiopia: *Lessons for Africa*. Patrick Webb and Joachim von Braun. John Wiley, Chichester, 1994, vii + 158 pp., £14.95. ISBN 0-471-94821-7.

Although considerable literature about famine and food security in Ethiopia exists, our understanding of the reality of famine has been limited for years by a lack of empirical information at the grassroots level. Webb and von Braun attempt to address this information gap using fieldwork and published materials. They use an appropriate and lucid analytical framework to analyze the data. The book attempts to identify the types of rural households worst affected by famine, and their coping mechanisms. It seeks to explain the causes of famine and investigates whether the most vulnerable households are effectively reached through famine relief and rehabilitation projects. The book is of importance for people concerned with the chronic problems of famine and food security in Ethiopia.

About one-third of the 158-page book is devoted to the context of the empirical study. Empirical analysis of famine and food security begins with the fourth chapter, where household coping mechanisms are analyzed. The rest of the book deals with postoral experience (Chapter 5), experience of relief and rehabilitation interventions (Chapter 6), and recommendations (Chapter 7).

The book is based on two assumptions: (1) famine acts selectively, not universally and (2) relief interventions should be better tailored to location- and income-specific needs of the group of people needing relief assistance.

The main argument of the book is summarized in its concluding part in the following terms: "given peace through improved popular participation in governance, sustained poverty reduction through rural economic growth and a determined government readiness to signal and respond to crises where and when needed, a future without famine is most certainly possible" (p. 135). However, the authors did not demonstrate whether Ethiopia is capable of meeting the list of conditions stated here.

This book is more or less the same as the original version (Webb et al., 1992) with respect to research hypotheses, analytical framework, data sources, and research findings. Of course, there are some apparent differences. For example, the third author (Yisehac Yohannes) is dropped in the new version and the "Lessons for Africa" is added in the "new" title, although it is difficult to understand how the authors were able to generalize for Africa on the basis of a survey covering a mere 550 households in limited areas of Ethiopia.

It is not clear why the authors often cite secondary and doubtful sources when original sources are already available. For example, the information on the size of holdings (10 ha) was ascribed to a secondary source (Brüne 1990), and not to the land reform proclamation of 1975 (p. 42). The authors make a bold assertion about the date of establishment of the Ethiopian State without citing original sources (p. 34).

Factual errors are committed here and there. For example, the massive dissolution of collective farms started after May 1991, not after the policy reform of March 1990 (p. 43). The reviewer of this book himself was misquoted (p. 64) with respect to patterns of participation in the informal financial sector. The *eqqub* and the *iddir* are not limited to relatively richer highland households.

The authors seem to be too optimistic about famine and food security in Ethiopia. For serious students of the Ethiopian economy, it is difficult to agree with the proposition that famine could be prevented in the foreseeable future without tackling the fundamental structural and institutional problems that the authors seem to shy away from or gloss over.

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