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Book Reviews

John Ryle, Justin Willis, Suliman Baldo and Jok Madut Jok (eds). *The Sudan Handbook*. Woodbridge: James Currey, 2011, pp. xx + 220, (paperback), ISBN 97818847010308.

Anyone familiar with the complex history of the Sudan that existed before July 2011 is likely to be taken aback by a thin volume titled *The Sudan Handbook*, and rightly so. A handbook of Sudanese politics or culture may be a reasonable title, but a succinct and comprehensive text on everything Sudanese runs the risk of falling short. The editors of this book are aware of this and they have decided to mimic the orientation of a colonial guidebook called *The Sudan Almanac*. The *Almanac*, according to Ryle and Willis (p.6) gave colonial officials everything they wanted to know about the land and the people they ruled.

Like the *Almanac*, *The Sudan Handbook* seems to be aiming at specific clusters of readers. It emerged from a Sudan Field Course delivered by the Rift Valley Institute in Rumbek, South Sudan. The students of the course, hence the target audience, included humanitarian aid workers, international development workers, staff of diplomatic posts and graduate students from some Sudanese universities. These groups of students are interested in political and developmental aspects of the Sudan and the book arguable delivers.

One chapter by Willis, Egemi and Winter discusses the history of land and politics in the Sudan. From memory, this reads like chapter one of a year 5 geography text of the Sudanese curriculum. A key point that emerges from their discussion and runs into the next chapter is the importance of the Nile in shaping Sudanese history and the state. The Nile was central to the annexation of South Sudan to the north. It remains a key flashpoint for all countries sharing the mighty river with Egypt.

The division of Sudan has meant that the South Sudanese will determine whether it is in their best interests to join the Nile Treaty – a colonially drafted pro-Egypt document. Another point of interest still to be watched is the Jonglei Canal Project intended to access the waters of the Sudd Swamp – the biggest swamp in the world – in South Sudan. This was conceived in the 1940s and started in the 1970s. In 1984, it was shot down because the Sudan People Liberation Army (SPLA) attacked. The Egyptians are still keen on its resumption according to recent media reports but the swamp serves the pastoralist needs of two of the largest

and politically allied South Sudanese ethnic groups – the Nuer and the Dinka. That is a serious obstacle. Furthermore, the environmental consequences of draining the swamp cannot be foreseen.

Many of the eighteen chapters in this book deal in a text book manner, with recurring and already dated issues such as the rift between South Sudanese and northern Sudanese, the role of Islam and the intransigence of successive regimes in Khartoum. These are important issues but they are no longer of continuing concerns since South Sudan has seceded. The influence of oil on the Sudanese political economy and how it has shaped its foreign policy also received insightful analysis and still, because South Sudan has taken a great proportion of that important natural resource, the work is already dated too. However, one important thing the book reveals, but is often masked by GDP per capita figures, is that even though Sudan had an oil economy, the revenues only benefited the state. The majority of Sudanese still depended on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods.

Finally, the book raises another key concern especially as it relates to South Sudan: the clash between the traditional mechanism of conflict resolution and the state's judicial system. Leonardi and Jalil in their chapter, argue that the government recognises the legitimacy of chiefs but it seems determined to regulate them. Commentators on South Sudan's Transitional Constitution have also noted this to be true.¹ As interest in traditional approaches to some types of conflicts is gaining popularity, especially in South Sudan, this area seems in need of further research.²

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¹ Jacob J. Akol, "Constitution and concept of 'house of nationalities' revisited" *Gurtong Peace Trust*, March 8, 2012, <http://www.gurtong.net/ECM/Editorial/tabid/124/ID/6592/Default.aspx>, (accessed 9 March 2012); Peter Run, "From Crisis to Democracy: a systemic assessment of South Sudan's founding constitution," paper presented at Australian Political Studies Association, Australian National University, Canberra, September 26-28, 2011.

² Akolda M. Tier, "Communal Wars in South Sudan: their causes and resolution," *The Citizen*, 3 January 2012, <http://www.thecitizen.info/opinion/communal-wars-in-south-sudan-their-causes-and-resolution-mechanisms/>, (accessed 9 March 2012); Peter Run, "The Jonglei Conflict Shows a Need for Conflict Management Mechanisms," *Gurtong Peace Trust*, 18 January 2012, <http://www.gurtong.net/ECM/Editorial/tabid/124/ctl/ArticleView/mid/519/articleId/6345/The-Jonglei-Conflict-Shows-a-Need-for-Conflict-Management-Mechanism.aspx> (accessed 9 March 2012).

