

MODERN AFRICAN HISTORY:
SOME HISTORIOGRAPHICAL OBSERVATIONS

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Introduction

Great changes have occurred in the study of African history in the space of a short time. The emergence of a new generation of historians, who are not content with studying the peoples of Africa solely as recipients of European civilization or, conversely, as passive victims of European imperialism, has led to a "decolonization" of the study of African history. Research has moved back into the pre-colonial period and, enriched by a series of new research methods, has produced fruitful and stimulating results. The resistance struggle, rebellion and nationalism among the African peoples have been thoroughly documented. Moreover, the last few years have seen a theoretical discussion of "the development of underdevelopment", dependence and neo-colonialism which has thrown new light on the recent past.¹

Even if it is difficult at the present stage to draw up a historiographical balance-sheet, it should nonetheless be possible to give an account of some of the most recent trends and controversies. The purpose of this essay is to examine a number of selected themes dealing with African history over the last hundred years. The starting-point is an important new book called *Africa in Modern History*, written by the British author and historian, Basil Davidson. Hardly any other individual has played such an important role in

¹ The two most important works produced by this group are P. C. W. Gurkind and I. Wallerstein, *The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa* (Beverly Hills, 1976) and P. C. W. Gurkind and P. Waterman, *African Social Studies: a Radical Reader* (London, 1977). Both these books contain extremely valuable bibliographies, prepared by C. Allen. For a critical discussion of this group of historians, see J. Simensen, "Den radikale retning i u-landsstudiene og dens tolkning av afrikansk historie", *Historisk Tidsskrift* (Norway), vol. 4 (1977), pp. 365-397.

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widening our knowledge of pre-colonial societies, the growth of nationalist movements and the present discussion concerning the connection between economic underdevelopment and the colonial system. His books have become classics enjoying a wide circle of readers in many countries, not least in Scandinavia.² His efforts to extend knowledge about and create solidarity with the struggle for liberation in southern Africa have also reached far beyond academic circles. It is therefore not unreasonable, when Basil Davidson has tried to produce an overall survey of African history since 1870, to choose this book as the starting-point for a discussion of the themes and methods, the recent advances and the continuing limitations within the contemporary study of African history. As well as providing a short account of some of Davidson's central attitudes, the main emphasis of this article will be laid on discussing a number of more recent works which supplement and correct the picture given by Basil Davidson. In contrast to Ole Justesen's article,* "The Danish Settlements on the Gold Coast in the Nineteenth Century", the examples in this essay will be drawn from eastern and southern Africa and the themes that have been selected for examination are connected with the ecological-political transformation of the first phase of the colonial period, African forms of resistance and collaboration, and the social and ideological foundations of the nationalist movements. These are areas in which there is a continuing and lively historiographical debate and in which the methodological problems are especially interesting.

The main themes of Africa in Modern History

The guiding principle behind all of Basil Davidson's many works is that a central place is given to the history of the Africans themselves, and it is their actions, cultural and economic advances, resistance struggles, political movements and initiatives that are described. In this respect, Davidson follows the same line as the "Africanist-nationalist" school that emerged in the mid-sixties, not least at African universities. However, Davidson is not limited by this approach and treats African history in the context of a global system in which colonialism, capitalist states and companies contributed greatly to establishing the framework for the economic and political life of Africa. In this respect, his work establishes a point of contact with the more Marxist-inspired concept of "the imperialist world system".

² The following are some of Basil Davidson's most important books, of which most have been translated into one or more of the Scandinavian languages: *Old Africa Rediscovered* (London, 1959), *Black Mother* (London, 1961), *Which Way Africa? The Search for a New Society* (London, 1965), *Africa in History. Themes and Outlines* (London, 1968), *A History of East and Central Africa to the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1969), *The Africans. An Entry to Cultural History* (London, 1969), *The Liberation of Guinea. Aspects of an African Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1969), *In the Eye of the Storm. Angola's People* (London, 1972), *Can Africa Survive? Arguments against Growth without Development* (London, 1975), *Southern Africa: the New Politics of Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1976), *Discovering Africa's Past* (London, 1978), *Africa in Modern History* (London, 1978). With regard to Davidson's importance for academic research into African history, see C. Fyfe (ed.), *African Studies since 1945. A Tribute to Basil Davidson* (London, 1975).

*Ole Justesen's article was published in Scandinavian Journal of History 4, 1979.

Even if it is the study of the ideological basis and organizational expressions of nationalism that constitute the main theme of Davidson's work, his most recent book does not belong to the category of intellectual history in the narrow sense. The term "modern history" which appears in the title of his book is also interpreted generously and the introductory chapters provide a valuable survey of pre-colonial societies. They contain a synthesis presenting the long lines of development since 400 B.C. (that is to say, the beginning of the African iron age) and a more thorough discussion of the growth and crises of the nineteenth century. These chapters give a useful guide to what we do and do not know about early African history, although the reader interested in obtaining a fuller picture must of course turn to more detailed, specialized studies.³ His discussion of the economic and political changes of the nineteenth century is stimulating and contrasts strongly with earlier, vulgar notions of stagnation and barbarism. His references to research into African "modes of production" and "social formations" are also interesting. The pre-colonial history of Africa has often been overlooked or treated schematically (or misrepresented) by both conservative and Marxist scholars, but there has been a rapid development in the study of this topic during recent years. Scholars like Samir Amin, Cathrine Coquery-Vidrovitch, Edward Alpers, Lionel Cliffe, Emmanuel Terray, Claude Meillassoux, Jean-Philippe Rey and the contributors to the important work, *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*, have opened up a new field through their empirical local studies and bold generalizations. A better understanding of the history of earlier periods is of crucial significance, since it is an important task to demonstrate the concrete connection between the economic and political manifestations of the colonial system and the social formations of pre-colonial society.⁴

³ J. D. Fage provides a useful survey of the pre-colonial period in *A History of Africa* (London, 1978). *The Cambridge History of Africa* contains more extensive studies of this topic; volumes 3 (1050-1600), 4 (1600-1790) and 5 (1790-1870) have appeared so far. The publication of a work prepared under the auspices of UNESCO, *A General History of Africa*, of which the first volume is due to appear in 1979, is awaited with great interest.

