This is well said and it should prove salutary to my conjectural author of ‘Religious Encounter and the Making of the Shona’. Too often Shona political history has been ‘unpardonably thin’ because it has lacked a strong streak of religion. Maybe, too, discussion of Shona ‘religion’ has been too religious. And yet I wonder a little about this contrast between ‘country fashion’ and Christianity. This is partly because Christianity itself is coming increasingly to be seen as a complex of ‘human activities’ rather than as a cosmology and a set of beliefs. But it is partly because it seems to me to threaten ‘thinness’ in its turn if we see African religions simply as pragmatic searches for power, prosperity, fertility, etc. One can identify ‘ideas’ without over-intellectualizing. Perhaps ‘ideas’ were more clearly identifiable before ‘The Age of Confusion’. I think Peel’s otherwise fascinating discussions, for instance, of the total contrast between Yoruba and Protestant ideas of sacrifice, or of the notion of ‘sin’, might benefit from being a little more cosmological.

But I don’t want to end this review on a quibble. This book would at once become the core and foundational text of my imagined post-graduate course. It would offer a challenge to students to think as hard about the societies in which they hoped to work. And it would offer a model which is very unlikely ever to be surpassed.

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The Ethiopian-Eritrean war is one of the most tragic and baffling armed conflicts to have scourged Africa in recent years. One of the main reasons for this is the arrogance and miscalculation of two state elites out of touch with the needs of their people, and who think that seeking a compromise is a sign of defeat. This book by two Scandinavian specialists is very welcome: it provides a good survey of the background to the war, the relations between the two regimes in power and the actual development of the armed conflict in the period May 1998–December 1999. A postscript covers events up to July 2000. It is certainly essential reading — not least for the rich section of statements and documents (pp. 105–165).

A problem, however, with such pieces of ‘instant history’ is that events always move too fast. The December 2000 peace agreement and the problems of delaying tactics in its wake are, of course, not treated. The agreement provided a framework for peace negotiations and the arrival of a UN force (the UNMEE) to monitor the border in a ‘temporary security zone’ entirely on Eritrean territory. Nor does the

4. Graham Harvey, ‘Introduction’ in G. Harvey (ed.), *Indigenous Religions. A companion* (London, 2000). Harvey’s collection includes a chapter on Shona religion by James Cox which takes a position similar to Peel’s, though much more superficially. ‘The religious expressions of Zimbabwean peoples have always changed just as societies have changed . . . the term indigenous therefore does not refer to some static African religiosity . . . the cardinal significance of indigenous religions for the study of religious practices in Zimbabwe, and by extension in many other parts of Africa, becomes apparent. The starting-point for such a study emanates from and is located within the very indigenous roots which receive, adopt, adapt and eventually transform.’ Cox describes ‘indigenous religiosity (and whatever else is now growing from this root)’ as ‘pragmatic, unanalytical and multi-stranded’. The collection also includes a chapter on the Yoruba.
book dwell on the internal unrest and the tensions in the leadership of both countries (i.e. in the leading parties TPLF and EPLF/PFDJ). These tensions finally erupted in both countries in early 2001, and are far from being resolved.

Notwithstanding these problems, the authors have succinctly presented a fuller inside view of the political and economic dynamics in both countries than any other study, paying specific attention to their leadership elites. This element has been lacking in virtually all analyses of this conflict and has led to ill-conceived responses and unsuccessful interventions on the part of the international community. The authors were able to talk with some high-level officials from both sides and extract their views of the background to the conflict. Remarkable here are not the new issues they raise but the extent to which mutual views are coloured by spite, disdain and resentment, based on past crises and differences of opinion between these two former guerrilla movements now in power. The psychology of the conflict seems to be as important as its political or material aspects, certainly at the level of the leadership.

The book has nine brief chapters (pp. 1–101). They deal with historical relations; the origins of the differences in ideology and military strategy between the two insurgent movements EPLF and TPLF; the border issue; economic relations; the side effects of the war (such as expulsions of citizens, depopulation of the war zone, the propaganda war, destabilization); and (in the longest chapter) the negotiations initiated by the international community (pp. 53–83). Chapter 8 is about how the 'border war' developed into a 'total war', and elaborates on its deeper causes. The brief concluding chapter is on 'pre-modern war in post-modern times'.

