as a family member. If only the thoughts of Ariyibi may be recovered outside of the curtness of his letters, which may really be the expressions of thankless patriarchal burdens, duties and responsibilities. Then, he may not come across as insensitive and difficult.

Regardless, such is the richness and density of lived experiences in this book that it will tempt scholars to apply it on either side of our scholarly debates. Many will find validation of feminist power and influence from Maryam's matriarchy but be chagrined at the hierarchical subordination of the 'lesser' wives. Those who celebrate communal living will also confront the loss of agency and privacy depicted in these experiences. Yet even if Vaughan points attention to these issues, he makes no pretention about the limited nature of the texts, the inadequacy of letters as historical texts, or even of their connections to the broader social, economic and political environment of the Vaughan experience. This book will be discussed a lot.

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Children of the Soil: the power of built form in urban Madagascar

by Tasha Rijke-Epstein
Durham: Duke University Press, 2023. Pp. xi + 347. $29.95 (pb). ISBN: 978-1-4780-2529-0

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In this captivating book, Tasha Rijke-Epstein explores the fascinating history of Mahajanga, in the north-eastern coast of Madagascar, since its foundation in the mid-eighteen century up to the 1970s. By interlacing the agency of human and non-human actors and mapping their contribution to the shaping of the urban space, the book offers a rich description of the many waves of Swahili, Sakalava, Indians, Merina and Comorians migrants that built and transformed the city across different historical periods. Rijke-Epstein addresses the different political

entities (Sakalava, Merina and French) that tried, with varying degrees of success, to impose their power, architectural visions and urban planning before, during and after colonisation.

Based on this background, *Children of the Soil* explores the symbolic and material ways through which housebuilding shaped and reinforced local notions of belonging and 'autochthony', with a particular focus on the histories of families of mixed Comorian-Malagasy origin. By the first half of the twentieth century, these families constituted around 50% of the city's inhabitants. At least since the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century, this internally differentiated group was known as *zanatany*, literally meaning 'children of the soil': an ethnonym that, as the author suggests, slowly replaced a previous one: *antalaotra*, which means 'people of the sea'. As the author brilliantly demonstrates, this shift was also the outcome of a history of progressive house-hardening, from building techniques based on palm leaves and raffia branches to wood, sheet metal, limestone, concrete and corrugate tin. Despite not being a straightforward process, house-hardening involved the assemblage of these various materials with human elements: umbilical cords, bodily effluvia and the hard work of different generations. Building construction soon became a symbol of both social prestige and economic success, as well as the progressive rooting and enduring continuity of these families within an urban context that has always been populated by groups of different origin: '[...] the labor of building construction and ongoing repair, which often stretched across family generations, enabled people to establish strong, emotive ties and enduring memories to the forms they inhabit' (p. 16).

And yet, as Rijke-Epstein demonstrates, this process of becoming native was far from being uncontested. Indeed, the book ends by discussing the violent events of 1976–1977, during which many people of Comorian origin were killed and forced to leave by a crowd of migrants from other regions of the island. Here, again, the author shows how the materiality of buildings often serves as the sole means to trace the traumatic memory of these events. Perhaps, and this is the only limitation I found in this book, it would have been interesting to also discuss the changes and continuities of the urban landscapes of the last 50 years. This would have allowed readers to better appreciate what remains and what has disappeared of these long historical legacies.

The emphasis placed on the materiality of the urban space, which the author considers a crucial yet often overlooked historical and ethnographic source, is, in my view, the most original and important contribution of this book. Rijke-Epstein shows how the urban landscape historically emerged as a complex arena for existential and political renegotiations among people occupying different power positions. These included Sakalava kings, Merina administrators and French colonial officers, as well as Swahili and Indian traders, East African slaves and Sakalava herders, indentured labourers from India and China, and people of mixed Comorian-Malagasy descent. This dynamic interplay was constantly influenced by other-than-human actors such as sand, mud, limestone, coral, stone, wood, water, fire, plague, ancestral spirits and so on. This perspective not only sheds light on many hidden parts of the city's history but also shows how Mahajanga's inhabitants made sense of

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and reconstructed their past, while also elaborating their futures through their connections with the material world. As the author suggests: 'Historians and anthropologists of contemporary Africa have yet to fully explore built forms as lasting evidentiary sources, as epigraphs crafted by families and individuals who left few other written records, yet who inscribed building with memories, knowledge, and aspiration' (p. 4). This book is an important step in that direction and is a significant contribution not only for scholars of Madagascar but also for all those who work on urban history, belonging, placemaking and the links between humans, materiality and other-than-human actors in other African contexts and beyond.

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Residual Governance: how South Africa foretells planetary futures

by Gabrielle Hecht Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2023. Pp.288. $27.95 (pb). doi: 10.1215/9781478027263

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The discovery of diamonds and gold and the emergence of industrial mining in the late 19th century has typically been understood by Marxist historians and sociologists through the lens of racial capitalism and the analytic categories of race and class. Influential South African Marxist scholars such as Harold Wolpe, Neville Alexander, Martin Legassick and David Hemson drew on the framework of racial capitalism to analyse apartheid as a system of labour control and exploitation of the Black working class. From this perspective, mining capital influenced state policies in ways that reinforced the availability of cheap labour by maintaining the former 'homelands' or Bantustans as labour reservoirs. These Marxist analyses were widely taught at liberal universities in South Africa when I was a student in the early 1980s.

Gabrielle Hecht's ethnography, 'Residual Governance', provides an additional dimension to this Marxist analysis. Drawing on the concept of racial capitalism, Hecht argues that the racial contract in South Africa is technopolitical in the sense that white supremacy is purposefully built into technologies and infrastructures that reinforce racial inequality. She writes that 'some of the most powerful expressions of the racial contract in South Africa are the colossal wastes – social and sedimentary – created by its mining industry' (p. 5). It is these histories of waste that are at the centre of her monograph. Hecht also