background for analyzing the religious conflicts in Nigeria during the 1970s and 1980s.

Loimeier also addresses the question of Islamic reform (tajdid) as the other dominant issue in the history of northern Nigeria. In tracing the history of the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya from the nineteenth century, Loimeier revisits old issues, including the controversy of conversion to the Tijaniyya, its popularization at the expense of the Qadiriyya during the first half of the twentieth century, and, since the 1970s, the emergence of a Wahhabi type of anti-Sufism championed by the Yan Izala movement. He criticizes John Paden’s terminology of reformist, traditional and modernist orientations within the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya, asserting that the disputes described by Paden are not a manifestation of a single conflict between two great Sufi brotherhoods but rather a multitude of controversies, quarrels, and jealousies among a whole series of networks (p. 16). Loimeier insightfully argues that we should see the Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya and Yan Izala as networks coexisting around a number of spiritually, politically and economically influential religious scholars, all of whom were competing with each other for influence, followers, supporters and economic resources.

Thus, Loimeier brings up to date the fascinating story of shifting relationships among the leading religious scholars and their networks which are comprised of ordinary mass followers, wealthy merchants, influential bureaucrats and high-powered politicians. He also critically examines the polemics among the religious leaders through a learned comparative analysis of three treatises authored respectively by members of the Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya and Yan Izala. He reveals in his textual analysis how different situations dictated the choice by these authors of discursive strategies for constructing religious and political authority in their texts. Given the focus on political change, however, Loimeier could discuss only a small sample of the vast polemical literature that he rightly identifies as the discursive area of competition among the religious networks. The reader should overlook minor errors of incorrect transliteration and mistranslation, which do not detract from the valuable contribution of this richly documented volume.

Arizona State University

MUHAMMAD S. UMAR

RETHINKING MALAGASY NATIONALISM


The Malagasy insurrection of 1947 figures in nationalist historiography as a heroic failure, a tragic attempt to secure independence which was brutally crushed by a French colonial government still intent on restoring the French empire. The main Malagasy political party of the time, the Mouvement démocratique de la rénovation malgache (MDRM), with a pedigree stretching back to the island's earliest nationalist movements, was destroyed during the repression of the rising. The tradition of militant nationalism in Madagascar lost the initiative to two parties enjoying the favour of the French administration, first Padesm (Parti des déserteurs de Madagascar), and then its successor, the Parti social-démocrate (PSD), the latter forming the first government at independence in 1960.

A reading of African nationalism of the sort fashionable among English-speaking historians in the 1960s and 1970s would thus tend to consider the MDRM as the party of authentic nationalists and Padesm as a party of reaction. This impressive book rescues the Padesm from such historical opprobrium. Far from being no
more than an artificial creation of the colonial administration, Padesm is revealed
to have been the vehicle for the many Malagasy who feared the advent of an
independent Madagascar dominated by those interests and those families – mostly
from the Merina people of the central highlands – which dominated the MDRM,
many of them lineal descendants of the ruling class of pre-colonial Imerina.
Prominent among the adherents of Padesm were provincial lineages whose
forefathers had suffered from Merina slave-raiding in the nineteenth century, and
descendants of Merina slaves or low-status castes who had good reason to prefer
administration by France to an independence dominated by families they regarded
with suspicion. Before the 1947 insurrection had sanctified the MDRM with the
blood of martyrdom, many left-leaning French observers were inclined to regard
Padesm as the more progressive of the two parties, since it represented a lower
social class than the aristocratic leaders of the MDRM. In recreating this context,
Jean-Roland Randriamaro goes beyond the myths of collaboration and resistance
to colonial rule and lays bare the real political struggles which took place in the
shadow of decolonisation.

As Françoise Raison-Jourde points out in an interesting preface, struggles
similar to this one took place throughout Africa during the 1950s, as various
African political parties manoeuvred to become the incumbents at the moment of
independence, frequently pitting parties which represented the interests of
provincial notables, arguing in favour of federalism, against those championing the
cause of a unitary national movement. In this regard she mentions examples from
Ghana, Burundi and Cameroon, but she could equally well have added similar
cases from almost any country south of the Sahara. The shortcomings of radical
nationalist movements with strong centralising tendencies, so evident today,
provide historians with every incentive to re-examine the history of African
nationalism, no longer primarily in terms of those who were for or against
independence, but in terms of the local political interests involved in such
struggles. Professor Raison-Jourde’s mention of Burundi, where the Manifeste des
Bohutu argued that the mass of the population was ill-prepared for an independence
dominated by what it called a ‘Tutsi colonialism’, is, in the light of recent history,
an apt illustration of just how important are these movements which had every
reason to fear the fate of large sections of various African populations in face of a
winner-takes-all system.

Armed with Dr Randriamaro’s lucid and intelligent study, we are better able to
read the recent political history of Madagascar as a struggle between rival groups
who have contested not so much Madagascar’s place in the world, as the internal
distribution of power within the island. As parties and constitutions have come and
gone, many of these interests have shown a remarkable continuity, demonstrated
not least by the number of leading personalities of Padesm who later became
prominent in the PSD, and some of whose children returned to power in the pro-
democracy movement of the 1990s. This is an interesting model for the further
exploration of modern African nationalism, now so far departed from the goals it
set itself in the first flush of independence, or which were set for it by historians
perhaps too confident in their identification of what exactly was at stake in the
transfer of power, and of the true identities of progressives and reactionaries.