

Book Reviews

Abou B. Bamba, *African Miracle, African Mirage. Transnational Politics and the Paradox of Modernization in Ivory Coast*, Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio, 2016, pp. 297.

Ivory Coast officially became a French colony in March 1893; it gained its independence in 1960. From the 1950s to the early 1980s the country experienced a massive economic expansion, dubbed Ivory Coast's "Thirty Glorious Years", after which growth waned dramatically. *African Miracle, African Mirage* explores the economic dynamics of the "glorious years" with particular regard to the triangulating relation among Ivory Coast, France and the United States. The central purpose of the book is to inquire into the way in which these two Western countries influenced the Ivory Coast's development framework. Abou B. Bamba, associate professor of history and African studies at Gettysburg College, used a huge quantity of primary sources for his study, as he specifically mentions in the very substantial bibliography section: State-owned archival sources from France, Senegal and United States, together with telephone and face-to-face interviews with men and women who were involved in the main events. The book is divided into three parts, plus preface, introduction, conclusion and the rich list of bibliographical sources. The three parts are chronological and thematic: "The postwar years" focuses on the years between 1946 and 1960, with special regard to the process of decolonisation; "The decade of development" deals with the 1960s, and in particular with the changes that followed independence. Finally, "The fate of modernisation" brings the story up to the 1970s, when the signs that the Ivorian model had been built on fragile foundations became clear.

French-style decolonisation was intended as official departure from the colony but effective perpetuation of dependency: a sort of neocolonialism. The French considered that in general their former colonial subjects would be permanently dependent on France for their survival, and the framework was applied to the Ivory Coast like so many other former colonies. Even after independence, this African country was marked by the very substantial presence of French expatriate and immigrant communities, people who played key roles in the economic and political processes so as to perpetuate a colonial mind-set by creating privileged relations between the Ivory Coast and France. The key entity was the "Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-Mer" (ORSTOM), which was chiefly responsible for forging French neocolonialism in the Ivory Coast and in all the other African ex-colonies: ORSTOM saw to the coordination of the activities of French applied scientists in the overseas territories and made itself indispensable to the economic and decision-making processes after the independence.

The idea, that is, is that France wanted to maintain its control over the Ivory Coast even after independence; what is innovative in the book's point of view, however, is its emphasis on the penetration, in the postwar years, of American ideas and development processes, creating a competitor with France for the control of the country. In fact, during the Cold War, we could say that the two Western powers were engaged in a "hot peace" in the Ivory Coast. To struggle against the new American developmental precepts that had begun to circulate, the French followed a tactic that the author calls "dubbing": they presented the American-inflected models of development as innovative French ideas and policies, so as not to lose control. The competition between the French and the Americans produced a schizophrenic dynamic in the implementation of modernization projects during the "glorious years", giving rise to a fragile sort of economic development and growth that would crash at the beginning of the 1980s.

The establishment of American development ideas was evident in the

late 1960s, with the project for the Kossou Dam on the Bandama River; the hydroelectric power it would generate was considered essential for industrialisation. The model that guided the dam was that of regional development, typified in the United States by the New Deal Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). In fact, the “Autorité pour l’Aménagement de la Vallée du Bandama” (AVB) was juridically similar to TVA: it had a semiautonomous status that effectively removed its actions from ministerial jurisdiction. And the principal permanent activities in the dam’s territory were agriculture, fishing and animal husbandry, the same as for TVA. The expert who applied this model to the Kossou Dam project was Philippe Lamour: a Frenchman, because France required French firms to provide high-level experts for the project in order not to lose its influence in the Ivory Coast, but he was actually the conduit for the American development culture. In fact, Lamour went to the United States in June 1946 to study the TVA model, and was fascinated by it. When he was assigned to revitalise economic planning in the backward French region of Bas-Rhone in the 1950s, he simply proposed the TVA model he had already assimilated. And he did the same again when France named him as the key French official in setting up the Kossou project. So American ideas were strongly established in the Ivory Coast. But this developmentalist mind-set passed not only through Lamour but also through key Ivorian agents. In 1963 a group of Ivorian parliamentarians and lawmakers visited the TVA installations around Knoxville: and like Lamour decades previously, they too were fascinated by that development model; so they spread this culture among the main Ivorian policy makers.

