Review
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contacts. The idea of nation-building (see above) has all but disappeared from the curriculum, in a swing of the pendulum perhaps too much to the other side. The problems of realizing the high educational aims outlined by Tekeste still stand.

Jon Abbink
University of Nijmegen

**Naval Strategy East of Suez: The Role of Djibouti**

Charles W. Koburger, Jr.

Since its independence on 27 June 1977, the small Republic of Djibouti has been the subject of a small but growing body of English-language scholarship. As I noted in a review article of published material devoted to Djibouti, however, one can still only speak of a "nascent" field of Djiboutian studies as opposed to the much more developed fields of Ethiopian and Somali studies. As a result, the publication of a book on Djibouti is a much-welcomed event.

Written by a retired captain of the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, the primary focus of the book is the historical evolution of Djibouti’s role in French naval strategy from the colonial era to 1991. After discussing Djibouti’s rising importance in French maritime strategy and the conflicts this caused with the other Great Powers prior to 1914 (Chapter 1), the author documents Djibouti’s role in several military events in which sea power played a role: World War I (Chapter 2), World War II and, particularly, the blockade of the small, French-ruled enclave by Allied forces from 1940 to 1942 (Chapters 3–5), and the Suez crisis of 1956 (Chapter 6). An analysis is also made of Djibouti’s continued strategic importance and varied roles as a French maritime base into the 1990s (Chapter 7). Clearly sympathetic to French military interests in the Horn of Africa and beyond, the author concludes: "Djibouti represents today one of France’s most important colonial successes, and it remains one of its key bases. The West—including the United States—can be glad of it." (p. 90)
Although the author describes several historical events (such as Djibouti's role in French intervention during the Suez crisis of 1956) of interest to scholars who study Djibouti and its place within the wider politics of the Horn of Africa and the international system, several factors detract from the overall presentation. First, the historical discussion is often marred by omissions of important events. In the author's discussion of colonial rivalry over Djibouti by the Great Powers prior to World War I, for example, no mention is made of the infamous and short-lived Russian landing at Sagallo and the mini-crisis that this caused for French authorities. The details of this conflict were nicely outlined in an article by Henri Labrousse (an admiral in the French navy), "Une tentative d' implantation Russe en Côte Française des Somalis en 1889: l'affaire de Sagallo," that was published in *Pount* (no. 5, 1968: 11–18)—a sporadically published journal devoted to recording various aspects of Djiboutian culture and history that recently witnessed a rebirth. Similarly, when discussing Djibouti's role in the Persian Gulf War of 1991—"Djibouti alone on the Horn was able to contribute to the U.N. effort" (p. 78)—the author fails to mention that Iraq was a close partner of Djibouti prior to 1991 and, in fact, was one of Djibouti's major sources of foreign economic assistance prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

The author's inadequate use of scholarly published material related to Djibouti constitutes a second serious shortcoming of the book. In the meager 14 footnotes contained in the three chapters describing Djibouti's role in World War II, for example, the vast majority (8) only reference two brief articles: Henri Labrousse, "Le Blocus de Djibouti Pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale," *Histoire Pour Tous* (1977); and Jacques Mordal, "Blocus à Djibouti," *Historia Magazine* (1968). If one takes into account that the primary theme of these three chapters is the Allied blockade against Djibouti, one is especially struck by the omission of reference to the arguments contained in such notable works as: Richard Pankhurst, "Italian Fascist Claims to the Port of Jibuti, 1935–41; An Historical Note," *Ethiopia Observer* 14, 1 (1971): 26–30; and Francis James Rennell, *British Military Administration of Occupied Territories in Africa During the Years 1949–1947* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1970). Indeed, the book seems as if it were prepared with little attention being given to the majority of scholarship devoted to Djibouti.
Minor details such as incorrect spellings ("Isaak" is spelled "Ishaak"), language usage (I do not favor usage of the word "tribe" when referring to African peoples nor the word "exotic" when referring to Africa) and, most important, hyperbole (life during the colonial era is described as being "poor, nasty, brutish, and short"—p. 9) also detract from the author's arguments. Sometimes the discussion is simply wrong and seemingly based on second-hand stories. Citing the well-known torrid temperature of Djibouti, for example, the author makes the strange claim that "beggars do not ask for money; they ask for water." (p. xviii)

A final critique is directed more toward the publisher than the author. Although I realize that books have tremendously risen in price during the decades of the 1970s and the 1980s, I find the publisher's asking price of $39.95 a little out of line for a hardcover book of only 90 pages (114 if one counts six appendices—most of which are of a dubious value—a short bibliography, and a brief index).

Peter J. Schraeder
Loyola University, Chicago

Note
2. For an annotated summary of over 400 works, see Peter J. Schraeder, Djibouti (Clio Press: Oxford, England; Santa Barbara, California; and Denver, Colorado, 1991).

Suffering under God's Environment: A Vertical Study of the Predicament of Peasants in North-Central Ethiopia

Mesfin Wolde-Mariam

This book is the result of a rural survey conducted by one of Ethiopia's most visible and outspoken academics. Mesfin Wolde-Mariam, a geogra-