Book Reviews

Tropical Africa. vol. 1, *Land and Livelihood.* George H. T. Kimble. Twentieth Century Fund, New York, 1960. 603 pp. Illus.

During its present session, the United Nations General Assembly added 16 former colonies in sub-Saharan Africa to its membership. This brought to 21 the total of self-governing, independent states in tropical Africa which are now members of that body. (The grand total of sub-Saharan members is 22, but I follow Kimble here in omitting the Union of South Africa from the "tropical" African community.) While some of these, notably the former Belgian Congo, will for a time undoubtedly experience difficulties in constructing nations or national communities out of their ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous components, there is no doubt that the combined political and economic potential of the infant African states is already forcing the creation of new patterns of diplomacy on the international scene. For even if the birth and early growth of these African states is accompanied by internal dissension, the rest of the world, on both sides of the Iron Curtain, knows that the countries themselves will last, that they will "westernize," and that, singly or collectively, they will assume a growing importance in the West's economic and political struggles for survival.

Even countries like Kenya, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Angola, and Mozambique, which have not yet severed their colonial ties or freed themselves from dominance by an immigrant European minority, will play an increasingly important role in the international competitions of the present decade. Indeed, the inevitable efforts of their African populations to rid themselves of European control and to join the growing roster of independent African states will be an important factor in determining the nature of this competition. Some experts have even speculated hopefully that, because the stakes are so high and the alternatives so alarming, the efforts of the African people to extend rule by the majority to every corner of the continent south of the Sahara may throw the competition more fully into the controlled arena of the United Nations. In short, they believe that international peace and prosperity may have a far better chance of survival *precisely because* the Africans are willing to fight for the right to rule themselves and to develop their economies in line with the interest of their indigenous populations rather than in the interest of a metropolitan power or an immigrant white settler minority.

Whether these experts are right or whether those who take a more pessimistic and tinderbox view of the Africans' efforts to achieve independence and self-rule are right remains to be seen. But whatever the ultimate consequences of the stunning series of events that have taken place in sub-Saharan Africa during the last few years, one of the immediate effects has been to force an awareness of the former "dark continent" on an overwhelmingly provincial American public. And, although maps are soon outdated and the place names change with confusing rapidity as country after country achieves independence, the general continental outlines are far better understood today than they were ten—or even four or five—years ago. Unquestionably, the curiosity for more accurate information is also growing.

It was with an apparent realization of this growing interest in tropical Africa and of the need for a compendium of basic data against which to project the changing scene that the Twentieth Century Fund persuaded George H. T. Kimble, the distinguished geographer, to prepare a modern handbook on that part of Africa that lies roughly between the Sahara on the north and the Limpopo River on the south, between the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. Of sub-Saharan Africa only the Union of South Africa is not included in this two-volume survey, toward the preparation of which 46 experts contributed "working papers." "More than a thousand" others were interviewed by Kimble in the course of his research, which spanned several years and three continents.

Land and Livelihood consists of 13 chapters, beginning with an introduction to the "economic life" of the area at the turn of the century. This is followed by a detailed chapter on the physical features of tropical Africa, its climate, vegetation, and soils; a chapter on "racial constitution," the distribution of the people and other demographic characteristics. The next two chapters are concerned with European and African agriculture and with European and African settlement patterns and resettlement schemes. There are lengthy and detailed chapters on the forests—their composition, present use, and potential—and on the waters and their use for power and as a source of food (present and potential); there is a chapter on the distribution of mineral wealth and its potential; and there are chapters on industrial progress, transportation, markets and marketing, and the labor force.

The expository materials are supplemented by 49 tables dealing with a variety of subjects, from rainfall distribution to the sex ratio among the adult population and the balance of payments in Ruanda-Urundi. Thirty-four maps portray graphically many things, from air flow to manioc production and the international migration of Africans between 1946 and 1952.

While the materials included are neither as complete nor as dispassionately outlined as those of Hailey's *African Survey* (Oxford University Press, 1957) nor, for all of their readability, as racy as Gunther's *Inside Africa* (Harper, 1955), they are quasi-encyclopedic in scope. More than 40 "different managements" are discussed; there are more than 600 groups who "do enough things differently from their neighbors to be recognizably different" (page 5); more than 167 million people are "dealt with" in this compendium.

In his acknowledgements, Kimble tells us that "No book is entirely the author's own, and probably few books are less so than this one. It might even be contended that the main reason for having a single name on the title page is that somebody had

to take responsibility for the mistakes!" Certainly no book that tried to encompass such a vast area as tropical Africa in all of its variety, that attempted to deal with all aspects of culture and natural environment as well as some of the main features of recent history, could have been produced unaided by a single individual. It is well that Kimble sought the assistance of 46 experts. It is well, too, that he made himself liable for any mistakes. For a book of this size is bound to have them, and it would be ungentlemanly to foist these on the contributors when the author himself has so obviously reworked the materials into a unitary and highly readable account.