The French intended to maintain their power over the Ivory Coast, which is why they engaged in what can only be called neocolonialist practices. But why were the Americans so keen to spread their developmentalist ideas in the Ivory Coast? Unfortunately, they were acting not from philanthropic motives but in application of the schema laid down by W.W. Rostow: to help developing countries in the Third

World in order to get them into the US sphere of influence and thwart the Communist threat. This was the main objective of the American assistance programs toward the newly independent states worldwide. The author concludes that while national policy makers may derive inspiration from the experiences of other countries, the development of a backward area depends essentially on the involvement of the local population, as the book makes abundantly clear. For the local populace have no ulterior motive in working for the economic development of their region and nation.

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Alberto Basciani, *L'illusione della Modernità. Il Sud-Est dell'Europa tra le due guerre mondiali*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli 2016, pp. 489.

In the last two centuries the Balkans have experienced radical political and economic change. Rising from the ashes of the crumbling Ottoman Empire, the region imposed itself as a new geopolitical entity riven by differing national aspirations, ethnic origins and cultural roots. In the late 1800s, the heterogeneous Rumelia provinces became the theatre of a fragmented struggle for power among emerging national states.

While the story of the formation of the Balkan states is a recurring theme of international historical research on the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of national states, Alberto Basciani's study sheds light on the less familiar history of the Balkans during the interwar period. His multidisciplinary approach, borrowing from political, economic and cultural studies, gives us a clear and thorough picture of the consolidation of new states in a troubled region in the wake of war. The three sections of the book provide a detailed analysis of chronological developments in the 1920s and 1930s, delving into domestic and international issues; state-building, institutional changes and economic transformation.

Basciani underscores that “modernity” was only a vague, aspirational concept devised by a political elite whose dream was to attain political and economic success like that the Western powers had achieved. The key to this success was economic progress, but the path to industrial power was fraught with difficulties: conversion, monetary instability, agricultural stagnation, economic depression, the poor potential of domestic markets and the continuing obstacles created by the developing countries. However, economic growth was useful to legitimate a new national elite pursuing internal consensus and external recognition. Political ambition and nationalism were key factors in the shaping of new national states.

After the Balkan wars and the First World War, the Eastern states had an opportunity to forge stronger national economies, but post-war ambition was thwarted by the international credit shortage. The costs of long-term borrowing became prohibitive for most of the Balkan states despite the availability of savings in the financial markets. The closing of the German and Austrian stock-exchanges constituted a shock for the Balkan economies, which were too weak to sustain high interest rates, large issue discounts and heavy guarantees.

With the onset of the Great Depression, the Balkan states were faced with external challenges. Agriculture suffered from general overproduction, while industry had to cope with economic upheaval for years to come. The downward spiral of industry undermined the social and economic transformation of the Balkan economies. Furthermore, the lack of long-term borrowing strategies in the 1920s had strained budgets and increased general debt. During that decade, unproductive government spending posed a threat to the future in several countries. There was a dearth of investment for the modernization of transport and agriculture and to create a dynamic environment for increasing economic growth in the long run.

The failure of industrialization policies had deep consequences throughout the region. Workers, peasants, ruling elites and intellectuals became disaffected with top-down industrial policy. Moreover, the

economic model pursued by the Western powers also came in for criticism. The economic crisis reinforced economic as well as political radicalization. The farmers' need for long-term credit led national governments to embrace economic planning and extensive public intervention. Regional governments looked to centralization as the only way to revitalize a depressed economy and to avert regional and local moves towards decentralization.

In conclusion, Alberto Basciani's book succeeds in framing a multidisciplinary approach that takes into account the evolution of state politics, economic policy, intellectual life, and other aspects. The common past of Ottoman history, a theme throughout the book, provides a new key to understanding Balkan state-building in the 1920s and 1930s.

