

how Uganda differed on key issues such as land, labor, and administrative policy might clarify what lessons can be drawn from the Kenyan experience. For that matter, what about conditions in places further afield like Natal or the Caribbean? All could help illuminate which aspects of the Asian sugar industry in Kibos-Muhoroni were unique, and which were typical across British colonies.

This book could also expand its temporal range. On numerous occasions the author points out that colonial policy toward Asian farmers and millers became more supportive in the 1940s and 1950s. This coincides with the origins of what Frederick Cooper calls “developmental colonialism.” While laying out his periodization scheme for *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (2002), Cooper argues that development policies conceived during colonial rule continued to influence administrative approaches long after political independence had been won. This problematizes the typical division between the colonial and postcolonial period, and the Asian sugar industry in Kibos-Muhoroni represents a fascinating opportunity to test Cooper’s theory. Wanga-Odhiambo’s obvious enthusiasm for economic policy makes her ideally suited to tackle this question. Unfortunately, the walls separating this study from both postcolonial theory and the postcolonial era mean that this opportunity is not taken.

A less bounded approach would allow the author to address issues in both the Kenyan and global context. The significance of the green revolution is hinted at in the fascinatingly diverse origins of sugarcane varieties tested in Kibos-Muhoroni by 1953 (98–99), but no further analysis is given. Recent issues with “pervasive corruption” are briefly mentioned in the preface (xviii), but the full scope of these problems is never examined. Reading this book, I was struck by the possibilities. Taking a small slice of Africa’s past and using it to exemplify larger global forces was famously done by Donald Wright in his history of Niimi (*The World and a Very Small Place in Africa* [1997]). Could something similar be done for Kibos-Muhoroni and its sugar industry? Perhaps it could serve as an entry point into issues of wide interest like colonial labor policies, global commodity flows, the development state, the green revolution, and the impact of neoliberal capitalism in the Third World. The limited scope of this manuscript, however, means we only catch a glimpse of this potential.

Wanga-Odhiambo has written the authoritative history of Asian sugar production in colonial Kibos-Muhoroni. It is a dense tome aimed at specialists, and impossible to recommend to anyone else. But with her scholarly bona fides now firmly established, my hope is that her next project will move beyond this well-walled garden.

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CHARLES LAURIE. *The Land Reform Deception: Political Opportunism in Zimbabwe’s Land Seizure Era*. Foreword by Stephen Chan. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xvi, 398. \$105.00.

In *The Land Reform Deception: Political Opportunism in Zimbabwe’s Land Seizure Era* Charles Laurie provides an

impressive examination of the violence and politics behind a major event in Southern African history and in the history of dismantling settler societies more generally. The appropriation of white-owned commercial farms without compensation caused a major transformation in the country, and not surprisingly a polarized scholarly response. For many Zimbabweans, the means may have justified the ends, in terms of correcting a major historical wrong: the “seizure” of what was often the best agricultural land by white settlers and the white settler state of Rhodesia over the prior 110 years. Laurie is not attempting to engage in a larger debate over post-land reform black small-scale farmers who received land, which mostly centers on assessments of the success or failure of the transition to black-owned farms. Therefore, the real value of this book is his close reading of the period from the late 1990s to roughly 2008, with a primary focus on the most intensive years of farm seizures: 2000–2002. Laurie offers an important scholarly examination of the links between the ruling party’s manipulation of a genuine demand for land by liberation war veterans, on the one hand, and, on the other, the realization in early 2000 that the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) was about to lose out to the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) after the defeat of a ruling-party referendum in February 2000. Realizing how strong the tide of support for the opposition was, Robert Mugabe and others in ZANU PF exploited the support of the MDC by some white farmers, giving Mugabe the opportunity to characterize the MDC and white farmers as bent on a common regime-change agenda that implied a recolonization of Zimbabwe, with the help of the British, in particular (42–65).

Laurie does a very good job of detailing how the ruling elites manipulated the grassroots land-occupation movement leading up to the 2000 elections and again in 2002 to help build a base for ZANU PF victories (77–79). The urban-based MDC was successfully defeated through violence, election rigging, and an emphasis on land and sovereignty that painted white farmers writ large as enemies of the state (41–51). The book’s greatest contribution is the careful demonstration of how diverse population groups, black and white, rich and poor, reacted to these land occupations. In addition to collecting his core survey and interview data from white farmers, Laurie also interviewed a number of intermediaries, who then explained in detail the role of state and local actors, painting a valuable picture of the winners and losers in this period. Laurie shows that, as with most processes in periods of “lawlessness” in Zimbabwean history, there was often much more order underneath the chaotic surface. Laurie provides us with glimpses of this order. In the bulk of the book, Laurie details the “processes” of land occupations: the motives of occupiers; the interactions of war veterans with local and national ruling-party leaders; the attempts at recourse to courts and power brokers by white land owners; the violence used to push farmers off farms; and the politics of who becomes the “owner” of the seized farm. All of these processes are complicated by previous years of ruling-party patron-client relations in the rural areas. Some white

farmers were protected because of their ties to the ruling party; others had to work out new relations to maintain control of some of their farms (216–220); while others lost everything. Laurie is especially good at translating political and economic power into a “farm invader typology” (187–197) that convincingly shows the class and power dynamics behind decisions over who would end up with the most profitable farms and farm improvements. Laurie demonstrates how the big *chefs* in the ruling party, along with many provincial-level power brokers, made out much better than the original war veterans and the *povos* (poor), who had initiated the call for land seizures before and during 2000. By the mid- to late 2000s, the most profitable farms and agribusinesses with the largest improvements were under the control of party elites.

This is a work by a political scientist, but it will have immediate value for historians, and not just for historians of Southern Africa but also for anyone working on the land dynamics of settler societies in the twenty-first century. Laurie’s research offers considerable value to historians for having captured not only the anger over victimization and state complicity expressed in the responses he received from 111 interviews and 1,442 survey respondents among commercial farmers (297), but also for his ability to specify and categorize the strategies many white commercial farmers used to survive. On a critical note, there are times when Laurie’s interest in demonstrating the role

of ZANU PF’s top leadership in orchestrating the violence of the land seizure may have allowed him to give too much weight to some of the claims made by his informants. An example of this comes when two informants whom he relies on heavily, one, called Peter Msasa in order to protect his identity, who is described as a “military intelligence agent” (45), and another, called Christian Muccheke, who is described as “a legal officer in the President’s Office” (29), both reportedly told Laurie in interviews that senior ZANU PF officials were directing and ordering the killing of white farmers for their own political interests (125, 128–131). These are big claims, and such revelations sound very similar to stories one hears during interviews with former combatants in the liberation war. These sorts of accusations of state-sponsored murders of white farmers (128–131), to be more credible, would need further verification and evidence. It may be the case that these allegations turn out to be true, but the way the evidence is presented in this book detracts from the much more solid evidence of how white farmers dealt with their own ordeals and of how both sides of the seizures tried to use their links to power to their own ends. As demands for land reform in South Africa increase and the concept of taking land from white farmers without compensation grows, Laurie’s book will have an even greater relevancy.

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