⁴ An essential introduction is provided by S. Amin's *Unequal Development. An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism* (New York, 1976), especially chapter one, "The Pre-Capitalist Formations". Two other basic books are: D. Seddon (ed.), *Relations of Production. Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology* (London, 1978); and B. Hindess & P. Q. Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production* (London, 1975). Seddon's anthology contains an essay by C. Coquery-Vidrovitch entitled "Research on an African Mode of Production" (pp. 261-288). Another of her important contributions is "The Political Economy of the African Peasantry and Modes of Production", pp. 90-111 in P. C. W. Gutkind and I. Wallerstein, op. cit. C. Meillassoux has produced many interesting works and of those that have appeared in English the following can be mentioned: "On the Mode of Production of the Hunting Band", pp. 187-203 in P. Alexander (ed.), *French Perspectives in African Studies* (London, 1973) and "From Reproduction to Production", *Economy and Society*, vol. 1 (1972), pp. 93-105. There are several well-documented studies in N. Parsons & R. Palmer, *Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa* (London, 1977); see especially Part One, "Pre-Colonial Economy and Colonial Impact", pp. 33-170. See also E. A. Alpers, "Rethinking African Economic History", *Ujahamu*, vol. 3 (1973), pp. 97-129 and the same author's more extensive study, *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa* (London, 1975); E. Terray, *Marxism and "Primitive" Societies* (New York, 1972) and the same

In his useful description of "the colonial model", Davidson provides a very precise survey of the fundamental mechanism of colonialism and a summary of the extensive and radical research into economic history that has taken place in recent years. His treatment is therefore very different from the more traditional survey given in J. D. Fage's *A History of Africa*⁵ and naturally even more different from the apologia for colonialism presented by Peter Duignan and Lewis D. Gann in the final volume of the collective work, *Colonialism in Africa*.⁶

Davidson's central themes concern such questions as the emergence of a labour market, the struggle for land and the trade system. He discusses the different forms in which African labour was exploited, forms that ranged from direct forced labour to the growth of a labour market as Africans sought to earn money to pay taxes. The systematic exploitation of areas in the interior as sources of labour for the more productive exporting zones along the coast, a pattern that is very clear in West Africa today, is also described. Davidson also shows in his survey that an attempt to classify the different forms assumed by the colonial system must provide a place of its own for areas that were dominated through a direct occupation of the land by European settlers, like Algeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya and, to a certain extent, Tanzania, Angola and Mozambique. However, European control of the land was also far-reaching and destructive in those areas, not least among them the former French Equatorial Africa, in which companies had obtained a concession and exercised great power.

There is a clear tendency among scholars today away from regarding the colonial period as a static whole. There has been considerable research into the far-reaching effects on Africa of the international economic crisis of the nineteen thirties and the Second World War.⁷ These crises not only had an immediate and adverse effect on the African population but also led to a considerable strengthening of the colonial system itself. The colonial infrastructure was extended; the production of raw materials for the world market was increased (not least in order to assist the reconstruction of a Europe that was short of food and dollars); the first "development aid" in the Keynesian style was provided to the African colonies. Production for export

author's "Long-Distance Trade and the Formation of the State: the Case of the Abbron Kingdom of Gyaman", *Economy and Society*, vol. 3 (1974), pp. 315-345; P.-P. Rey, "The Lineage Mode of Production", *Critique of Anthropology*, vol. 3 (1975); and L. Cliffe, "Rural Class Formation in East Africa", *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 2 (1977), pp. 195-224. For a general overview, see A. Foster-Carter, "The Modes of Production Controversy", *New Left Review*, No. 107 (1978).

⁵ See note 3.

⁶ L. H. Gann & P. Duignan (eds.), *Colonialism in Africa*, vols. 1-5 (Cambridge, 1969-75); see especially the summary they provide in vol. 4 *The Economics of Colonialism* (1975). For a criticism of their views from a non-Marxist point of view, see A. G. Hopkin's review of the whole series, "The Burdens of Empire-Building" in *African Affairs*, no. 306 (1978), pp. 108-120.

⁷ In contrast, little attention has been paid to the far-reaching effects of the First World War, but an excellent special issue of *The Journal of African History* (Special Theme: World War One and Africa), vol. 1 (1978), has now been devoted to this topic.

grew rapidly during and after the Second World War and led to a corresponding migration to the towns and "growth zones". This social and economic transformation in its turn influenced the growth of the urban resistance and nationalist movements.

An ecological-historical perspective

There will always be disagreement about what aspects of a topic to include in a general survey, but in my view the most recent developments in historical research make it especially desirable to describe attempts to provide an explicitly ecological-historical approach to the fundamental changes that occurred in Africa around the turn of the century. A description of that kind will produce an account of what actually happened in a number of local communities and will help to explain why the effects of the ecological disasters and administrative control of the colonial period continue to inhibit agricultural progress in many African states. The historical debate on these themes has been considerably advanced by the appearance of a new book by the Norwegian political scientist, Helge Kjekshus.⁸ His book, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History. The Case of Tanganyika 1850-1950* is an inter-disciplinary work in the real sense of the term, and creates a unified whole out of research in the fields of ecology, history, anthropology, medicine and the social sciences. While many historians have concentrated on political institutions when studying African society before and during the colonial period, Kjekshus has written a book that concentrates on material developments. He ascribes a central place to changes in the basis of production, the interaction and conflict between man and his natural environment, rinderpest and epidemic diseases, changes in the methods of cultivation and the development of more advanced equipment. From these many different elements he presents a coherent thesis of an ecological collapse and a social crisis which coincided with the period of European colonization and which was clearly accentuated and rendered more catastrophic by this colonization.

In each chapter, Kjekshus casts himself vigorously into the historical debate, by directly and readily attacking a whole series of prevailing views about the period in question. The many re-evaluations which he presents are not loosely based but are supported for the most part by extensive source materials. For example, the reports of the early explorers (Livingstone, Speke, Burton) are studied from new points of view and this applies to a still greater degree to the extensive source materials produced by German scholars and colonizers. The many reports from local colonial administrations and memoirs are also valuable sources. The (mostly British) historians who later produced surveys of East African colonial history made little use of such sources and, even if they had, it is inconceivable that they would have reached

⁸ H. Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History. The Case of Tanganyika 1850-1950* (London, 1977).

the same conclusions as Kjekshus. New theoretical premises and the "modern" ecological consciousness emphasize how important it can be to re-examine the source materials.

It can be said that many historians have presented the nineteenth century as a period of stagnation and backwardness in East African history, a period in which the slave trade, tribal wars and famine led to population decline and the dissolution of existing social structures. Such attitudes were kept alive by strong interest groups which promoted the view that European trade was a civilizing advance in comparison with the slave trade, and colonial "pacification" a blessing in comparison with "tribal wars". According to this outlook, it was first after the *Pax Britannica* or the *Deutsches Schutzgebiet* had been established that the basis existed for demographic progress and a new era. Kjekshus is rightly puzzled that historians have so easily accepted accounts whose purpose might clearly have been to vindicate certain ideological or material interests. However, he goes much further than this and argues strongly that reality might well have been the opposite of the picture presented by colonialist historians. His thesis is that the size of the African population was, on the whole, stable or even increased somewhat until the eighteen eighties and that it was during the following 40 years that a considerable decline in population occurred.

If there is considerable force in Kjekshus's re-evaluation of demographic developments, one reason is that the East African slave trade was hardly on as large a scale as earlier historians believed, even though about two million people were exported from the area during the hundred years before 1870. However, it might have been of interest in this respect if Kjekshus had adopted the same approach as that followed by Edward A. Alpers in his book, *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa*, and had dealt with other social aspects as well as the purely demographic ones. Kjekshus might profitably have included such questions as the effects of the slave trade on the increasing social inequality and the growth of a "comprador class" that could later serve the interests of the colonizers, and he might also have paid more attention to changes in areas other than trade. It is also clear that Kjekshus seems to underestimate the extent to which population and labour were lost to East Africa, since the number of people who were torn from the local communities in the interior was probably double the number of those ultimately exported as slaves from the coastal areas.