In a foreword, August Heckscher reminds us that Kimble is not only a scholar, but the kind of scholar who "does not assume that scholarship precludes good writing." The writing is very good indeed. In respect to style, this first volume of *Tropical Africa* may be one of those answers to the prayers of social-scientists—and especially of non-social-scientists—who wish publications in this field were more often readable. But readability is not enough. Nor is exhaustive research and the aid of a corps of experts. The product of such a massive collective effort may be evaluated only by the accuracy of its results and the insights of its analyses. In these respects, Kimble's first volume has, as might be expected, certain virtues and certain deficiencies.

For the reader eager to acquaint himself with some of the complexities of a "continent in turmoil," Kimble has organized and presented, in most palatable form, a generous collection of data about a staggering number of things. Much of it will still be useful after the last colonial power has transferred political control to the resident African majority. In this regard the volume may be recommended as one among several reference works to be consulted by those who are anxious to acquaint themselves, in the most general way, with certain recurrent or idiosyncratic features of tropical Africa's natural habitat and culture.

But while the author remarks several times on the internal diversity of the area under scrutiny, his organization and approach lead frequently to overgeneralization, sometimes to a facile "homogenization." I suppose these are flaws which are almost inevitable in the construction of a handbook of this kind. In fact, only the enormous quotient of ignorance about Africa and the urgent need for dispelling some of that ignorance with facts presented in a readable form at all justify the publication of so ambitious a volume.

The book will not please the scholarly Africanist-at-large; even less will it please the institutional and regional specialist on Africa. It appears to have been aimed primarily at an audience whose knowledge of Africa is either slight or nonexistent. Perhaps it is for this very reason that the African "expert" might feel especially disturbed by some of the uses to which Kimble puts his facts; by the way he sometimes proceeds to judgments, analyses, or conclusions with insufficient data; by evaluations made on the basis of data taken from only one side of a controversial issue—what one might call the built-in bias of selectivity; or by the gratuitous value judgments and personal prejudices he occasionally offers in place of analysis.

Let me cite some examples of the kind of thing I am referring to:

1) What does the author mean when he suggests that some of the post-emergency Kikuyu are "thinking better . . ." page 142)?

2) How would he defend the imputation of African infantilism in the following? "Many . . . Africans like nothing better than to buy more of the things they already have" (page 392).

3) What does he mean when he observes that the task of fashioning strong economies in the new territories is pressing and "calls for gifts of mind as well as of "matter" and then adds, "It is indeed fortunate that so many of these territories have the latter. The former may well prove the harder to come by" (page 369).

4) On the basis of what kind of data or research does he render the following observation on the generalized African "mind" as related to diet? Africans like "to eat and drink the things a European eats and drinks. A man is what he eats and drinks. . . . Accordingly, if the European is a smarter man than the African—if he can make stronger 'magic,' can earn more money and have more leisure in which to enjoy it—it must be because of what he eats and drinks." And that is why "canned goods, packaged cereals, refrigerated meat, butter . . . beers . . . wines and spirits" are in such rising demand among Africans (page 514).

5) What kind of data lead Kimble, when referring to one of the new resettlement schemes for Europeans and Africans in Mozambique, to the conclusion that the inferior bush-housing of the Africans in their part of the community owes to "diverse social and linguistic backgrounds . . . but there is no thought of segregation" (page 180 ff.)? On page 309 of *Portuguese Africa* (Harvard University Press, 1959), James Duffy suggests that the Africans' isolation and inferior circumstances in this settlement area are altogether involuntary.

6) On instincts: "The trading instinct is strong . . . in many Africans" (page 567).

7) On the African's capacity to learn and the European's capacity to earn: "The training of a man to do even the simplest of new things, such as pushing a wheelbarrow, frequently takes an amount of time out of all proportion to the gains to be derived by the employer" (page 586). Many employers must be willing to pay the price, for I saw hundreds of wheelbarrows being used in East Africa, and not one of them was being pushed by a European.

8) This one will probably come as a great surprise to physical anthropologists. "Here and there [in Africa] the spade of the archaeologist has unearthed the skeleton of a man a million years old . . ." (page 22).

9) And what of the author's definition of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland as a "self-governing, multiracial state based on equal rights for all civilized men and opportunities for all men to become civilized" (page 538)? Wouldn't this look like an oversimplification to some of the hundreds of Africans who were beaten, jailed, and otherwise mistreated during last year's demonstrations on behalf of "equal rights?"

10) And what of the analysis involved in the author's conclusion that pilfering by African "storekeepers, ticket takers, and inspectors" owes to impaired "ethical standards" which should be elevated (page 411)? Could it be possible that it is not ethical standards alone which need elevation, but African wages as well, if the pilfering is to diminish? It's worth a try; and at the very least it is an amendment which might have been proposed by the author himself.

11) In the course of a factual and informative discussion of the tariff union that links Kenya, Tanganyika, and Uganda, Kimble points out that the union does not "affect in any way the right of each territory to vary its

own tariff." Export duties have thus come to differ considerably among the three territories. The author's analysis: "The reason for this is probably less fiscal than psychological, it being colonial nature to disagree with neighbors" (page 544).

