

# BOOK REVIEWS

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WORD PROCESSING: LAURIE GEORGE

*AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST*

*Ariel Sharon: An Intimate Portrait.* By Uri Dan. (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Pp. xvi, 292. \$16.95.)

Ariel Sharon, well known for his military and political roles over the course of Israeli history from 1948 to 2006 when he suffered a stroke, remains a figure who generates deeply held feelings and controversy. For some, he represents the best of Israel's daring and heroism; others view him as guilty of repeatedly provoking violence, and as responsible for initiatives—such as the settlement of occupied territories and the Lebanon War of 1982—that intensified conflict, thereby undermining any possibility for negotiated peace. Some consider him a war criminal as well.

The author of the book reviewed here does not in any way contribute to readers' understanding of this complex figure or his impact on history. Uri Dan's subtitle suggests entry into a more personal grasp of Ariel Sharon, but it would be more accurate to call this a portrait based on hero worship and hope for admiration based on basking in Sharon's reflection. The author, a longtime friend and spokesperson for Sharon, offers his own narrative and unpublished interviews, but none of the material can actually be verified or evaluated without significant further research as the book contains neither footnotes nor bibliography. At best, this is a personal tribute of love by a follower who may hope to affect the way this history is written.

Although it will take time and distance to permit a historically sound evaluation of Sharon's impact on Israeli history, there is no doubt that his biography encompasses a lifetime of efforts to remain close to military and political action. In the early years of statehood, Sharon led a commando group of the Israel Defense Forces, which undertook reprisal actions against Arab villagers over the border. One incident, in Qibya on the West Bank, in particular gained attention for its destructiveness and civilian deaths. Other military actions reinforced Sharon's reputation for aggressive initiatives.

Eventually he became the Minister of Defense largely responsible for the Lebanon War of 1982 and notorious for his role in the Sabra and Shatilla massacres. Even before, however, he was a powerful force in creating the density of Israeli settlements in occupied territories, which remain a significant obstacle to negotiated peace efforts. Despite the fact that one of his last acts as Prime Minister was the removal of settlements from Gaza, most who followed Sharon's career had doubts as to whether this effort represented a change of heart or simply another tactical effort.

For Dan, Sharon was “the man who most embodied Israel’s destiny” (Foreword). There is little doubt that Sharon’s life was intimately and intricately bound up with the state for which he fought, but this book unfortunately provides readers with little insight into the meaning of that relationship beyond an idealization, which in itself is perhaps best understood as part of that history.

*Duke University*

Ylana Miller

*Locality, Mobility, and “Nation”: Periurban Colonialism in Togo’s Eweland, 1900–1960.* By Benjamin N. Lawrance. (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2007. Pp. xv, 288. \$75.00.)

This author responds to the frequent failure of past histories of African nationalism to include the roles of “multiple human and territorial constituencies” in the exploration of the development of ethnic and territorial nationalism while accepting that independence struggles were nationwide phenomena. Benjamin N. Lawrance expands the analysis of ethnic and territorial nationalism beyond its conventional exaggeration of urban, male, and elite power as the engines driving the process. By integrating the city and its surrounding rural areas into his analysis, his study of French Togo overcomes the limitations of narratives about state, power, and invented tradition, which overstate the roles of chieftaincies while understating the importance of rural populations in the nascence of anticolonialism.

*Locality, Mobility, and “Nation”* is most assuredly a political history tracing the evolution of an independence movement culminating in the birth of the Republic of Togo in 1960 after Sylvanus Olympio, its first president, led decolonization efforts. But it is far more than that. It is a deeply nuanced interdisciplinary study integrating gender, social, and political history. Lawrance’s narrative encompasses urban and rural interaction, the role of market women in the genesis of Ewe ethnic nationalism, and the transformation of ethnic nationalism into territorial nationalism. It is a well-crafted history of German Togoland come under French rule by way of the League of Nations Mandate. That mandate administratively divided the Ewe people between France and Britain. Examining the intricacies of urban connections and interdependencies with surrounding rural areas, Lawrance provides a superior account of the economic, social, and political tensions that shaped the events and circumstances leading from the growth of Ewe nationalism to the forging of the broader conception of territorial Togo.

Having laid down the context and circumstances of the evolving French colonial milieu in the Mandate era, including its consequent adjustment to inter-

national oversight, Lawrance turns to the analysis of the developments leading to the market women's revolt in 1933. Presenting it as the first overt expression of reaction to French tax policy changes, market day alterations, selection of councils, and appointment of chieftains, he examines the complexities of *Vodou* as an Ewe means of reclaiming political authority, first by women, then by African males. He insightfully analyzes the adjustments of the colonial government to a growing resistance at the urban and rural junctures complicated by the porous border between Gold Coast and Togo across which travel dissenters and dissents. His closing chapter constitutes a fine synthesis of the entire period culminating in the exploration of the print media's role in promoting territorial nationalism.

In this well-researched and thoroughly documented work, the author offers new perspectives on anticolonialism in terms of the integration of urban centers and the surrounding rural communities, which together constitute the "periurban" zones. African and colonial scholars alike will benefit from this groundbreaking work.

*Boise State University*

Peter Buhler

*The Development of Trans-Jordan 1929–1939: A History of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.* By Maan Abu Nowar. (Reading, England: Ithaca Press, 2006. Pp. xii, 392. \$66.00.)

This is the fourth volume in the series "A History of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan." A former Major-General in the Jordanian army, diplomat, and politician, the author earned a D.Phil at Oxford, which was the basis for the first volume, *The Creation and Development of Transjordan 1920–1929*. He later published *The Struggle for Independence 1939–1947* and *The Jordanian Israeli War 1948–1951*. With the current volume, Maan Abu Nowar has completed a continuous narrative history of the Emirate of Trans-Jordan (later, the Kingdom of Jordan), which lasted more than three decades.

The author's main message is that the 1930s constituted a formative period for Trans-Jordan. In the 1920s, the new entity was established, its boundaries were contoured, its relations with Great Britain were institutionalized, and the status of its ruler, Abdullah, was defined. In the 1930s, Abdullah obtained legitimacy from the indigenous population and the neighboring countries both for the new territorial unit and for its authority over it.

This period was dedicated to state building and, simultaneously, was characterized by a slow and gradual progress towards independence: government