

in shifting circumstances. Second, it demonstrates that studies that treat racial politics as discrete local practices, impervious to external ideals, overlook the power of human agency in the rapidly globalizing world of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Third, and most importantly, it puts the anti-colonial movement in its merited place in the history of sexuality. Whether it is the story of the 1919 race riot in which white men blamed black men for taking their jobs as well as their wives, or the case of Felicia Agnes Knight, who protested about the impending termination of her white husband's appointment in Ghana in 1961, the intersections of race, nationalism and sexuality come to life in an important manner. The 1919 race riot in Britain and its implications for black men's economic survival and immigration status assumed new meaning in the contestation over interracial marriage and sex in the 1920s and 1930s, as Gold Coasters decried the increasing 'enticement' of their women by 'irresponsible' white men who abandoned the children they had fathered. While cases of deliberate abandonment of multiracial children existed, the big questions about interracial affairs often dovetail with the core features of anti-colonial struggles that viewed white men's sexual relations with African women as another arm of capitalist expropriation.

Thus, the contest over the injustice of colonialism in the Gold Coast included the exploitation of the sexual body, in addition to the abundant solid mineral and agricultural resources of the colony. The intersections of sex, race and anti-nationalism find another interesting dimension in Ray's analysis of interracial affairs between white women and members of the West African Students' Union (WASU), who shaped the anti-colonial movement and politics in the immediate post-independence era. Ray's observation that romantic affairs between WASU members and white women 'were not just personal, they were also political and politicized' (pp. 212–13) is compelling and apt.

Crossing the Color Line is tier-one scholarship, capable of directing a new course in historical research on sex, gender, race, diaspora, empire and identity formation, among other themes and subfields of African colonial history. In Carina Ray's rigorous hands, the reader is introduced to stories of men and women across location and race as they encountered and contested shifting metropolitan and colonial conceptions of race relations, power and gender.

Saheed Aderinto

Western Carolina University

saderinto@email.wcu.edu

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Emily S. Burrill, *States of Marriage: gender, justice, and rights in colonial Mali*. Athens OH: Ohio University Press (hb US\$80 – 978 0 8214 2144 4; pb US \$32.95 – 978 0 8214 2145 1). 2015, xiv + 239 pp.

Emily Burrill's *States of Marriage* is an innovative study of law, gender and colonialism in the colony of the French Sudan (present-day Mali). Employing the concept of the 'marriage legibility project', it demonstrates the centrality of marriage to colonial state making. Drawing from James C. Scott's notion of 'legibility', Burrill argues that the colonial administration sought to 'draw African marriages under the purview of the colonial state and render them "legible" and recognizable, in order to create a codified definition of African marriage' (p. 4).

An introduction and six chapters trace the evolution of the marriage legibility project over the course of the twentieth century, moving between a local context (the town and surrounding region of Sikasso), a larger colonial context (French

Sudan and the greater French West African federation), and transnational influences. As the colonial administration increasingly intervened in African marriage practices, the gap between the administration's definitions of marriage and the 'contours of marriage that were actually forged by African women and men' (p. 5) grew.

Chapter 1 establishes the local context of Sikasso and describes how French officials turned to elder men to help them identify discrete ethnic groupings. The binary ethnographic template that emerged from colonial accounts, contrasting 'native' Senufo populations with 'newcomer' Jula, overlooked histories of intermarriage that had driven precolonial political and economic processes. A colonial 'ethnic legibility project' – blind to the importance of marriage and women to political power – paved the way for the marriage legibility project. Chapter 2, covering 1898 to 1914, places the emergence of this project within the context of the end of slavery, French conquest, and the establishment of colonial 'native courts' in 1903. Focusing on marriage, divorce and child custody cases in the provincial-level court in Sikasso, Burrill argues that the court functioned as a potentially 'emancipatory' space for women and former slaves renegotiating their bonds with men. Chapter 3, however, reveals that, between 1912 and 1930, the court took a more conservative turn, typically favouring patriarchs in marriage and divorce cases. Burrill connects the shift to an emerging colonial ideology of the patriarch as the basis of the 'stable African family', which was in turn the foundation of a stable colony (p. 80). It is not coincidental that this ideology emerged during World War I, when the French in West Africa leaned heavily on patriarchal figures of authority to mobilize army recruits and labour.