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Michele Colucci and Stefano Gallo (eds.), *L'arte di spostarsi. Rapporto 2014 sulle migrazioni interne in Italia*, Donzelli, Rome, 2014; *Tempo di cambiare. Rapporto 2015 sulle migrazioni interne in Italia*, Donzelli, Rome, 2015; *Fare spazio. Rapporto 2016 sulle migrazioni interne in Italia*, Donzelli, Rome, 2016.

In 2011, Tatiana Agliani, Giorgio Bigatti, and Uliano Lucas published a stimulating photography book titled *È meridionale però ha voglia di lavorare* ("A Southerner, but Willing to Work"), offering a highly evocative representation of Southern Italian immigrants living in Milan. Among its underlying premises was the restriction of the discourse concerning Italy's internal migrations exclusively to that of Italians from rural parts of the South to industrial cities of the North.

Up to that time, and following Goffredo Fofi's work on Southern immigrants in Turin, the category of "internal migration" had actually seemed to coincide with just such a flow. In 2002, Enrico Pugliese, in his *L'Italia tra migrazioni internazionali e migrazioni interne* ("Italy Between

Inter- and Intra-national Migrations”) had already noticed that population mobility in the Italian peninsula increasingly involved foreign immigrants; but it was only in 2012 that Stefano Gallo completed his first work on internal migrations, highlighting the two main problematic aspects. First of all, Gallo observed that “foreigners’ internal mobility [remained] largely unrecorded”. Secondly, quoting Ercole Sori, he noted that concepts like international migration, internal migration, and urbanization could be lost, at least in the sense they had retained up to that moment [Stefano Gallo, *Senza attraversare le frontiere* (“Without Crossing Borders”), p. 200].

According to Gallo, two approaches were necessary: a thorough quantitative and qualitative analysis of the phenomena, and a reconceptualization of the categories upon which the analysis had to be conducted. A few years later Gallo resumed his investigation along those lines, collaborating with Michele Colucci. The research they initiated in 2014 on behalf of the Italian National Research Council has led to three annual reports on internal migrations, along with a website (<https://migrazioninterne.it>), periodically updated with new material and documents. The most significant aspect of their endeavor is the emphasis they have placed on foreign immigrants within the framework of internal migrations, providing a renewed and multi-faceted description of this phenomenon.

The three volumes offer a representation of the flows of migrants coming from various countries and regions, and involved in the diversified trajectories of job markets belonging to different areas. Young and older people, men and women, with their individual needs and profiles, life projects and expectations depending on the circumstances in which they find themselves during their “life course” – a category present in various contributions. The authors treat Southern Italian migrants but also African day laborers, the latter moving across the countryside of Southern Italy in search of seasonal employment; Domenico Perrotta underscores the pivotal role of this issue in Italy’s new “day laborer question”. The reader is then presented with Eastern

European caregivers, whose paths across Emilia Romagna are described by Caterina Satta. This group has especially perceptive things to say, thanks to the nature of their work and because they are among the fastest-moving migrants in the country. Finally, Indian and Moroccan workers in Northern rural areas are discussed by Francesco Carchedi, who focuses on their complex professional dynamics.

The analysis of these workers' movements reveals the complexity of the Italian job market, divided into differentiated levels of qualification and at times characterized by illegality, especially when foreign workers are involved. It is clear, therefore, that Michele Colucci and Stefano Gallo have achieved their main objective: to provide "a more complex, complete, and never banal image of the society framing these various flows" (2014, p. XIX).

Their objective, however, is also to provide methodological tools of investigation and reflection on interpretive categories. Among them, bibliographical and historical reconstructions are particularly helpful to anyone wishing to observe contemporary internal mobility, with a more thorough awareness of its conceptual background, and of the choices made by those who have already studied this phenomenon. These are found in the essays of Ercole Sori and Michelangela Di Giacomo, or in contributions like that of Michele Nani, rich in theoretical implications. Equally stimulating, from a different angle, are the essays on primary sources, for instance Michel Poulain and Ann Herm's analysis of population registers. Nor should we fail to mention Luca Pappalardo and Fosca Giannotti's study on "Big Data": new, powerful, electronic archives that, with a particular set of digital tools, are able to record the movement of the totality of a country's population, as long as its members make regular use of smartphones or tablets. Among the host of questions this raises are: What use can historians, sociologists, geographers, and demographers make of "Big Data"? What is their role in mobility studies? What questions can we ask, and what answers might we expect?

