

valid, but why does it take so much theory and ponderous language to say something that historians of the rural prairies have said before, and often? Cam McEachern analyses the unpublished memoirs of Alfred J. Ostheimer, which record his experiences as a nineteen-year-old student who climbed the Rockies in the summer of 1927. Besides noting the white, male perceptions in the journal, McEachern argues that it illustrates classical liberal ideology with its notions of “possessiveness” and especially of “liberal time”, the idea that one should use time efficiently to accomplish goals, in this case rapidly climbing as many mountains as possible. These ideas may be imbedded in the memoir, but this interpretation might just as easily have been extracted from a memoir about tiger hunting in India, and therefore it tells us nothing about the history of the Rockies in the 1920s.

Russell Morton Brown provides the best written and most interesting essay in the book. He argues that the prairie region provided fertile soil for postmodern thought and that its first product was Robert Kroetsch’s *The Words of My Roaring* (1966). The novel is set in Alberta in 1935, the year that William Aberhart’s Social Credit movement won its first landslide victory in a provincial election. Brown claims that Kroetsch was influenced by the communications theory of another prairie intellectual, Marshall McLuhan, especially by his views on the dynamic power of radio, the medium that Aberhart exploited to great effect. Indeed, Brown even suggests that Aberhart was the first postmodern politician since he explicitly declined to know how to implement social credit theory, and thus rejected the concept of reason. The idea is intriguing, but it is difficult to see how either this essay or the novel itself can enhance our understanding of Social Credit history in Alberta. Indeed, social historians should skip this volume entirely and devote their time to reading literature written in the places and during the eras that interest them.

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CAMPBELL, Gwyn — *An Economic History of Imperial Madagascar, 1750–1895: The Rise and Fall of an Island Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp. 413.

Gwyn Campbell is the leading economic historian of Madagascar, a position he has established without publishing a book. For 25 years, he has been producing well-researched, well-argued, and carefully written articles on the economic history of Madagascar and the Indian Ocean. Recently he edited a series of books that emerged from conferences he organized in Avignon on the Indian Ocean, but this is the first book he has written. It is worth the wait. The book covers only a century and a half, but it does so in a comprehensive, almost encyclopedic way. Though packed with information, it marshals that information in a strong argument and subjects many other interpretations of Malgache history to careful criticism. Campbell also uses the prism of a series of larger theoretical concepts like secondary empire, demographic transition theory, and proto-industrialization to cast light on Malgache history.

Madagascar was dominated in the nineteenth century by the highland empire of the Merina, though its dominion was not as extensive as some writers have suggested. The Merina were also one of many non-Western states that responded to the European challenge by efforts to modernize and industrialize. The rise of the Merina state in the late eighteenth century was fuelled by the demand for slaves and provisions for the French Mascarene islands, but by the early nineteenth century Merina rulers wanted to move beyond that role. In 1820 King Radama I linked his kingdom to Great Britain by abolishing the slave trade in exchange for British training for his army, assistance for efforts towards industrialization, and the establishment of schools staffed by British missionaries. Many histories of Madagascar have contrasted the outward-looking modernizer, Radama, with his wife and successor, Ranavalona I (1828–1861), who expelled the missionaries and adopted anti-Western policies. Campbell, however, argues that Radama was disillusioned by the first effects of the opening and shifted in his last years to a policy of autarky, which limited the role of foreigners, used forced labour, and relied on royal monopolies. Though there was an easing of controls after the death of Ranavalona, autarky remained a goal of Merina policy. Campbell argues that it was the major reason for the failure of the regime's modernization policies. After some early successes, the programme of industrialization foundered.

The biggest problem was forced labour, which was inefficient. Even though the Merina empire was probably about one-third slave for much of the nineteenth century and Radama encouraged the use of slaves for productive labour, slaves were more important as status symbols for ruling elite. The state relied on conscription for military service, for public works, and for production of export crops. This policy was resented throughout the century and explains the failure of development policies. In addition, mortality was very high in both the army and on major public works projects. The chapter on population is particularly damning. Climate and reliance on conscripts explained the failure of the Merina effort to conquer all of Madagascar. Losses to troops serving in the malarial lowlands were particularly heavy, averaging between 25 and 50 per cent each year. Reliance on forced labour also led to social dislocation as people fled or hid to avoid conscription. It contributed to famines and to brigandry. Even in the highlands, labour levies suffered high losses through both flight and disease. Madagascar's low population densities can be attributed to the cumulative effects of centuries of slaving and a century of conscription. If anything, Campbell underestimates the population losses to slaving, relying on Patrick Manning's estimate of a loss of 16.67 per cent in West Africa (p. 157). I think these estimates are far too low. In the late nineteenth century the Merina became slave importers, though slave exports also continued till the end of the century, often disguised as contract labour.

Economic development depended on enterprise, but the use of state power discouraged entrepreneurial instincts. It also depended on development of a transportation infrastructure. The British projected a network of roads that could be used by animal-powered carts, but Merina anxiety about European military potential meant that no roads were built. Goods being moved between the highlands and the east coast had to be carried up or down a steep escarpment. Radama remarked that he depended on two

generals, *tazo* (malaria) and *hazo* (the dense lowland rainforest). These defences proved very costly to the French colonial army, but lack of transport routes hindered Malgache modernization. When the French invaded in 1895, generals *tazo* and *hazo* did their job, but the conscript army refused to fight and simply melted away. There were massive desertions even as the vulnerable French struggled up the escarpment. Campbell attributes the French success to the “implosion of the Merina Empire” and the presence of Senegalese troops, who were less troubled by malaria.

After the controlled opening of 1861, the Malgache profited from European demand for Malgache products. Autarky had, however, had its effect. It meant that domestic capital formation was limited and there was no possibility of raising foreign loans. Campbell argues that economic growth depended on the export of human capital, which in turn hindered economic growth. The major form of taxation was conscription. Money income depended on import taxes. There was a limited development of currency. Credit was dependent on Indian finance, which was better developed in ports outside the control of the Merina. During the second half of the century, exports increased, but there was little investment in industry or wage labour.

In all this, one theme is missing. Radama encouraged missionaries and eagerly sought education. The result was the creation of a literate class, a written language, and the ability to read Western books. Merina did travel, but there was not the kind of effort to travel in and study Europe that we find in Egypt, Thailand, or Japan. Autarky limited any modernization because the capacity to modernize was financially constrained. Development of capitalist enterprise was also very limited. For example, a portage syndicate using slaves who were paid wages was more efficient than the state at moving commodities into and out of the highlands.

This book would be useful not only to scholars interested in Madagascar, but also to any interested in responses of African and Asian countries to European imperialism and early efforts towards economic modernization.

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CLARK, Elizabeth A. — *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004. Pp. 325.

During the past several years, historians have published a number of books that attempt to come to grips with the implications of post-structuralism. The tone of these works is distinct from the polemics of earlier decades: theories and approaches that once seemed dangerous now appear to be simply different, the province of other disciplinary specialties, potentially useful if mounted within a properly historical framework. This is not to say that historians have adopted much from post-structuralist theory. To the contrary, as Elizabeth A. Clark argues in her new book, the potential uses of post-structuralist theory for historians remain to a great extent unexplored.