Chapter 4 explores the increased monetization of bridewealth payments and a resurgence in human pawning during the Great Depression, which Catholic missionaries and local administrators interpreted as evidence of 'slave-like' practices. The Mandel Decree of 1939 was meant to eradicate these practices by establishing consent as the foundation of legal marriage – a major shift to a more interventionist approach to African marriage. Burrill contends that these 'slave-like practices' were in fact local adaptations to the new socio-economic pressures and increased labour obligations of the 1930s, when 'wealth in men' shifted to 'wealth in women'. In Chapter 5, we 'hear' women's voices through court testimonies from domestic violence cases that allow Burrill to push Kandiyoti's concept of the 'patriarchal bargain' further, demonstrating how women could form 'an informal system of observation of male behavior which held men to their part of the bargain' (p. 137).

Chapter 6 examines the late colonial stage of the marriage legibility project (the 1940s to the 1950s), when an increasingly interventionist state influenced by a rights-driven international community passed the Jacquinet Decree of 1951, which established limits on bridewealth payments; permitted women to choose their own spouses; and authorized registration of civil marriages. Sikasso court records reveal the uneven outcomes on the ground from such top-down legislation. The book concludes with a stimulating discussion of the significance of the notion of 'consent' for female colonial subjects.

This overview does not adequately capture the multiple conceptual threads that Burrill skilfully weaves together, such as her discussion of matrilineal kinship among some Senufo in the region (a practice the French consistently failed to render legible); how the marriage legibility project created space for the exercise of violence; and intergenerational tensions. A topic deserving further exploration is the intersection of Islamic law with the marriage legibility project. Burrill argues that because Maliki law was more 'legible' than customary law to French administrators (who were equipped with a translated, condensed version of a key Maliki

text), the Sikasso court often read elements of local or customary practices ‘through the lens of Maliki law’ (p. 61, 64, 80) and applied Maliki precepts even when non-Muslims were involved. Yet this line of argument risks minimizing the historical significance of the Maliki legal tradition in West African communities and the fact that many litigants and African court personnel would have brought their own understandings of Maliki jurisprudence to court.

States of Marriage is well written and persuasively argued. Burrill adeptly navigates the multiple levels of her study, employing an impressive range of sources while consistently grounding colony-level developments within the context of Sikasso. Extensive interviews with people in Sikasso provide context for the court cases, which, read in isolation, can be problematic sources that over-privilege conflict and the importance of formal or state institutions in resolving it. Indeed, this work sets a new standard for the use of colonial court records as historical sources. In addition to contributing significantly to the fields of African history and gender studies, the book provides useful background for understanding contemporary debates around the Family Code in Mali. Finally, the consequences of the colonial administration’s view of marriage practices and women’s status as ‘static ethnographic curiosities’ (p. 107) – rather than as integrally connected to economics, power and work – are instructive for contemporary development interventions aimed at women.

Rebecca Shereikis
Northwestern University
r-shereikis@northwestern.edu
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Susanne Epple, *The Bashada of Southern Ethiopia: a study of age, gender and social discourse*. Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag (pb €39.80 – 978 3 89645 825 4). 2010, 291 pp.

This monograph on a southern Ethiopian people appeared a few years ago but may not have received the attention it deserves. German anthropologist Susanne Epple has written a remarkable ethnography of the approximately 2,600-strong Bashada people, an agro-pastoralist group in the south-west Ethiopian plains east of the Omo River, which she has studied on and off since 1994. Culturally akin to the Hamar and Banna peoples and speaking virtually the same South Omotic language, the Bashada are a more or less independent society that distinguishes itself from its neighbours and survives through a combination of livestock herding (mainly goats), shifting cultivation, pottery production and hunting and gathering. While many ethnographic studies on this now rather well-documented part of Ethiopia have focused on politics, conflict, violence and livelihood changes, this study takes a different approach, offering a sustained analysis of the Bashada’s social organization and social and gender relations through the spectrum of their age organization. The result is a very rich and detailed study that evokes admiration for this society, and shows the author’s fieldwork skills. Age organization (age-sets, age-grades, generation-sets) having been a favourite theme of earlier generations of East African ethnological studies, it contributes by focusing on the conflict-mitigating and social equilibrium-enhancing role of the prevailing age system.

The book has five chapters: a brief introduction on age organization, age-sets and their definition; one on methodology; a third on the Bashada way of life, economy, family and local history; and the core Chapter 4 on ‘age differentiation