In order to support his demographic hypothesis, Kjekshus presents many grounds for regarding the nineteenth century as a period of considerable advance in agriculture. New products were introduced with great success and the ecological balance was generally preserved through "agro-horticultural prophylaxis", irrigation, crop rotation, the use of natural fertilizers and measures against erosion. The old societies are usually described with such terms as "primitive shifting cultivation" and a static barter economy, but Kjekshus shows with the support of many contemporary references that agricultural production was far more varied, advanced and complicated than these terms

suggest. He describes in detail the different agricultural systems in the various parts of the country and demonstrates that a substantial surplus was probably produced in some of the years. He also documents the existence of an extensive "cattle complex" and that a varied exploitation of resources occurred in this connection. The large herds of cattle and the presence of many types of food, not least vegetables, made a strong impression on many explorers, and they spoke in their reports of both "lands of plenty" and areas that "abound in flesh". East Africa also enjoyed a favourable ecological situation with regard to the supply of wild game and hunting, but this ecological balance was later disturbed by the establishment of national parks for safari tourists with unfortunate consequences for the local population. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that there was a link between improvements in agriculture and a certain increase in population, as is argued in Ester Boserup's classical thesis.

Kjekshus also draws attention to industrial improvements in several areas: the production of new tools, like iron hoes, provide an example of metallurgical innovation; salt was extracted, distributed and used more rationally than before; and there was a great advance in the age-old art of weaving. In this latter respect, it is clear from many reports concerning handicrafts that there was a rapid growth of weaving in most villages just before the colonial period began. However, all industrial areas then experienced the same disastrous but unavoidable development during the colonial period: the African producers were unable to compete with the mass producing modern industries of the colonial powers and old techniques were forgotten at the same time as the development of new, local techniques received no stimulation.

Historians have emphasized the local network of markets and trade in West Africa, but many have assumed that such activities hardly existed in the eastern part of the continent before long-distance and caravan trade was introduced from the outside. Kjekshus takes issue with such attitudes on the basis of an "Africanist" historical approach, that is to say that he attaches importance to independent African innovation, initiative and adaptation. He presents reports of local markets for the exchange and sale of such commodities as pottery, cattle, tobacco, coffee, bananas, fish, grain and iron products during the nineteenth century, and reaches the conclusion that the later caravan trade was built upon the foundations established by existing trade routes and local traditions. In this connection, Kjekshus, like H. M. Stanley, among others, refers to the large stock of food offered for sale by the Gogo people, which lived in the Dodoma area, an area that was later ravaged by famine. It was undoubtedly a precondition for the large scale of the later caravan trade that a certain degree of social stability and surplus production of food and beverages existed.

At this point the objection could be made that Kjekshus underestimates both the element of force and the social upheavals that were induced by the impact of "foreign trade" at this time. This applies not least to the vital

role played by the import of weapons for political centralization and for the increasingly grave consequences of the many tribal conflicts. It is, of course, both correct and important to emphasize internal development and local trade. The quantities of ivory, textiles and weapons involved in the coastal trade were not very substantial compared with the varied selection of local products involved in the trade in the interior. However, it is well-documented, not least in relation to the Nyamwezi area, that the export of ivory and the recruitment of bearers was injurious to the agricultural economy, and Kjekshus himself shows that the import of textiles hindered the development of Tanzanian industry.

It is against the background of this "revisionist" picture of the nineteenth century that Kjekshus presents his account of the catastrophic ecological and social collapse of the period from 1890 to 1920 with such vigour and professional skill. A whole series of calamities now descended on Tanganyika, some due to natural disasters and others to political and colonialist development. The great cattle disease, rinderpest, reached Tanganyika around 1890 after moving south from Ethiopia and the Sudan. It is not difficult to understand that the effects of the disease were profound and serious in view of the important role occupied in many African communities by the interplay between the tending of cattle and the cultivation of the soil. There is a sharp contrast between the accounts given of the same districts by explorers on the one hand and German colonial administrators and scholars on the other, even though their times of writing were only a few years apart. Those regions in which explorers had previously noticed an abundance of agricultural produce and large herds of cattle were now marked by ruin, hunger and decay after the onset of rinderpest. By this time there are also local accounts of African origin which paint a similar picture. The Masai and Gogo peoples were among the worst affected. Without cattle to serve as a source of food and a barter object, the pressure on the land became much greater as everyone sought to secure his own livelihood. Careful management and long-term measures against erosion had to be abandoned as the loss of cattle considerably reduced the amount of manure available.

Rinderpest was not the only natural calamity to hit East Africa. The caravans from west and north brought other epidemics, usually insect-borne, into the region. Smallpox and other diseases spread rapidly among a population which had little resistance. Swarms of locusts attacked rice, maize and millet crops on a hitherto unprecedented scale and further reduced the supplies of food.

It was in this situation that the German colonization occurred and the evidence clearly shows that "pacification" was a far from peaceful process. (Kjekshus provides a systematic collation of all reports of clashes between colonizers and Africans in a useful appendix.) The German troops acted harshly in order to complete an occupation that met strong local resistance, and in the face of modern weapons African losses were heavy. When the

Africans resorted to guerilla warfare, the Germans responded with a scorched earth policy. The population suffered a further decline, stocks of food were confiscated and fields were burned. The possibility of storing food for use in hard times, a practice that had previously been widespread, was much reduced. Moreover, food stuffs were often requisitioned, since there was no other way of obtaining provisions for the occupying German troops. The introduction of a cash economy also made it tempting for many Africans to sell a greater part of any surplus they produced than they had done before, and in consequence they had less to fall back on in times of crisis. In any case, it soon became not only tempting but also highly necessary for Africans to sell either their produce or their labour in order to pay the new taxes that were imposed on them. Many agricultural systems were also destroyed when, for example, Africans were forced to cultivate cotton or recruited as labour for the plantations (such recruitment also often involved an element of coercion). Kjekshus shows that the number of plantation workers rose from 4–5 000 at the turn of the century to around 100 000 in 1912. In some districts, most of the men were away working and this made it difficult to clear the bush, which enabled the tsetse fly to establish itself more firmly. The word "*Fraundorf*" soon came to feature regularly in colonial reports. Health and accommodation conditions on the plantations also led to the dissemination of new diseases, while the African workers obtained little in the way of cash or new agricultural techniques from their labour on the plantations to take home with them to their villages. In the outlying areas, the tsetse fly obtained a firm hold, the stock of game increased at the expense of agriculture and the resources for counteracting the ecological collapse were lacking in the most vulnerable and peripheral areas.

