

# Merchant Capital And Economic Decolonization: The United Africa Company, 1929-1987

REVIEWS

203

able of reforming and renewing a religion which had become too dependent on Western rational enlightenment. Through the Christian vernacular, Bediako insists, through the prayers and responses of the poor, the living forces of the primal imagination are perpetuated and carried forward in the liturgy. The Gospel, as understood right across the denominations and not merely in the independent African churches, as in the independent African views of the essentially unified and 'spiritual' nature of human existence. African Christians have, on the whole, avoided any significant secularisation of their outlook. The requests previously addressed to a variety of spiritual powers have come to be addressed to Christ (pp. 175-6). By helping to make the Bible accessible in the local vernacular, Western missionaries have enabled Africans to appropriate it, stripped of its specifically Western interpretations.

With his eyes firmly fixed on this vernacular apprehension of Christianity, Bediako maintains that the earlier concern of some African theologians to seek an 'indigenization' of Christianity was misguided. Mesmerized by the attack on African cultures by those missionaries ignorant of African values, Idowu and some other pioneer African theologians thought they were dealing with two unrelated entities. They overlooked the simple fact that Christ has taken His place as a reality within primal imaginations. Bediako therefore explores some of the ways in which biblical and especially New Testament categories have resonated in Africa. He describes the process of exegesis taking place at the grass-roots in Akropong. He dissects the presumed homogeneity of pre-Christian traditions. The new African theology, he argues following the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, will have to make room, within an inherited body of tradition, for new ideas which 'come in to fulfil aspirations within the tradition, and then alter it quite significantly on the basis of self-understanding within that tradition' (p. 84).

He discusses some of these alterations. He examines how Africans can now appropriate Christ as an Ancestor, with far-reaching consequences for this dimension of African beliefs. He touches also on some of the major social and political implications of this new African theology. He looks at marriage and polygamy (pp. 183-6), and in an important chapter he argues that the desacralization of political power brought by the Bible is the key in Africa to a transition from authoritarianism towards democracy (pp. 234-49). Some of his specific suggestions will doubtless provoke debate. A few slips will raise some eyebrows. Archbishop Milingo will wryly see himself described as a Cardinal (p. 92), and members of the Kimbanguist Church will be perplexed to find their founder referred to as Joseph Kimbangu (p. 204). One hopes also that the author may be able in future to consider how the strengths of the local vernacular churches, whose strengths he demonstrates so notably, could perhaps be expanded and fortified by a greater awareness of other Christian traditions. Christ may become present in Africa not only through the vernacular Bible but also through rituals, sacraments and the sacrifices of sanctified lives.

The potentially dangerous isolation of local Christians can be overcome only by a constant emphasis on the ecumenical dimension, on universality, inverting the tensions inherent in collegiality and hierarchy.

RICHARD GRAY

D. K. FIELDHOUSE: *Merchant capital and economic decolonization: the United Africa Company 1929-1987*. xxviii, 832 pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. £65.

From its formation in 1929, the United Africa Company dominated merchant trade in West Africa and had further extensive interests in French Equatorial Africa and the Belgian Congo. It soon gained particular notoriety among both colonial officials and African consumers. As the first full account of this Anglo-Dutch company, this is a significant addition to the small number of good business histories of British concerns operating in Africa and an important contribution to literature on economic aspects of colonialism and African economic development; it also contains much of interest to historians of more general themes in African history, European imperialism and British business.

It is a huge book. But two or three important themes demand particular attention. First, this study will be eagerly received for the light it sheds upon controversies surrounding European capital, which frequently turned on the activities of UAC. Past interpretations have been filtered through the lens of the Colonial Office; *Merchant capital and economic decolonization* provides a valuable company-based perspective, perhaps inevitably refuting some of the wilder claims made about the operations of European businesses. Fieldhouse shows, for instance, that, in the commercial jungle of inter-war West Africa, UAC's early years were plagued by financial crises and the infamous European buyers' pools and merchandise agreements of the 1930s were essentially defensive mechanisms designed to protect market shares and profit margins. These arrangements did not constitute part of a monopolistic system, since the firms were rarely able to sustain concerted action. Fieldhouse finds no evidence that UAC, at least, regarded the 1937 agreement, which provoked the cocoa hold-up of 1937-8, as a means of breaking the power of African middlemen. Fieldhouse also adds considerably to our knowledge of the origins of the West African marketing boards, apparently evidence of the influence of big business over the imperial state. While clearly setting out UAC's role in promoting the introduction and operation of state control of the produce trade, he also highlights the way such control circumscribed the independence of the firms.

In addition, Fieldhouse pays welcome and timely attention to less frequently visited aspects of the operations of merchant capital in Africa. His analysis of UAC's policy on manufacturing in Africa, for instance, anticipates the approach of the leading merchant firm towards the development of secondary industries

Merchant Capital and Economic Decolonization: The United Africa Company By D. K. Fieldhouse? Oxford: Clarendon Press, xxviii + pp. Judith Wale, "Merchant Capital and Economic Decolonization: The United Africa Company, D. K. Fieldhouse," The Journal of Modern History 69, no. sacflamenco.com: Merchant Capital and Economic Decolonization: The United Africa Company, (); D. K. Fieldhouse: Books. Merchant Capital and Economic Decolonization: The United Africa Company, D. K. Fieldhouse. A Clarendon Press Publication. Merchant capital and economic decolonization: the United Africa Company, Front Cover. David Kenneth Fieldhouse. Clarendon Press, Merchant Capital and Economic Decolonization: The United Africa Company, Front Cover. David Kenneth Fieldhouse. Clarendon Press, Download Citation on ResearchGate Merchant Capital and Economic Decolonization: The United Africa Company The United Africa Company. Merchant Capital and Economic Decolonization: The United Africa Company By D. K. Fieldhouse Oxford: Clarendon Press, xxviii + pp. Merchant Capital and Economic Decolonization: The United Africa Company By D. K. Fieldhouse Oxford: Clarendon Press, Get this from a library! Merchant capital and economic decolonization: the United Africa Company, [D K Fieldhouse] -- "The United Africa Company. sacflamenco.com: Merchant Capital and Economic Decolonization: The United Africa Company, () by D. K. Fieldhouse and a great. Merchant Capital and Economic Decolonization: The United Africa Company by D. K. Fieldhouse and a great selection of similar Used, New and. "Merchant Capital and Economic Decolonization: The United Africa Company," OUP Catalogue, Oxford University Press, number Free Online Library: Merchant Capital and Economic Decolonization: The United Africa Company, by "African Affairs"; News, opinion and. Merchant capital and economic decolonization: the United Africa Company, Book. Merchant capital and economic decolonization: the United Africa Company, / D.K. Fieldhouse. Author: Fieldhouse, D. K. (David Kenneth), , English, Book edition: Merchant capital and economic decolonization: the United Africa Company, / D.K. Fieldhouse. Fieldhouse, D. K. (David. Mega Sale! Save 24% on the Merchant Capital and Economic Decolonization: The United Africa Company, by Clarendon Press at Dream Africa H.

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