Florent Mazzoleni, *Burkina Faso musiques. Modern Voltaïques*, Le Castor Astral: Bordeaux. 2011. ISBN 9782859208738 ; and Florent Mazzoleni, *Musiques modernes et traditionnelles du Mali*. Le Castor Astral: Bordeaux. 2011. ISBN 9782859208739.

These two texts in French on the topic of West African music contribute to a growing body of works by the author. Mazzoleni, who is soon to publish in English, has already contributed biographies of James Brown and Salif Keita, histories of soul music and rock, and texts on The White Stripes and Nirvana. His recent publications have focused upon West African musical styles, and are a welcome addition to the literature on that subject.

Of his two recent texts, both published by Le Castor Astral in 2011, the work on the music of Burkina Faso is perhaps the more significant, given that so little has been published on the topic. Those few authors who have written on Burkinabé music have usually been concerned with the traditional, indigenous musical styles and forms as, historically, these have been considered the more important and valuable areas of African music research. The serious study of popular African music is a more recent area of enquiry, and there is still much debate as to what constitutes and defines terms such as *popular*, *traditional*, and most problematic of all, *modern*. However, locally in West Africa the terms *moderne* (for modern music) and *folklorique* (for traditional music) are common currency and are widely used and understood. Mazzoleni, here, has the honour of authoring the first substantive text on the *modern music* of Burkina Faso, and he rightly focuses on the styles of music which are heard in the clubs and bars and on the radio throughout the country.

I have recently been compiling discographies of modern Burkinabé music and have been amazed by the size of the catalogue. My discography currently lists over 300 releases of 45rpm singles and 33rpm albums prior to the 1980s, or about 2,000 songs. This extensive catalogue indicates a very active local music industry, and for his research Mazzoleni interviewed many of the principal figures involved. In his introduction, he informs us that the nation's first republic, under the presidency of Maurice Yameogo, was influenced by Sékou Touré's Guinea, insofar as Yameogo adopted the same cultural philosophy of *authenticité* (as did Modibo Keita in Mali). At the heart of *authenticité* was the desire to modernise the Arts, and for musicians this meant, in Guinea at least, that they were supplied with instruments and amplifiers, paid a wage, and encouraged to modernise the nation's musical traditions through the

composition of new songs. It is not made clear in Mazzoleni's text whether the same commitment of funds was forthcoming from Yameogo's government. From my research the Burkinabé regime were less committed to the *authenticité* movement than their neighbours, but what is clear is that the government encouraged the formation of orchestras, created national competitions, and supported musicians in their goals.

Orchestras existed in Burkina Faso prior to independence in 1960, and Mazzoleni describes one of the first – l'Harmonie Voltaïque – in excellent detail. Formed in 1949, the orchestra's original instrumentation consisted of two acoustic guitars, a banjo, a piano accordion, a kit drum, a trumpet, and a tuba. By the mid 1960s the group had evolved to include electric instruments which, in the spirit of the era, were juxtaposed with traditional instruments such as the balafon. Mazzoleni traces the orchestra's career through the heydays of the 1960s and 1970s, and describes the foundation of Burkinabé recording labels such as Club Voltaïque du Disque. Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso were two of the main centres for orchestras, and the text provides commentary on popular groups such as Volta Jazz, Dafra Star, and Echo del Africa National. In many cases, Mazzoleni is publishing the first descriptions of these African orchestras, with his text informed by interviews with the surviving members. His book is wonderfully presented, with full colour photographs of musicians and orchestras, many of which are being published for the first time. Discographies of Burkinabé labels are also presented by the author.

Mazzoleni's second text, *Musiques modernes et traditionnelles du Mali*, has been eagerly awaited. Mali was home to a wonderful range of orchestras whose impact on the development of West African music was nothing short of profound. Introduced by Lucy Duran, the text covers the major Malian orchestras, instrumental ensembles, and musicians since independence in 1960. Mazzoleni profiles important national groups such as L'Orchestre National "A" de la République du Mali and Badema National, as well as regional orchestras such as Mystère Jazz de Tombouctou and Kanaga de Mopti. As with his profiles of Burkinabé groups, such information has not previously been published. The government's sponsorship of the local groups (in accord with the *authenticité* programme, borrowed from Guinea) generated a blossoming of creative activity, as the music of the Touareg, the Bozo, the Songhaï and other indigenous styles were presented in a modern jazz-orchestra setting for the first time. These state sponsored groups faced competition

through private orchestras such as the highly regarded Super Djata Band, and Malian groups dominated the airwaves in West Africa, particularly in the 1970s when the local recording industry expanded. Mazzoleni includes many rare and previously unpublished photographs of these orchestras in their prime. His commentary on the Super Rail Band, Super Biton de Ségou, and Les Ambassadeurs du Motel is excellent and well researched. Many of Mali's solo stars, the *grande vedettes*, are also featured, including singers such as Ali Farka Touré, Ami Koïta, Tata Bambo Kouyaté and Oumou Sangaré. Such a diversity of styles, personalities, and politics is handled well by the author, who also briefly describes Mali's Biennales, local recording labels, and the role of the national radio broadcaster.