Helge Kjekshus is not alone in his fundamental ecological-historical thesis that a varied agricultural system supporting a growing population was abruptly destroyed during the period 1890–1920 and that this was due to the negative interplay between colonization and natural catastrophes. These problems have attracted the attention of an increasing number of scholars and both detailed local studies and general surveys are being prepared. One of the most interesting developments in this connection is the work R. G. Willis is undertaking on the history of the Fipa in Tanzania.⁹ Willis bases his work on "oral history" and a thorough examination of the documentary evidence and reaches the conclusion that the period 1860–90 saw the development of a flourishing agriculture and great advances in the fields of metal production and weaving. There was also an abundance of cattle and the surplus was used in trade and in building up a state apparatus that guaranteed peace and inner stability. At the beginning of the eighteen nineties a series of ruinous events occurred of which the most disastrous was probably

⁹ See R. G. Willis's forthcoming works, *Ideology and Domination: the Anatomy of State Power in Ufipa*. Some of the problems are outlined in the same author's "Comments of Dr Kjekshus' paper", *African Historical Demography. Proceedings of a seminar held at the Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh*, 29–30/4 1977.

the destruction by the Europeans of the existing commercial system. The African state apparatuses dissolved in part because of the European missionaries, who came to be seen as representatives of "still higher powers", and in part because sections of the traditional administration of the Fipa assumed the position of "a quasi-independent exploitative class". To avoid exploitation, many Africans moved to new areas which could not be adapted quickly to advanced agricultural methods. Rinderpest reached Ufipa in 1892 and at the same time the tendency towards dissolution in the pattern of settlement was strengthened by the German advance into the area in the late eighteenth nineties, an advance that was accompanied by coercive measures, the levying of taxes and the conscription of male labour in the service of the German army.

The occurrence of similar upheavals in other parts of Africa is suggested both by studies of developments in Lesotho and Kenya and by Robin Palmer's well-documented and seminal work, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*.¹⁰ His detailed studies confirm the general impression described in this essay:

A striking feature of many travellers' accounts of East and Central Africa in the nineteenth century is the evident agricultural prosperity of many—though not all—of its peoples and the great variety of produce grown, together with the volume of local, regional, and long-distance trade and the emergence of a wide range of entrepreneurs. An equally striking feature of accounts written in the 1920s and 1930s is the picture of widespread stagnation and decay which emerges, with a greatly reduced number of crops being grown, an almost complete cessation of inter-African trade, and an increasing cycle of rural poverty driving more and more people away to the towns. By 1939 virtually all vestiges of African economic independence have been shattered; African cultivators have become tied to a world market over which they have no control and a pattern of underdevelopment has been firmly established. The Shona provides a classic example of this general pattern.

African resistance and protest

It is against the background of the colonial system, and not least of the economic upheavals it caused in the local communities, that Basil Davidson begins his broad treatment of the nationalist movements. It is only in the context of such a perspective that African protest movements are comprehensible: defensive measures against foreign occupation of land; the discontent of the new, educated, African elite with their career prospects; the revolt of the religious prophets against white Christian culture; and the militant strikes of the growing working class. With an abundance of detail, acquired through a thorough study of the sources, Davidson provides the reader with a glimpse into a world of movements, action, initiatives and or-

¹⁰ See the chapter on the historical background in G. W. Ström, *Development and Dependence in Lesotho, the Enclave of South Africa* (Uppsala, 1978). See also the detailed study by C. H. Ambler, "The Great Famine in East Central Kenya, 1897-1900, a Regional View" (Historical Association of Kenya, Annual Conference, 1978, Mimeograph) and R. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia* (London, 1977).

ganizations. These phenomena are explained as concrete and understandable responses to historical changes like urbanization, new educational opportunities, the emergence of a mining working class as a result of an intensification of the search for new raw materials after the Second World War and the presence of tens of thousands of ex-soldiers from the British and French armies. All these factors contributed to a crisis within the forms of political control exercised by the traditional colonial system. Davidson also draws attention, of course, to changes in the international context of colonialism, of which the growing strength of the United States and the great multinational corporations at the expense of the old colonial powers was one of the most important.

Basil Davidson has placed his main emphasis on a comprehensive account of protest movements and the development of political ideas and organizations, but in my view, he fails to take into account new research and new approaches which may widen our perspective. It is particularly striking that it is the educated elite, the small industrial working class and the cultural prophets which dominate Davidson's account in *Africa in Modern History*. A concentration on formal institutions and movements which kept written records that can serve as source materials is a weakness in much history writing, and it is more of a weakness when studying a part of the world in which the great majority of the population are small peasants. In recent years increasing attention has therefore been devoted to the many forms of resistance and protest on the local level among peasants, agricultural labourers and miners. There were many such manifestations of resistance and protest and only now are they beginning to be more closely studied and discussed. The refusal to pay taxes; migration to areas that were not under colonial administrative control; sabotage; "social banditry"; a willingness to slaughter cattle rather than to see them confiscated; spontaneous, local uprisings, etc., these are all forms of action that deserve a far more prominent place in the history of resistance and protest. Several important studies dealing with this subject have already been published and cover such topics as the actions of the cocoa producers in interwar Ghana, rural uprisings in Mozambique and protests against coercive measures in agriculture in Tanzania and Zambia.¹¹

¹¹ The many local movements are well documented in A. Isaacman, *The Tradition of Resistance in Mozambique* (London, 1976). Works on Ghana include R. Howard, "Differential Class Participation in an African Protest Movement: the Ghana Cocoa Boycott of 1938", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 3 (1976), pp. 469-480 and J. Simensen, "Rural Mass Action in the Context of Anti-Colonial Protest: the Asafo Movement of Akim Abuakwa, Ghana", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 1 (1974), pp. 25-41. Examples from Tanzania are given in such works as I. N. Kimambo, *Mbiru, Rural Protest in Colonial Tanzania* (Nairobi, 1971); L. Cliffe, "Nationalism and the Reaction to Enforced Agricultural Change in Tanganyika during the Colonial Period", in L. Cliffe & J. S. Saul, *Socialism in Tanzania*, vol. 1 (Nairobi, 1972), pp. 17-24. The same problems are also covered in detail in Mac Dixon-Fyle, "Agricultural Improvement and Political Protest on the Tonga Plateau, Northern Rhodesia", *Journal of African History*, vol. 4 (1977), pp. 579-596 and in L. Vail & L. White, "'Tavani, Machambero!: Forced Cotton and Rice Growing on the Zambesi", *Journal of African History*, vol. 2 (1978), pp. 239-263.