All three volumes seek to link qualitative and quantitative dimensions,

as remarked by Michele Colucci and Stefano Gallo: “The most insightful contributions to the recent and older debate are the ones in which the awareness and accuracy tied to quantitative data processing and dissemination are interwoven with the ability to reveal aspects of social phenomena in a precise and original manner, according to different disciplinary approaches” (2016, p. XIV). Accordingly, each report presents studies of subjective sources supported by the demographic analyses conducted by Corrado Bonifazi, Frank Heins, and Enrico Tucci. An example is Anna Bandino’s article comparing the experiences of young Southern Italian and foreign women who migrated to Piedmont; similarly illuminating is a piece by Michele Colucci himself about the life of Rocco Rascano, a Communist who migrated from Potenza province to Turin. The effort to combine the two dimensions is most successful in the two essays that close the second volume. Following Michele Nani’s conclusions, in which the author states that research should focus mostly on quantitative approaches and on the “construction of research units and object identification” (2015, p. 125), Michele Colucci and Stefano Gallo present an interview with the writer Marco Balzano on his work *L’ultimo arrivato* (“The Newcomer”), a story about Ninetto Giacalone, a Sicilian who arrived in Milan at the end of the 1950s.

The reports also address other issues, including: Europe as a new setting in which to discuss internal migration; the relationship between internal mobility and urban transformation; and the role of politics and of administrative choices and regulations in influencing and restricting mobility, a matter of the utmost importance, as Enrico Gargiulo’s work underlines.

Although the editors, in the introduction to the first report, stress the pivotal role of job markets in determining the structure of internal migrations, the hallmark of the three volumes is their interdisciplinary openness and readiness to consider different approaches. The essays are written from different starting points — historical, sociological, demographical, sociolinguistic, and even IT-centered approaches. It must

be said that quite a few of them include substantial theoretical discussion, to the point that they might make for heavy going for someone eager to find information on human mobility in Italy. Nevertheless, the logic underlying the three volumes can be grasped through an attentive reading, permitting one to recognize and to interpret the complex map on which they are based, a logic inspired by Marcel Mauss's well-known definition of migrations as a *fait social total*.

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Manuela Martini, *Bâtiment en famille. Migrations et petite entreprise en banlieue parisienne au XX^e siècle*, CNRS Éditions, collection Alpha, Paris, 2016, pp. 461.

Manuela Martini's work is divided into four parts (1-*Le Bâtiment: une histoire d'archaïsmes*; 2-*Territoire: circulation migratoire et mobilité professionnelle en banlieue parisienne*; 3-*Trajectoires d'indépendants. Mobilité et travail entre lieux de départ et lieux d'arrivée*; 4-*Gestion: les petites entreprises et leur main-d'œuvre* – 1-*Construction: a history of archaisms*; 2-*Territory: migratory flows and job mobility in the Paris suburbs*; 3-*Independent career paths. Mobility and work between places of departure and places of arrival*; 4-*Management: small firms and their workforce*). Its eight chapters provide the reader with an in-depth analysis of the world of migrants.

Martini manages to mediate between methodological and thematic requirements, linking business history with the history of migration on a more strictly thematic level, while her methodological approach takes account of various levels of historical analysis.

The unifying theme of the volume is the history of a successful company founded by an Italian migrant, Lazare Ponticelli, who died on 12 March 2008. In reconstructing and analysing this success story, on the basis of vast reading in the literature and of important and previously unpublished archival sources, the author gives us a study –

more instructive and topical than ever, especially in the light of what is happening nowadays in France and at European and world level (especially in the Mediterranean basin) – of talented men who started at the bottom as migrants and succeeded in becoming craftsmen, businessmen and builders; before migrating, they had had no capital or access to transnational networks, or know-how, specializations or new technical skills.

