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in the formation and transformation of systems of inequality. He shows that, over the past two hundred years, commoners' access to alcohol has been controlled—in the precolonial period by laws and injunctions, in the colonial period by legislation, and in the postcolonial period by repressive laws. The common people used alcohol as a symbol of their resistance to colonial rule. Women's access to drink was controlled by men, and Akyeamong details how they sought to overcome this restriction and achieve their own autonomy in public space. The author discusses the strategies that were developed by commoners and women to counter such repressive and draconian impositions from "above." He draws attention to the intensity of class and gender-based struggles over social and public space. He shows that local and colonial elites' definitions of order and disorder were made at the expense of social subordinates—workers and women.

This is a significant and ambitious book. The author casts his study of alcohol and alcohol consumption in a materialist and social-relational vein, an understanding of which he links to values, rituals, symbols, and beliefs.

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Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa. By Frederick Cooper. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pp. xviii, 677. \$89.95.)

One has come to expect insightful historical analysis from Frederick Cooper, and his latest work does not disappoint. Shifting his focus from the subject of his three previous books, circumstances of East African coastal workers (both enslaved and free), Cooper examines the conceptions of African labor that informed British and French policies in their colonies in Africa. In size, scope, and depth this is a big book, drawing heavily on original research in French and British colonial archives and covering the high colonial period from the mid-1930s to the decolonization of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Gracefully written, subtle, ironic, and profound, it is a very important book as well.

In the hands of a less skillful historian, a study of how sub-Saharan Africa's two most important colonial powers formulated and reformulated their labor policies might never have left their respective colonial offices. Cooper avoids this Eurocentric trap by demonstrating how African actions regularly forced European governments to reformulate their images of Africans and thus their colonial labor policies. During the first decade covered by this study, colonial officials struggled to reconcile deeply entrenched forced labor policies (justified by a belief in the "backwardness" of African societies) with the growing presence of wage laborers, a trend accelerated during World War II. Postwar official fantasies about such supposedly "detrified" Africans were shaken by the series of strikes and other labor actions. The new French and British antifascist governments responded by embracing a new image of African wage laborers as small-scale versions of the European working class that were so central to the emerging welfare states in postwar Europe. However, a crisis developed as officials, seeking to treat such an African working class as a partner in their "modernizing" efforts, were met by African workers' demands for wages and benefits equal to those of

viduals of a century ago runs the risk of reading too much into realities that may fall far short of their contemporary meanings. It is not far from the truth to speak of the political activities of the Iranian intellectuals and the activists for constitutionalism as a struggle for social justice, whatever social justice may have meant at that time. But to think that those intellectuals and activists understood the meaning of democracy as we apply the term today is questionable. Even the Social Democrats of the period could not come close to what we understand as democracy at present. The same can be said about the application of the concept of "feminism" for the political and social activities of women in this period.

Still, Afary's efforts in synthesizing theory and historical facts is bold and encouraging. As historians move away from pure descriptive analysis, the likelihood that we may have a better grasp of the meanings imbedded in the behaviors of historical actors increases. This book provides history as analysis rather than history as narration.

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Drink, Power, and Cultural Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times. By Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong. (Portsmouth and Oxford: Heinemann and James Curry, 1996. Pp. xxiii, 189. \$60.00.)

What does a study of alcohol consumption tell us about social history, power relationships, and cultural change in Ghana/the Gold Coast-Asante over a period of nearly two centuries? Emmanuel Akyeampong's book is an intellectually refreshing contribution to the historiography of Ghanaian social history and a fine example of the insights to be gained from examining the lived and spoken forms of alcohol consumption among Akan-speaking, Ga-Adangme-speaking, and Ewe-speaking peoples. This excellent book is very much a history from below, a study that seeks to make sense of subaltern collective experiences—struggles, expectations, and defeats—over an extended period of time.

In this complex study, the author attempts a number of different tasks. The first three chapters, devoted to the precolonial and early colonial periods, examine the social and cultural roles of alcohol. Akyeampong considers alcohol in the context of gender relations and conflicts as well as social struggles between "young men," on the one side, and elders and other power-holders, on the other. Chapters four and five treat the politics of alcohol under the British colonial regime from the 1910s to the 1940s. Chapter six links the social and symbolic presence of alcohol with the politics of nationalism. The last chapter focuses on independent Ghana in the 1960s and 1970s and examines the political disillusion of the populace and the emergent complexities of alcoholism. An epilogue looks at alcohol in contemporary Ghana. The central data of the book include interviews carried out in Ghana, archival records, and published anthropological and historical studies.

For Akyeampong, the politics and culture of alcohol was and continues to be an issue of class and gender relations, and these relations, in turn, were and are constitutive of what he calls a "culture of power." He maintains that alcohol's enduring legacy in Ghana is due to its connections with spiritual power. His intention is to specify the role of alcohol consumption

AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, and the Origin of Feminism. By Janet Afary. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. Pp. xxi, 448. \$32.00.)

In 12 detailed chapters, the author of this study attempts to recount the history of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911) in the light of new concerns about race, gender, class, and the world capitalist system. The traditional historiography of this revolution, according to the author, has relied on single-factor analysis or one-dimensional explanations. Afary attempts, for the first time, to correct for this by taking into account the "multiclass, multicultural, and multi-ideological dimensions" of this revolution. She relies on available historical documents, newspapers from the period, and accounts of participants and observers of this revolution, to show that, contrary to widespread belief, the revolution was not the product of an alliance between the secular intellectuals and liberal clerics only. The revolution was also a product of the efforts of diverse groups motivated by various ideological, political, economic, ethnic, and social causes.

In chapter one, the author places Iran within the context of the capitalist world economy and discusses the political and economic effects of this system on Iranian society. Chapter two deals with the diversity of views and ideologies that contributed to the emergence of the Constitutional Movement, with an emphasis on the role of Azali Babi thinkers in the revolution—a role conventionally ignored by other historians. The composition and efforts of the first parliament in social reform and of various urban councils in expanding grassroots democracy is examined in chapter three. Chapter four deals with events and forces that contributed to the clash over the supplementary constitutional laws, with importance given to the role of conservative religious forces. A unique attempt to deconstruct the ideological and political texts of this period, especially the press, is discussed in chapter five. The next two chapters are devoted to the role of various classes and groups such as peasants, artisans, and women in fighting the dictatorship of the Qajar rulers and foreign intervention. While chapter eight deals with the civil war in Azerbaijan as a form of class struggle, chapter nine attempts to show the connection between the revolution and international efforts to establish democracy and social justice. Chapter ten deals with the second national assembly and the formation of political parties. Chapters eleven and twelve describe events that began to undo the revolution, especially the role played by the imperialist powers and Iranian conservative forces.

Afary's well written reevaluation of the history of this revolution is unique and innovative—unique because it explains the dynamics of the revolution in terms of the multiplicity of forces and ideologies that were present at the time and innovative in an approach that goes beyond the description of events and personalities and looks at this movement from a theoretical angle. By employing theoretical insight, Afary enriches historical facts and provides a deeper understanding of historical processes. The downside to this approach is that the usage of contemporary terms such as "democracy" and "feminism" for explaining events and indi-

impassioned language of the time and the incredible sacrifices of the war indicate that this ideological interpretation is correct. Still, one cannot help but wonder if the historians of the next few decades will refine this interpretation. Perhaps behind at least some of the passion that young men expressed for their causes lay a less exalted desire to escape their mundane lives as sons and husbands.

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