An example of a perceptive, detailed study of this character is Charles van Onselen's book on mining, the coercive economy and workers' conditions in Rhodesia, *Chibaro. African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933*.¹² Van Onselen shows that it was very difficult to arrange organized strikes, open meetings and demonstrations under such an oppressive and strictly controlled system, and that in consequence the historian must examine less organized, but no less important, forms of action like desertion from forced labour, the destruction of pass books, the reduction of the tempo of work, "absenteeism" and industrial sabotage. Van Onselen uses a wide range of source materials to show what methods were adopted and his conclusion is of both methodological and historiographical importance:

Considering the power which they challenged and the control to which they were subject, black workers in Rhodesian mines then showed an impressive degree of articulate, literate and organised resistance to the alliance of the employers and the state. In a labour-coercive economy, however, worker ideologies and organisations should be viewed essentially as the high water marks of protest: they should not be allowed to dominate our understanding of the way the economy worked, or of the African miners' responses to it. At least as important, if not more so, were the less dramatic, silent and often unorganised responses, and it is this latter set of responses, which occurred on a day-to-day basis, that reveal most about the functioning of the system and formed the woof and warp of worker consciousness. Likewise it was the unarticulated, unorganised protest and resistance which the employers and the state found most difficult to detect or suppress.¹³

These perspectives deserve such a prominent place in historical writings about Africa because attempts have been made to interpret the absence of great rebellions and centrally organised movements as "evidence" that the colonial system was accepted by the Africans. This is part of the criticism that has been directed recently at the tendency of many prominent historians, like, for example, John Iliffe and T. O. Ranger, to concentrate on well-organized, large-scale uprisings. This concentration was clearly intended to counteract the tendency of the more conservative historians of colonialism to dismiss African resistance and rebellion for ideological reasons. However, some reservations should be made about this approach since it gives insufficient attention to the different acts of resistance in the periods that preceded the uprisings. A historical controversy concerning these questions, which takes its point of departure in T. O. Ranger's books and articles about Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in the eighteen nineties, is at present being conducted in scholarly journals.¹⁴ Madzviwanyika Tsomondo has maintained in a very

¹² C. van Onselen, *Chibaro. African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia* (London, 1976).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

¹⁴ See especially T. O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-97* (London, 1967). Ranger and other scholars belonging to the "nationalist" school are criticized by J. Depelchin in "Toward a Problematic History of Africa", *Journal of Southern African Affairs*, vol. 2:1 (1977), pp. 5-10 and by M. Legassick in "Perspectives on African 'Underdevelopment'", *Journal of African History*, vol. 3 (1976), pp. 435-440. The sharpest and most well-founded criticism, especially with regard to the tendency to overlook other forms of resistance than centralized rebellions,

important essay that the interest devoted to the so-called "rebellion" of the years 1896-97 might create the impression that the preceding period was characterized by the willing or unwilling acceptance of the European occupation by the Shona.¹⁵ This was the view that the settlers themselves presented to the outside world, and a number of historians have undoubtedly gone a long way towards accepting the myth.

Tsomondo clearly shows that the Shona did not regard themselves as the subjects of either the British South Africa Company or Great Britain during the period 1890-96, and that it was not the case that a "rebellion" first broke out once the colonial administration had shown itself to be arbitrary and heavy-handed. Tsomondo argues strongly that the Shona reacted and resisted throughout the whole period after 1890, and that the strengthened and collective form of resistance adopted in the years 1896-98 was merely an intensification of the first phase of resistance. Tsomondo produces evidence to demonstrate that there was considerable resistance before 1896, although it was not centrally coordinated or directed. A case in point was the high degree of non-cooperation with Europeans, which was expressed, for example, in the fact that whole villages moved to other areas in order to avoid the forcible conscription of labour for the mines or the projects of the colonial administration. The great local variations, in the forms and strength of resistance were due of course to the fact that the Shona area was not a unified state. There were many local communities and both the degree of European penetration and their political institutions and traditions differed considerably. The institutional and material basis for centralized action was therefore weak, and to regard the absence of such action as a sign of "passivity" or "acceptance" is consequently ahistorical and unreasonable.¹⁶ These considerations give further emphasis to the need to examine local and spontaneous manifestations of resistance more fully, as is done by Allen Isaacman in his book, *The Tradition of Resistance in Mozambique. Anti-Colonial Activity in the Zambesi Valley 1850-1921*.¹⁷

The question that arises is how the local and spontaneous forms of resistance should be studied and where the sources for an examination of this

is presented by M. Tsomondo in "Shona Reaction and Resistance to the European Colonization of Zimbabwe, 1890-1898. A Case against Colonial and Revisionist Historiography", *Journal of Southern African Affairs*, vol. 2: 1 (1977), pp. 11-32. See also J. Cobbing, "The Absent Priesthood: another Look at the Rhodesian Risings of 1896-1897", *Journal of African History*, vol. 18: 1 (1977), pp. 61-84. T. O. Ranger gives a survey of this debate and a reply to his critics in "The People in African Resistance: a Review", *Journal of Southern African Affairs*, vol. 4: 1 (1977). This issue of the journal is a very stimulating special issue on "protest and resistance".

¹⁵ Tsomondo, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ "If the localization of Shona societies in the late nineteenth century is taken into account, Shona resistance should be looked for at the corresponding same level. It is to the individuals, to the local villages, and to the headman and subchiefs, and not to the paramounts or the Shona as a whole, that one must go to look for the signposts of resistance during 1890-96." Tsomondo, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

¹⁷ See note 11.

subject are to be found. It is clear in this connection that source materials exist if one is prepared to look for them. The colonial authorities did not record outbreaks as political insurrections or actions aimed at preserving African independence but tried to present them as isolated, civil crimes, just as today the struggle of the liberation movement in Zimbabwe is presented as individual acts of terrorism, murder etc. Those who resisted or tried to regain land and cattle confiscated by the Europeans were described as thieves. The colonial authorities tried to conceal the political nature of African resistance by drawing up a whole catalogue of such "crimes". There are many examples of the terminology used and these examples are illuminating for those historians who are trying to identify the forms of anti-colonialist protest and resistance adopted in the rural areas:

insolence, insubordination, lack of respect for authority, tendency to take advantage of fair dealings, laziness, desertion of employers, refusal to contribute labor for mines, ingratitude, contentment with poverty, desertion of own villages, non-payment of hut taxes, refusal to sell their crops and livestock to the white man, stealing from Europeans, proneness to murder settlers, inability to achieve without supervision, refusal to answer to summons, unwillingness to venture far from their own villages, etc.¹⁸

It can be added that Allen F. Isaacman made the same observations in his study of resistance in the Zambesi valley in which he drew attention to the material that is to be found in the police archives of the colonial authorities.