The historical section highlights the huge negative impact of Italian colonialism — the root cause of all trouble — on Eritrean society: for example, one astounding fact is that, in the late 1930s, some 40 percent of the colony's male population served in the Italian colonial army. The chapter on border issues make a good start in dealing with the extremely complicated international-legal aspects of the treaties and documents relating to the border between the two countries, but it is much too short. A major study on this issue is needed. In the chapter on economics, the authors rightly stress that economic tensions alone cannot explain this war; there are more causes coming together, especially those relating to Eritrea's wish to profile itself as an independent state, separate from Ethiopia, both politically and in other respects. The great lack of agreement on economic policy that materialized in the post-1993 period (pp. 32, 35) is revealing, as Ethiopia feared the colonization of its economic life by Eritreans living in Eritrea and Ethiopia (pp. 32, 43). The detailed chapter on negotiations shows that the international community failed in an embarrassing manner to effect conflict prevention and mediation. The postscript (pp. 166–71) was written in June 2000, after the 'cessation of hostilities' agreement.

Key features of the political culture of the two countries in question are certainly underlined in this book, and are confirmed daily by the news from the region: completely autocratic, arrogant leaderships with little democratic imagination, probably for fear of losing power and privilege. Neither leadership can deal with the idea of dissent, which is seen as a personal insult by malevolent people. Obviously, this kind of thinking will prevent any quick turn in a more positive direction. Also, as the authors say, '... international observers and the diplomatic community were misled by the rhetoric on democratisation and market liberalism' (p. 21).

While the authors have unearthed various unknown, unpublished documents on the background to relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia (see pp. 26 and 31), we still do not know enough about the secret dealings of both leaderships before 1997. These dealings created misunderstandings and thus had a direct impact on the genesis of the conflict. They were made outside democratic parliamentary control.
and were deeply resented, especially by the Ethiopian public (for example, the twenty-five ‘Protocol Agreements’ of 1993).

Despite its informative and perceptive approach, the book has some strange mistakes — some probably due to the haste with which it was written. In the preface (p. viii) it is stated that Tronvoll ‘...visited Eritrea (Asmara, Zalambessa, Badme) ...'; but the last two places are incontrovertibly Ethiopian. There is also talk about ‘ethnic deportations’ (pp. ix, 46). But there were no ‘ethnic’ deportations, only deportations and expulsions of nationals of the enemy country. On p. 1 the authors write ‘Eritrean forces advanced deep in Tigrean-held territories’: surely this must be ‘Ethiopian-held territories’. The statement about the air force bombing of June 1998 (p. 1) is also wrong. It has been established that Eritrea bombed first (hitting a school in Mekele twice in one hour, killing more than 40 children and rescuers, and seriously injuring many more) and that Ethiopia retaliated shortly afterwards with a raid, not on Asmara as the authors say, but on the military section of Asmara airport (killing one person). I am also puzzled by the remark (p. 7) that before the 1935 invasion Italy adhered to the principle of ‘good neighbourliness’ with Ethiopia. The opposite is true. From 1902, the Italians repeatedly tried to encroach on Ethiopian territory (years before the 1934 Wäl-Wäl incident they established military posts on Ethiopian soil) and unilaterally marked up the border on maps of the area.

As only limited space is available here, I cannot take up all the points and interpretations of the authors. Suffice it to say that this book is essential reading and very helpful in elucidating much of the background to this tragic conflict and the peculiar autocratic leaderships that led to it. But obviously, the full story of the conflict still has to be written.

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Fela Anikulapo-Kuti was both Nigeria’s most famous musician and one of its most vocal political dissidents. His various diatribes against corrupt military dictatorships (current Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, for example, features prominently in the song ‘I T T’) and public gestures like openly smoking marijuana and marrying 27 wives in one ceremony earned him frequent arrests and beatings, as well as the enduring love of the Nigerian masses. The raw material that Michael E. Veal has to work with thus sometimes seems better suited to a Hollywood movie than an academic study. Indeed, Veal identifies a number of parallels between Fela’s real-life odyssey as ‘the Black President’ and the fictional exploits of ‘blaxploitation’ movie heroes like Shaft and Superfly (pp. 249–50).

Veal describes this work as a ‘semi-biographical narrative of Fela’s life’ that operates on three levels: an analysis of Fela the musician; an analysis of Fela the social figure; and an analysis of Fela’s work within the larger spheres of both post-colonial Africa and its dynamic cultural interactions with the African diaspora (p. 11). Extensively researched, well written, and frequently entertaining, Veal’s balanced assessment succeeds admirably on all three levels.

The complexities and incongruities inherent in Fela Kuti frequently produced misunderstandings. Those expecting good time dance music were subjected to