In summary, though Malian music has received a lot more attention than its Burkinabé counterpart, the text is nonetheless essential reading, for it delves where others have not. I was particularly impressed with the scope of the material, and reading about the history of some of my favourite orchestras was indeed a great pleasure.

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Susan Williams, *Who Killed Dag Hammarskjöld? The UN, the Cold War and White Supremacy in Africa.* Hurst and Company, London, 2011, 306pp. ISBN 978-1-84904-158-4.¹

In 1962 Australian artist Sidney Nolan toured Africa, absorbing sights and storing images for future paintings. In October a personal pilgrimage took him and his wife Cynthia away from tourist routes to a northern Zambian town called Ndola – to visit the place where UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld had died the previous year in a plane crash. Cynthia wrote that a friendly mining acquaintance drove them to the site, unexpectedly accompanied, by a “stern-faced watchful man who was, in some way, not clear to us, connected with civil aviation.” He later, suspiciously, asked them why they had come. Sidney replied – “... to pay homage, to remember a man we venerated...”. This Australia-connected vignette highlights the deep admiration in which many (but not all) felt for the outstanding, principled leader of the fledgling UN and that they

¹ This review was previously published in *The Canberra Times*, 11 November, 2011, and is reprinted here with permission.

had their suspicions that Hammarskjöld's death was not an accident. The story is mired in conspiracy theories and official obscurity and despite three inquiries, none has clarified 'why' and 'who'... words which reverberate throughout this outstanding book. *Who Killed Dag Hammarskjöld* was launched in London in 2011, appropriately on the fiftieth anniversary of the crash. Its author, Susan Williams, is senior fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies and her impressive probing draws together previously-secret archived material and witness statements never before aired. The book is rigorously academic, with intensive referencing and quotes from expert informants, but it is also an intriguing "who dunnit," albeit one with particularly sombre connotations. Among the colourful (and sometimes dubious) cast is Australian, George Ivan Smith AO, schooled at Bathurst and Goulburn, who had an impressive UN staff career. Others include western diplomats, MI6 officers, mercenaries, Zambian charcoal burners, colonial officials, mining company representatives and the first-ever team of UN peace keepers.

To make sense of the story some background issues need to be understood. Firstly, the 15-year-old UN was itself rapidly evolving and dozens of newly independent Asian and African countries had become members - which changed the balance of power in the General Assembly and reduced the dominance of western countries. A further factor was that some countries (especially America) feared that communism would fill the void left by colonialism's demise. Then there was Hammarskjöld himself, whose leadership style emphasised the ideals of the UN Charter, but whose principles confronted individuals serving narrower interests. But Hammarskjöld was dedicated to working with everyone and was a skilful negotiator which was why he agreed to undertake the risky mission of flying 1,600 miles from the Congolese capital Leopoldville (Kinshasa) to Ndola to meet Moïse Tshombe, head of Katanga province, then trying to secede from the newly independent Congo. The urgency of the mission arose because the fighting against UN soldiers in Katanga by the (western backed) secessionists was seriously accelerating.

At stake were Katanga's immense mineral resources, controlled by international companies and on which many western countries depended. But the Congolese government counted on the same minerals for its major funding source. Consequently, Congolese independence produced a clash of fiscal interests, with the UN pitched in the middle. At the same time, Rhodesia, trying to maintain white rule in southern Africa, needed a western-backed Katanga as a buffer against ever-increasing 'black'

Africa, was seriously alarmed by UN efforts to prevent the secession. At risk of spoiling the end of the story, Williams does not name the person(s) responsible for the crash, but provides clear pointers as to why it happened and who was involved in what was undoubtedly, murder. Her painstaking research should inspire a comprehensive and conclusive inquiry. Then perhaps those responsible who are still alive, and before they die, may be inspired to admit their roles, including some governments. I may be naïve in thinking this but miracles have happened in recent years - Belgium owned up to its role in Lumumba's murder and South Africans confessed at their Truth and Reconciliation commission inquiries. The Nolans and George Ivan Smith would applaud this important book which strongly supports their gut-felt suspicions. It is a complex tale. The lessons still apply today – think Bougainville, Tibet, West Papua, Western Sahara and Aboriginal Australia. The UN, and non-government organisations, are still desperately needed to ensure that governments and commercial interests abide by the principles of the UN Charter. Dag would be sad that this is still so 50 years on.

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Australian Scholar and Former UN Population Fund (UNFPA)
representative to Zambia (1998-2005)

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