

Swahili written texts that reflect the lived context. This is his justification for relying on European sources. Haustein argues that the post-colonial historian's task 'cannot be to write a history of "lived Islam" under colonial rule', but only to reconstruct the genealogy of European representations of Islam (p. 355). This is a disappointing, though perhaps inevitable, conclusion. One can only hope that the work of scholars such as R. S. O'Fahey, Anne K. Bang, Ridder H. Samsom, Kai Kresse and others will help historians access indigenous sources that might offer a different perspective.

Haustein reminds us that 'the very idea of Islamic Studies emerged within the context of Germany's colonial endeavours and resonated because of its political utility' (p. 366). This deconstruction of influential and enduring tropes serves as a cautionary tale and a call to interrogate the assumptions we bring to scholarship. He believes that the goal of the study of Islam is 'not to determine the past, but to enable a fuller present' (p. 369). A worthy goal, to be sure, but it is to be hoped that historians will not renounce the ongoing effort to understand the past, and not only from the vantage point of biased imperialists.

doi:10.1017/S0022278X24000041

The Infrastructural South: techno-environments of the third wave of urbanization

by **Jonathan Silver**

Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2023. Pp. 330. 6 × 9 in, 54 b&w illus; <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/14868.001.0001>.

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'The Infrastructural South' critically examines prevailing views on infrastructure predominantly stemming from Western notions of urban modernity. The book's departure point lies in acknowledging that our current era transcends the previously insufficient frameworks focused on Northern urbanisation or the post-independence modernisation efforts in the South. It underscores infrastructure's central role in Africa's 'third wave of urbanisation', drawing attention to the speed and intensity of urbanisation, yet urbanisation without industrialisation. Its central argument is that 'we need new ways to explain the everyday functioning of basic services, unfolding hi-tech enclaves, new transnational trade corridors, and digital apps operating across urban space' (p. 3).

Based on research work in Uganda, Ghana and South Africa, the book delves into cities like Kampala, Accra and Cape Town, analysing the effects of energy, water, sanitation, transit and information technologies on everyday life. It portrays African cities as simultaneously modern and unmodern entities, built upon rich histories, traditions, negotiations and experiences while also orienting towards an evolving future (see, for instance, p. 19). Contrary to much of the developmental, planning and policy literature on African cities, which tends to emphasise technical and managerial solutions, 'The Infrastructural South' underscores the diverse politics and imperatives inherent in these geographies (p. 15). It offers a comprehensive reassessment of our understanding of urban issues central to twenty-first-century Africa and beyond.

The book's ten chapters, scrutinising the relationship between urban areas, technology and the environment, suggest different ways of thinking about the fundamental importance of systems shaping the evolving and mutating urbanisation. These chapters span several themes beginning with discussions on the 'infra-future' (Chapter 1), multifaceted dynamics of urban modernity (Chapter 2), patterns of eco-segregation (Chapter 3) and patterns and geographies of survival and the pre-figurative (Chapter 4). Subsequent chapters delve into the expansive temporal and spatial dimensions of infrastructure (Chapter 5), experiences of displacement associated with promises of infrastructure development (Chapter 6) and the articulations of the infrastructural catch-up in geographies labelled as 'off the map' (Chapter 7). They also discuss digital disruptions that challenge established norms from both hierarchical levels (Chapter 8) and offer a rethinking of infrastructure's dynamic role in post-colonial African urban landscapes (Chapter 9). These chapters collectively enrich our perspectives on urban systems towards a renewed reading of urban modernity as a basis for seven 'techno-environments' proposed in the book, including enclave, incremental, imposition, corridor, digital, catch-up and predicament.

The book concludes with the concept of 'mutating modernity' to 'destabilize assumptions and Western knowledge traditions in ways that open up new analytical potential and pathways in thinking through knowledge concerned with the global geographies of infrastructure' (p. 248). Here, Jonathan Silver urges a move towards democratising and socialising power and ownership over urban networks (pp. 247–248), offering the idea of 'popular infrastructure' as a progressive and more inclusive approach to envisioning an emancipatory urban future. He emphasises the significance of expansive public work initiatives, communal ownership models, embracing diversity and experimental platforms in driving equitable and sustainable technical, social and financial advancements to redefine infrastructure practices. Further, he advocates for reparative measures to confront the historical injustices of global racial capitalism that have long marginalised Africa.

The book articulates the need for fresh vocabularies, explanations and theories and paves the way for future research that bridges technology, environmental urbanism and urban politics. It offers the notion of the 'Infrastructural South' as both conditions, geography and epistemological position, and provides a good starting point for more generative and more

genuine contributions beyond contentious ideas of modernity. It opens the ground for studies that problematise and spell out not just complexities but also local transformations and real attunements of infrastructural articulations in Africa and other contexts.

doi:10.1017/S0022278X24000028

China's Relations with Africa: a new era of strategic engagement

by D. H. Shinn and J. Eisenman

New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2023. Pp. 251. £23.39; <https://doi.org/10.7312/shin21000>.

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This is a very important and deeply impressive book. It could be seen as a sequel to the authors' 2012 tome on the same topic and it is just as comprehensive and meticulously researched. The book theorizes China's engagement with Africa from the standpoint of its global 'geostrategy' to sub-regional relations. It then engages some of the most important topics of Chinese engagement in Africa, such as party to party relations, propaganda, security and information technology. Both authors are political scientists and this disciplinary background and training is evident in the writing and structure, as economic engagements and issues are arguably downplayed, however this also gives the book a distinctive focus and feel, and makes sense given the importance of the analysis of Chinese geostrategy to it. In particular it analyses the 'overlapping latticework of relationships with thousands of African elites' (p. 1).

The most surprising aspect of this book is that it details the vast network of relationships and influence that the Chinese state and Communist Party has across the continent with actors ranging from the military to journalists. No other work, to this reviewer's knowledge, has covered this in such breadth and depth and with such attention to detail. The book's major contribution is to uncover this and it shows that despite declining investment and loan volumes from China, the country's influence in and on the continent remains vast. Western powers would have a huge task to try and compete with these networks across multiple thematic areas and scales, and it is not clear that they could (whether that is desirable or not is a different matter). The authors argue that while COVID-19 reduced some exchanges, training programmes and