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The Rainbow and the Kings: A History of the Luba Empire to 1891. By THOMAS Q. REEFE. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981. Pp. 306. Maps, tables, index, bibliography. \$24.95.

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Axumites were assisting Byzantines to fight Berbers in the eastern Sahara at the beginning of the fifth century. In addition, Axum's power and friendship were necessary to prevent Beja raids on Byzantine Egypt.

Although the general organization of the book is materialist, the work is not Marxist in an important sense. There is little explanation of the contradictions inherent in Axumite society of any particular period. Although change is not ignored, there is not the sense of change arising out of the tensions and class conflicts produced by internal contradictions which one finds in the works of most western Marxists. This lack of a dialectical model results in an occasional sense that the author is describing a society in functional stasis, rather than one in a dynamic process of continual change. This same charge, however, could be leveled at most non-Marxist western descriptions of societies, whether current or historic. It does not significantly detract from the achievements of Kobishchanov, Michels, and Kapitanoff.

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The Rainbow and the Kings: A History of the Luba Empire to 1891. By THOMAS Q. REEFE. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981. Pp. 306. Maps, tables, index, bibliography. \$24.95.

Thomas Q. Reefe's book provides the student of central African history with a thorough and well-organized collection of dynastic oral traditions and a periodization of the precolonial history of the area. But it is essentially a history of the kings and the ruling lineages of the Luba empire, with only a short chapter on trade and a few paragraphs on the empire's economic base.

The strength of Reefe's book is in his analysis of the myths which make up the ideological baggage of the Luba ruling classes. He uses a functionalist approach to show how these myths have become important to the kingship, since, according to Reefe, this is how some of his informants saw the role of these traditions in their own society. Reefe explains, for example, that Nkongolo, a major figure in the Luba genesis myth, inflicted amputations upon his followers and thereby set a precedent for the royal practice of amputation as a form of punishment on faithless subjects. Reefe tries to show the astonishingly successful way in which the Luba rulers were able to consolidate and maintain control over an extensive empire through the use of a complex ideological superstructure based on such myths.

Despite his provocative analysis of the myths and his chronology of kings, Reefe's book has two major flaws. The first is his understatement of the economic base of the empire. Most central African states were products of a process of competition over the control of scarce resources such as salt, water, gold, iron, and copper. Reefe tells us that

the Luba state was probably centered on the control of salt and iron resources, but the actual mechanics of this control are ignored. A deeper analysis of the economic sphere would not only add more substance to the genealogies and history of state expansion, but would help guide historians toward a more holistic understanding of how these large states developed.

The second problem in Reefer's book is that he overlooks Joseph Miller's work on the Mbundu, *Kings and Kinsmen* (1976), in the areas where their work overlaps. In the process of exploring Mbundu history through the use of oral traditions, Miller examined the early Luba genesis myths which are closely related to the Mbundu and Luba myths. His discussion of the possible genesis and dissemination of the Kalala Ilunga character in central Africa may have important ramifications for piecing together the early history of central Africa. Miller suggests, for example, that the telescoping already evident in sixteenth century Luba genealogies implies greater antiquity than is generally presumed. Reefer ignores such findings.

Reefer's work is important for his analysis of Luba political history from about 1700 to 1891, when the Belgians assumed formal control of the area. His sources include the kinglist and the traditions he has gathered, corroborated with the traditions of neighboring peoples, together with archaeological, linguistic, and ethnographic evidence. *The Rainbow and the Kings* begins to clear some new ground, but it is not as satisfying as Miller's *Kings and Kinsmen* or Steven Feierman's *The Shambaa Kingdom* (1974). Both Miller and Feierman approach history through the same sources as Reefer, but have more substantive discussions of the workings of the societies concerned.

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The Dreadful Day: The Battle of Manzikert. By ALFRED FRIENDLY. London: Hutchinson, 1981. Pp. 256. Maps, bibliography, index, notes. \$17.95.

Narrative history has its uses. For those who are new to a subject, unembroidered chronology and minimal, arcane debate prevent boredom and confusion. For the average reader, Byzantium and pre-modern Turkey require such an approach, for the subjects have no foundation in popular awareness. With such things in mind, perhaps one should welcome Alfred Friendly's *The Dreadful Day: The Battle of Manzikert*. The author does not propose to invade the academic precincts. He readily admits his dependence on the linguistic abilities and historical interpretations of several eminent Turkologists and Byzantinists. One cannot fault Friendly in this area, for he does faithfully outline some of the work of Cahen, Grousset, Vryonis, and Ostrogorsky. One wishes, however, that he had added the style and excitement which is the strongest attribute of the history popularizer. For, while the author is careful and