There is also a new and stimulating tendency to discuss the term "social banditry" with regard to the study of early manifestations of African protest and resistance in the countryside during the first encounter with colonialism and capitalism. This approach is best known through the classical works of E. J. Hobsbawm and was first adopted in an African context by Allen Isaacman.¹⁹ His essay, "Social Banditry in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and Mozambique 1894-1907: An Expression of Early Peasant Protest", breaks new ground in this connection and combines empirical local studies with a critical use of Hobsbawm's categories. Isaacman's article is clearly a challenge to modern writing about Africa, or as he expresses it himself:

In addition to the problems of sources, the absence of serious research on social banditry reflects a trend in the historiography of resistance. To date, most studies, including my own, have focused on highly visible mass movements rather than more localized reactions of workers and peasants whose efforts were often short-lived and rarely produced tangible results. Recent studies on the atomized responses of peasants, workers, and the urban poor, have opened up a whole new inquiry which needs to be expanded. To further this analysis, such loaded terms as "riots", "van-

¹⁸ Tsomondo, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹⁹ A. Isaacman, "Social Banditry in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and Mozambique, 1894-1907: an Expression of Early Peasant Protest", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 2:1 (1977), p. 3. The most important of E. J. Hobsbawm's works in this connection is *Social Bandits* (London, 1969), but see also *Primitive Rebels* (London, 1959) and the article "Social Banditry" in H. Landsberger (ed.), *Rural Protest, Peasant Movements and Social Change* (New York, 1973).

dalism" and "banditry" must be reexamined and the context, motivation and goals of the participants seriously explored.²⁰

By presenting the social basis of the two best known "social bandits" in the area, Mapondera and Dambukashamba, Isaacman shows clearly that their most immediate objectives, a sort of spontaneous protection of the poor and a desire to preserve traditional institutions, gradually widened into a more anti-colonialist and revolutionary activity. Referring to other studies in Tanzania and Kenya, he also raises the question of whether such local forms of "social banditry" were not also present during the first years after 1945, a period in which the challenge to colonial rule of the more institutionalized nationalist movements had still not been extended to the countryside to any great extent. It may, for example, be asked whether the activities of the Shamba in Tanzania and the early phase of the "Mau Mau" rebellion in Kenya cannot be seen in this light.²¹

Collaboration: a new theme for research

The question of collaboration is another theme for research which has largely been overlooked and which consequently also receives too little attention in Davidson's book. This lack of research applies to collaboration both during the first phase, that is to say during the process of colonial conquest itself, and during important periods of the "modern" resistance struggle. This weakness is partly connected with the fact that the analysis of class formation during the nineteenth century is incomplete and there has, as a result, been a tendency to see a more uniform African reaction to colonization and the introduction of capitalist forms of production than the evidence permits. However, this problem is being taken up in more recent historical research and this is fortunate since it would be difficult to write an adequate account of the main features of the nationalist and resistance movements without including some discussion of the problem of collaboration.

Any consideration of this problem raises a great number of questions. How was the process of colonization possible when it was supported by such a small administrative apparatus and such comparatively limited armed forces? Why did some tribes and chiefs resist while others cooperated? How were the decisions concerning the forms of resistance to be adopted reached? To what extent was popular pressure from below applied in favour of resistance or cooperation? What, for example, lay behind the pressure which "the masses"

²⁰ Isaacman, *op. cit.* Isaacman explains these problems relating to the source materials in the following way: "Because the written documentation represents the official position of the colonial regime, which at every level had an interest in down-playing the significance of the social bandits or reducing them to vulgar outlaws, as little more than the state ideology, it is hardly likely to yield useful insights, much less a coherent body of data about the motivation and goals of social bandits" (p. 28).

²¹ Isaacman is here referring to information from Professor Steven Feierman about Tanzania and to E. Keller's "A Twentieth-Century Model: the Mau Mau Transformation from Social Banditry to Social Rebellion", *Kenya Historical Society*, vol. 2 (1973), pp. 189-206.

applied before the Zulu rebellion in South Africa in 1906 and which the leadership yielded to?

There has been some research into these questions and a number of significant contributions that will undoubtedly be built upon in the future have already appeared. An example, which directly takes the historical debate concerning reactions to European colonization as its starting-point, is Edward I. Steinhart's work, *Conflict and Collaboration. The Kingdoms of Western Uganda 1890-1907*.²² Steinhart reminds us that a decolonization of African historiography has occurred with the result that African resistance and heroic struggle against European domination have finally received their rightful place. However, he also expresses anxiety that some nuances have been lost in this process, not least with regard to the complex and varied African reactions to colonization. In order to study these reactions more closely, Steinhart has examined three kingdoms in Uganda, in which the traditional political elites chose to cooperate with British imperialism. It was not a question of uncritical submission or surrender but rather of the choice of that course of action which best satisfied the needs of these elites in respect of both their private material interests and their desire to preserve their traditional position of power. A comparison of the three kingdoms also shows that it was Ankole, the area with the sharpest social stratification and most authoritarian form of government, which most clearly adopted the path of collaboration. The ruling elite in Bunyoro was the most hesitant in this respect, while Toro occupied an intermediate position.

Steinhart takes a great interest in the question of political stability, not least because traditional legitimacy in the three kingdoms was exploited by the British for administrative purposes, the collection of taxes etc. The possibilities of mobilizing any forces of resistance that may have existed were not great in the face of the political elite's united support for collaboration, and even if they had been mobilized, traditional authority was backed up by British military superiority. Steinhart also produces interesting evidence to show that the educational privileges afforded by the colonial power to the sons of the elite groups created self-perpetuating power groups which had little interest in decolonization and still less in democratization within an independent Uganda. In view both of the present situation in Uganda and of the direction that future historical research might follow, Steinhart reaches an important conclusion:

Where in most African colonies the educated and westernized elites served as the vanguard of nationalist political activity, in Uganda the effective preoccupation of the "modernizing oligarchy" with operating the local regime of collaboration and securing the rewards offered by participation in politics made them as resistant to the appeal to nationalist solidarity as any class within colonial society. Successful collaboration at an early stage of colonial rule may have acted as a brake on the democratic

²² E. I. Steinhart, *Conflict and Collaboration. The Kingdoms of Western Uganda* (Princeton, N.J., 1977).

and nationalist reaction that colonial rule seems to have triggered elsewhere in colonial Africa. Perhaps, even the neocolonial and authoritarian tendencies of the nationalist elite may be traceable to a collaborationist heritage. Certainly much research on the role of this neotraditional elite in colonial politics remains to be done.²³

A number of essential questions and comments connected with the expansion and collaboration of African states and the differences between the various social groups' interests when confronted with colonization are presented in an essay written by Barbara and Allen Isaacman, "Resistance and Collaboration in Southern and Central Africa, c. 1850-1920".²⁴ Although they are the first to concede that their own research and efforts to form a theory are still at a preliminary stage, it is clear that the results of their studies can already be drawn together into a meaningful whole, provided that the right questions are asked. On the basis of their empirical studies concerning southern and central Africa, they briefly summarize their views on the most important motives for collaboration in the following way:

We can identify the principal factors which motivated Africans to collaborate at a particular point in time as well as those social strata most likely to become permanent agents of the colonial regime. As in the discussion of resistance, it is important to remember that the different strata within any society often had conflicting interests and that the decision to collaborate was characterized by similar complexity. The principal incentives to collaborate were: (1) to protect one's primordial group against encroachments by a historic enemy; (2) to facilitate expansionist ambitions; (3) to enable a segment of the ruling strata to regain or reinforce its privileged position; (4) to eliminate all authoritarian regimes and (5) to increase one's economic status within the new colonial order.²⁵

It is clear from this quotation that the considerations mentioned might also explain more durable collaboration and provide a way of approaching historical processes that also appeared in quite recent times, that is to say during the period of "decolonization" and the struggle for liberation. An obvious example is Kenya and the "Mau Mau" rebellion of the nineteen fifties, and a number of important re-evaluations of this topic have appeared in recent years. As a result of these new studies, it is difficult to accept Basil Davidson's somewhat simplified account of these events in Kenya in which he speaks of nationalism and peasant rebellion without discussing the forces which did not rebel.²⁶ Abundant material on the social and class basis of the uprising is available today and information is beginning to appear about the people who behaved actively as what the British called "loyalists".