In the twentieth century, immigrant businessmen or foreigners born abroad and living in France, with or without French nationality, did not necessarily belong to social or professional élites. From a statistical point of view, from the early years of the century, the presence of these ‘particular’ entrepreneurs changed the performance of some sectors, the organization of work and the management of the workforce in a significant number of firms. Martini’s study examines this transformation, which took place at the beginning of the last century.

Her research work succeeds in demonstrating that an immigrant entrepreneur, far from being an example of individual success, a marginal figure or a chance occurrence within the phenomenon of mass immigration, forms part of a larger group of self-employed workers, raising general questions relevant to the history of business and work, the history of migration, and family history.

The career paths of migrants, compared with those of all the businessmen active in a particular economic area, show the mechanisms that lead immigrant workers towards independence and illuminate the outcome of an entrepreneurial development linked to the difficulties of social and economic integration in a foreign country.

‘Mastery’ of a profession can play a decisive role, on a par with an endowment of seed capital, but in the twentieth century the vast majority of newly arrived migrants lacked the essential technical skills for establishing any kind of productive enterprise. Yet skills alone were not enough to allow people to set up on their own; to achieve this, the assistance and aid of family and friends, often not of an economic nature, played a crucial role.

The author starts with the story of Lazare Ponticelli, focusing above all on the construction industry, which in the 1970s (when the firm that he had founded became firmly established), was an occupation that involved many workers and businessmen in France, especially migrants.

The construction sector in France is characterized in particular by public works, on which a good number of studies have already been done; Martini instead concentrates on the theme of migrant entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises.

The choice of the story of Lazare Ponticelli and his brothers is not accidental; it represents a long-term case study in the building industry. From the beginning of the century to the 1970s, Italians were the most numerous group in this sector, which in fact was the one that most attracted immigrants and offered them the greatest employment opportunities.

As noted, this study not only describes the fortunes of the Ponticellis but also traces their history, permitting assessment of the stories of other Italian businessmen, their conditions and their aspirations in the course of the twentieth century. In the context of the history of migrations, it appears that in France there is a close connection between the particular activities and economic sectors in which immigrants were employed and their countries of origin. The question, for the author, is what made the construction sector so attractive for Italian migrants in particular; she looks at the changes that took place and how they influenced the relationships within and the management of this sector.

Having analysed some data from INSEE, the author reports (p.13) that construction is a sector in which there was an exceptional increase of employment, with steady growth in spending and in construction from the beginning of the century. During the postwar boom the industry expanded by a total of 46 per cent in absolute terms, or at an average annual rate of 1.8 per cent.

Thirty interviews served to reconstruct the stories of a dozen family-

run companies, located in the eastern suburbs of Paris, between 1920 – the start of a significant decade, during which a number of international conventions were ratified while migration escalated, with a sharp increase in the flow of migrant workers (p. 115, Chapter 3) – and the slumps of 1970 and 1980.

As all researchers know, however, oral sources give rise to methodological problems in relation to the lives and subjective conditions of the persons interviewed. It is common knowledge that perceptions tend to be polarized. Chronologically, it is almost impossible to go back to any period antedating the 1930s. To overcome the limitations inherent in these oral sources and manage to cover the entire twentieth century, the author also refers to stories and data from contemporary analysts of the early period: geographers, doctors, sociologists, social observers and demographers. Though intended mostly for other purposes, these sources are most useful for historians, owing both to the topics discussed and to their involuntary contributions. For example, old technical manuals and the history of technological change often reveal traces of the impact that migrant workers had on the organization of work and on the relationships between employers and workers, bring out problems in using tools, technology and machinery, or provide descriptions of the tasks of individual workers by comparing old and new work provisions. The book interweaves all these different threads with the account of the Ponticelli family and their enterprise.

This new work will undoubtedly become a standard reference in the history of 'ethnic' and 'migrant' entrepreneurship. It has already made a considerable contribution to the practically inexhaustible theme of the history of migration. An English translation would make this essential text available to an even wider academic public.

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