12) In the concluding chapter of volume 1, "The workers," Kimble tackles, among others, the difficult job of explaining the slow rate of African advancement to better jobs. He concludes that the problems begin with government or trade union intervention (pages 592–93). "So long as these assumptions [about which job belongs to which race] remain unwritten and uncodified [many employers will be] happy to have an African demonstrate his competence since it means that they can cut labor costs by replacing high-priced with lower-priced help. The trouble starts when these assumptions get written into the laws of governments and trade unions. Then African advancement of an evolutionary kind becomes much more difficult, for the division of the labor field between European and non-European is clearly defined, carefully guarded by the European workers' watchdogs, and not readily amenable to 'boundary' adjustment." Many Africans, I believe, would question whether the informal and desultory decisions of certain employers counted for evolution at all. But even if employer self-interest were to insure an increase in the number of this kind of boss at a fairly rapid rate, that would not solve the problem of the African who is looking for *equal* pay for equal work. Government intervention or the action of trade unions removes the element of whimsicality from the contractual relationship and offers the hope of protection to the African, not only in his competition with European workers but in his efforts to secure just treatment from all employers.

Despite the shortcomings which are illustrated in some of the foregoing excerpts, and despite the tendency to frequent oversimplification, there is, I believe, much information of value in this volume, and all of it is presented in a charming prose style. If it falters from time to time, it is not only because the subject is too large, or too diverse, or too complicated, but because the author occasionally tries to make it seem smaller, more homogeneous, and less complex than it is.

The future of the new Africa, as its precolonial past, rests largely with the African himself. For, as Kimble reminds us "The tropical Africa of today is the work of the African's hands; almost every railroad, highway, public and private building, mine, plantation and European farm is a monument to his physical exertions" (page 575). The tropical Africa of tomorrow will even more surely be a monument to the *whole* African. For in it, we may hope, he shall be freed, as never before during the period of his colonial status, to contribute not only the strength and skill of his hands but the creativity of his intellect to the making of new nations and the growth of a continent.

ROBERT A. MANNERS
Department of Anthropology, Brandeis University

Tropical Africa. vol. 2, *Society and Polity*. George H. T. Kimble. Twentieth Century Fund, New York, 1960. 506 pp. Illus. Set, $15.

In the early 1950's when the Twentieth Century Fund turned its attention to Africa, it was not as obvious as it is today that rapid political and economic developments would soon place Africa in the forefront of the world scene. At that time all of tropical Africa, with the exceptions of Liberia and Ethiopia, was in colonial status, and most people, even the most informed, expected it to remain so for many years to come. Planning for economic, social, and political development was the concern of the colonial powers. When the United States dealt officially with tropical Africa, its dealings were largely with the appropriate officials in the metropoles. Few African students reached this country. Most Americans thought of Africa, if at all, as a country of big game and safaris, a field for mission work, or a romantic land of darkness. They knew nothing of the new industrial developments, of the efforts to further social and economic change, of the growth of towns and urban problems, of the appearance and hopes of African trade unions, of the growing group of young African leaders who were demanding a share in the governing of their own countries and were soon to refuse to accept anything save fully independent African governments. Only a few American scientists and scholars had actually worked in Africa and knew something of its problems at first hand, and these tended to write for their fellow specialists.

Today tropical Africa consists of a score of independent nations and a few colonial territories which will undoubtedly obtain independence in the next few years. African political leaders are frequent visitors to the United States where they expect to find support for their programs and an understanding of their problems. The United States is increasingly involved in technical assistance in the newly independent countries. The number of American scholars and scientists with a specialized interest in Africa is proliferating rapidly. Universities and colleges are teaching an increasing number of courses on Africa, and books about Africa pour from the presses.

All this makes apparent an urgent need for a convenient general handbook, incorporating the mass of specialized knowledge now available on various portions of the continent, to serve the student in the classroom, to supplement the knowledge of the specialist, and to provide a guide for the general reader. The Twentieth Century Fund is to be congratulated for the vision with which it foresaw this need and for the impressive body of expert knowledge it was able to mobilize for the project. Some 46 reports on special topics were prepared as background material from which the final report, *Tropical Africa*, was assembled by George Kimble. The Fund was wise in placing this last task in the hands of a geographer, for of all specialists it is the geographer who most clearly holds to a widened vision when he writes of the way in which man and his environment interact. As a popular handbook, the work also gains by being the final product of one writer, for it has a coherence derived from a single style and a particular point of view that a collection of essays, no matter how well assembled to complement one another, cannot have. At the same time, most readers will wish that it had been possible to publish the background papers as a supplement to the handbook. Their value to the scholar becomes apparent on almost every page of the two volumes. It is also to be wished that the Fund had found it possible to publish the annotated bibliography prepared for it by the International African Institute.

Tropical Africa will find its place on the bookshelves of the specialist who will turn to it as one convenient means of checking conditions in portions of