One of the most important contributions to the study of this theme has been made by Frank Furedi in several articles on "the land issue", and such

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

²⁴ *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 1 (1977), pp. 31-62.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

²⁶ Davidson, *Africa in Modern History*, pp. 263-264.

studies have illuminated the social basis and motives of the collaborators.²⁷ One of Furedi's central findings is that it proved difficult for the authorities to find Africans who were willing to cooperate with them in the White Highlands, an area in which, unlike in the Kikuyu reserves, there were no African groups that owned land or had any immediate prospect of social advance within the framework of the colonial system. Instead, an acute deterioration in the terms governing leases and labour contracts had occurred in the highlands after the Second World War, partly as a result of the mechanization and rationalization of agriculture. Sharon Stichter's work has also made it possible to establish important differences in the attitudes of various groups, including the working class, in Nairobi towards the rebellion.²⁸ The role played by the urban lumpenproletariat is a significant part of the history of the resistance movement. It need hardly be said that the British colonial authorities and sections of the white power block in Kenya understood that the land question was the real issue in the conflict and they therefore undertook a series of measures from the middle of the nineteen fifties onwards aimed at creating new collaborators for the post-colonial period. The right of owning private property was safeguarded, the land was divided into individual plots, the existence of an African landowning middle and upper class was consolidated, etc. In this way, guarantees were created for a continuance of the privileged position of large landowners within the agricultural sector, and it is not surprising that Kenya has served as a "model" for those who study history in order to find a pattern for a possible neo-colonial solution in Zimbabwe.²⁹

Kenya is also one of the most obvious examples of how politically sensitive the debate about collaboration is, even among professional historians and in literary circles. This can be seen from the reactions to Professor B. A. Ogot's introduction to the discussion on "the loyalists" in his contribution to the annual congress of the Historical Association of Kenya in 1971.³⁰ Ogot's point of departure was that the role of the Kikuyu loyalists had hitherto been overlooked by historians and social scientists, and he also criticized the "nationalist" school for its neglect of this topic. (This is clearly the case even in Nottingham and Rosberg's well-established work on the "Mau Mau" rebel-

²⁷ See F. Furedi, "The African Crowd in Nairobi. Popular Movements and Elite Politics", *Journal of African History*, vol. 2 (1973), pp. 275-290, "The Social Composition of the Mau Mau Movement in the White Highlands", *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 4 (1974), pp. 486-505, and "The Kikuyu Squatters in the Rift Valley 1918-1929" in B. A. Ogot (ed.), *Hadith 5* (Nairobi, 1975).

²⁸ S. B. Stichter, "Workers, Trade Unions and the Mau Mau Rebellion", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 2 (1975), pp. 259-275.

²⁹ The best account of the land question during this period is G. Wasserman's *Politics of Decolonization. Kenya Europeans and the Land Issue 1960-65* (Cambridge, 1976). The transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism is also described in C. Leys's valuable work, *Underdevelopment in Kenya. The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism* (London, 1975).

³⁰ B. A. Ogot, "Revolt of the Elders", in B. A. Ogot (ed.), *Politics and Nationalism in Colonial Kenya* (Nairobi, 1972), pp. 134-149.

lion.)³¹ In Ogot's view, the social divisions between Africans were an essential feature of the whole uprising and he believes that a closer study of the motives and social background of the loyalists, dealing with such questions as the amount of land they owned and the level of their attachment to Christianity and constitutionalism, is desirable. Ogot's belief that more research is required and his own contributions to systematizing what is already known are not without political importance, because (to quote his own words)

Unlike the Loyalists in the American Revolution who lost their argument, their war and their place in American society, the Kenya Loyalists won the military war, lost their argument, but still dominate the Kenya society in several significant respects. It is therefore necessary in any serious study of political revolution in Kenya during the colonial period to include a discussion on Loyalism and its role in Kenya politics.³²

These continuing tensions were underlined even more sharply by the arrest of the author and literary scholar Ngugi wa Thiong'o around the turn of the year 1977-78. No official explanation was given, but it is reasonable to suppose that the motive lies in his novels, like *Petals of Blood*, and in his last play, *Ngahika Nenda*. The latter was performed in Limuru in the autumn of 1977, but permission to stage it was withdrawn when it was proposed that it would be shown in the villages of the area. According to the district commissioner, "the play might rekindle enmity between different groups". This is clear reference to the nineteen fifties and to the antagonism between earlier freedom fighters and opponents of the "Mau Mau"-uprising. This antagonism is a theme in several of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novels. His treatment of this subject has been criticized for placing too much weight on the heroism of and the mass support received by the resistance and liberation struggles, since there is a risk that new myths will be created and that other elements in the picture of struggle and collaboration that are needed for a complete historical analysis will be lost. This is a central argument of the prominent Kenyan historian, Atieno-Odhiambo, who has directly criticized the myths propagated in literary, and also to some extent historical, works. Since his controversial article, "Who were the Mau Mau?" gives an example of how research into and discussion of the subject of collaboration, in all senses of the word, is constantly being developed further, it is appropriate to quote an extract from it:

Who defeated the Mau Mau forces? First and foremost the loyalist Home Guards, those private armies of the African chiefs. Armed with spears, swords, clubs and guns these people faced the Mau Mau and fought them out. The second group of people who defeated the Mau Mau were the African masses, the same masses that Ngugi Thiong'o wants to mystify and mythologize in his *Petals of Blood*. The masses, certainly the majority of them, refused to join the fighting forces, hid behind Christianity, betrayed the whereabouts of the few freedom fighters that they happened

³¹ C. G. Rosberg, Jr & J. Nottingham, *The Myth of "Mau Mau": Nationalism in Kenya* (Nairobi, 1967).

³² Ogot, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

to see, denied the freedom fighters food and shelter, dug the trenches that enriched the foresta and planted the spikes in them, and oh, the list is endless.³³

The ideological and social basis of the nationalist movements

The lack of research concerning the formation of classes, both before and during the colonial period, is also apparent in Basil Davidson's discussion of nationalist movements and "decolonization". With regard to the most important features of the nationalist movements, he writes that "They became movements with mass support or mass acclaim. They did not become movements of mass participation. The distinction is important".³⁴ The distinction is indeed important, but it does not play a significant role in Davidson's further discussion of the topic, even though it could have provided a direct link between Davidson's account of the nationalist movement and his later description of a growing division between "the few and the many" after independence.

