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Review

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Dei-Anang's book makes interesting reading; scholars and students will find it stimulating. Some minor details offer interesting insights. On Nkrumah and the O.A.U. he discloses that before the Addis Ababa conference of 1963 Nkrumah sent a special two-man delegation—Kojo Botsio and Nana Kobina Nketsia to the Central African Republic to ask whether the government of that country would consent to its capital being proposed as Africa's capital city. (p.43) And on the outcome of the Addis Ababa conference he asserts: 'The real issue seems to be that his [Nkrumah's] expectations were not based on an accurate analysis of the forces behind the heads of state which made it impossible for them to go further with him on the question of a continental government for Africa'. (p.45).

This otherwise interesting book has a few contradictions. In one breath he notes that 'Nkrumah was a most genial boss and showed considerable attachment to anyone who proved to be a steady and conscientious worker.' (p.35) In another, he exclaims: 'I must confess that, as a trained official, I was often nettled and exasperated by President Nkrumah's unorthodox methods.' His statement that the U.S. is anti-colonialist is debatable. It is true that President Kennedy, when he was a Senator, supported the Algerian Liberation Movement but one cannot lose sight of America's leadership of N.A.T.O. which has supported colonial powers including Portugal.

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West African Food in the Middle Ages, according to Arabic Sources by Tadeusz Lewicki (with the assistance of Marion Johnson), Cambridge University Press, 1974, pp.xv, 262, map, £8.

This book was originally written in Polish and published in 1963. The English translation was made by Marianne Abrahamowicz and this was then edited for publication by Marion Johnson on the initiative of Professor J. D. Fage who has also written a Foreword to the present English edition. The work remains essentially of 1963 vintage, though a few references are made to works published subsequently. It has not, however, been noted that the papers of Baker, Portières and Stanton delivered at the Third Conference on African History and Archaeology (held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London in July 1961) were published in the following year in volume iii of the *Journal of African History*.

The book is arranged in the form of an encyclopaedia of the various items of food about which information can be gleaned from the Arab geographers and historians who wrote in the period c.800-1400, with a great deal

of comparative material from later European writers and travellers and a few references to the seventeenth century *ta'rikhs* of Ka'ti and Al-Sa'di and the work of Leo Africanus. The idea was to give as complete a picture as possible of what foods were eaten and how they were prepared before the introduction of South American and Far Eastern plants by the Portuguese. Needless to say, in spite of the phrase 'West African food' in the title, the geographical area from which information is actually derived is only the northern fringe of West Africa—essentially the Sahel region—because of the limitations of the Arab writers' own knowledge. It is also important to note the other implication of the phrase 'according to Arabic sources' since the archaeological evidence which might in particular have thrown light on other areas of West Africa, is not examined. But the book was written by a specialist making use of the materials which he felt competent to handle (and which few other scholars could handle so competently) and is no less valuable for this. Professor Lewicki has, in fact, performed similar tasks of combing through the Arabic sources to extract material on livestock rearing and on precious stones in Africa in the same period (see his 'Animal husbandry among medieval agricultural peoples of the western and middle Sudan', *Acta Ethnographica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, xiv (1965), pp.165-78 and 'Les écrivains arabes du moyen âge au sujet des mines de pierres précieuses en territoire africaine et leur exploitation', *Africana Bulletin* (Warsaw), vii (1967,) pp. 49-68).

Professor Lewicki is a precise and scrupulous scholar and his *West African Food* is a valuable reference tool. Almost half of the book is taken up by footnotes (pp.135-226), there is a full bibliography and an excellent detailed index.

The book has been produced by the off-set process from typed sheets with an unjustified right margin. Footnote numbers are placed in the left margin with asterisks against the place in the text to which the note refers. But the appearance is still neat and legible, though since this format was presumably chosen on grounds of economy, it is a pity that the final price still had to remain so high. For specialists concerned with the Arabic sources for West Africa or those interested in the question of food production in the area, Lewicki's book is a useful and scholarly reference tool. In a day when too much speculation takes place in African history on the basis of too little carefully sifted evidence, the appearance of such a book is especially welcome and one may hope that it will be the harbinger of further detailed studies both by Lewicki and others. [This review is a shortened version of one appearing in *African Economic History*, i [1975]

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