Davidson presents Tanzania and Uganda as examples of countries in which the nationalist parties enjoyed mass support, and it is therefore natural to recall that a lively debate is being conducted at present concerning the nationalist movements in both these countries, a debate that calls into question some prevailing assumptions about the social recruitment of the nationalist movements, the ideology of the leadership and the effects of these two factors on the development strategy that was adopted later. For example, we now know much more than before about the variations in the level of mass support TANU enjoyed in different areas. Issa Shivji's much-discussed book, *The Class Struggles in Tanzania* has shown that it was not only the small farmers and "the intelligentsia" (Nyerere) who formed an alliance in TANU and that an ambitious group within the petty bourgeoisie, the African traders, were also involved. "It was the traders who provided the material base for it to transform itself into a political organization ... The traders provided the necessary bridge between the urban-based intelligentsia and the rural peasants to forge a mass nationalist movement".³⁵ One of the reasons why it is important to study such a group, a group that Davidson hardly discusses, is that the seed of the conflict after 1961 between a private capitalistic commercial sector on the one hand and a state bureaucracy which wanted nationalization or co-operative (*ujamaa*) enterprises on the other already existed during the struggle for independence. It might also be asked why TANU was so weak right up until the last year of the colonial period in those parts of the country that were most fully integrated into the capitalist market and

³³ A. Odhiambo, "Who were the Mau Mau?", *African Perspectives*, vol. 2 (1978), p. 7.

³⁴ Davidson, *Africa in Modern History*, p. 227.

³⁵ I. Shivji, *The Class Struggles in Tanzania* (London, 1976), p. 67. Shivji also refers to the declaration that TANU made at the time of its foundation in 1954 in which one of its objectives is described as being "to help Africans establish an increasing share in the running and owning of business" (p. 59).

system of production. What does this fact mean for the present political situation and for the prospects of a socialist transformation of the countryside? Issa Shivji and John Iliffe have discussed these problems from different starting-points and it is clear that the picture of TANU as a homogeneous nationalist party must be modified.³⁶ Moreover, it is not possible without a more thorough and more balanced historical presentation of the ideological and social bases of the nationalist movements to analyze the role of the state in African countries like Tanzania after independence. Without such analyses, historical myths about united movements supported by all classes and pursuing common interests will prevail and will serve to provide legitimacy to the ruling groups. Such myths therefore have a political function in themselves.³⁷

In the case of Uganda, Mahmood Mamdani's book, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*, also provides a stimulating contribution to the discussion about classes, the state and decolonization.³⁸ Mamdani treats nationalism as a movement which gathered together groups with conflicting long-term interests and which primarily had a petty bourgeois ideology and class support. For a number of reasons, it proved possible to unite several different groups at a given moment in history. Africans employed in the administration were discontented with the discriminatory salary system; farmers who produced coffee and cotton for export were dissatisfied with the state organizations which retained such a large part of the surplus they produced; traders protested at the protection the colonial power afforded to existing commercial privileges; the industrial workers demanded higher wages, etc and all these groups found a temporary unity in the nationalist movement.

However, even if the movement was a temporary coalition between many different social forces in Uganda, the leadership was drawn almost exclusively from the petty bourgeoisie. Within this class, there were important differences between the traders, the larger farmers and the civil servants. The industrial workers were quickly pushed aside with considerable assistance from the colonial power's attempts to repress and fragment the working class, and the interests of large groups in the countryside were subordinated to those of the more prosperous farmers. The fact that Uganda achieved independence without a consolidated and relatively homogeneous petty bourgeoisie, in contrast to Tanzania and Kenya, may be part of the explana-

³⁶ J. Iliffe, "Nationalism and the Commercial Economy in Tanganyika, 1954-61" (unpublished paper, University of London, 1971). An extensive history of Tanzania by the same author, *A History of Tanganyika*, will appear in 1979.

³⁷ An attempt to produce a concrete analysis of the Tanzanian state is made by J. S. Saul in "The State in a Post-Colonial Society: Tanzania", *Socialist Register 1974* (London, 1974) and also by I. Shivji, *op. cit.*, and by M. von Freyhold, "The Post-Colonial State and Its Tanzanian Version", *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 8 (1977), pp. 75-89. *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 5 (1976), contains a number of articles on the state in Africa, including an important contribution by C. Leys, "The 'Underdeveloped' Post-Colonial State: a Re-Evaluation", which also deals with Tanzania.

³⁸ M. Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda* (London, 1976).

tion for the political and tribal divisions that emerged after independence and for the collapse in the functioning of the "independent" state just before Idi Amin's coup in 1971.

"The search for a new society"

Towards the end of *Africa in Modern History* Basil Davidson again demonstrates his ability to collect the threads together and present fruitful categories. He emphasizes strongly in his account of "decolonization" that the latter's forms were to some extent different from country to country and that these differences were not fortuitous but were largely connected with divisions that arose earlier out of the economic mechanisms of the colonial system. In West Africa it is the commercial system that is prominent and it is possible to find in several places local elite groups inside the commercial and educational sectors who were able to carry on the tradition. In colonies with many European settlers like Algeria and Kenya "decolonization" was first achieved after a long liberation struggle. In this connection, Davidson gives a useful reminder that the interests of the local settlers and the long-term neo-colonialist strategy of the colonial power and industrial capital do not coincide. This observation is also relevant for the present situation in Zimbabwe.

Was "decolonization" only a trap then? Basil Davison emphatically answers this question in the negative. Decolonization was a complex and contradictory process, just as colonization had been in its time. Changes were to some degree obtained through struggle and at least in some countries decolonization has opened up opportunities for progress which were quite unthinkable under colonial rule. Nonetheless, he still reaches the conclusion that the colonial system is still predominant and that many of its features, like the existence of differences and contradictions between classes and regions, have rather been strengthened than weakened since independence. Davidson also provides a useful attempt to categorize the paths of development followed by various African countries. In some areas, like Nigeria, the Ivory Coast and Tunisia, the growth and consolidation of African middle class groups has taken place. In other countries (Uganda, the Central African Empire, Zaire, etc.) a weak autocratic-bureaucratic dictatorship is in power. However, there are also countries which present the hope of development along new roads, and finally, there are those countries, like the former Portuguese colonies, which are aiming at a real liberation. It is therefore the political conditions and experiences created by a long guerilla struggle that constitute the most important explanatory variable, and in this connection Davidson can draw on his own studies of Guinea-Bissau and Angola.

In this way, Davidson connects present developments with history. He summarizes his fundamental view as being that underdevelopment and foreign domination have structural roots in history, but that the Africans have the opportunity through movements, initiatives and struggle of regaining the

right to shape their own future.³⁹ It is this that is meant by the book's subtitle, *The Search for a New Society*. As this brief survey of some trends in the study of African history has shown, Basil Davidson's book, even if it contains much that ought to be discussed, criticized and supplemented, is so rich in new perspectives and concrete information that it gives more to the reader than any other individual writing on modern African history. I hope that this article will have shown that *Africa in Modern History* can also provide a means of posing new questions and furthering historical discussion.

³⁹ In this respect Davidson's views are quite similar to those of Colin Leys who writes that "What is needed is not a theory of underdevelopment but a theory of underdevelopment and its liquidation ... A theory of this kind implies nothing less than a theory of world history from the standpoint of the underdeveloped countries" (Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya*, pp. 20-21).