

***Power and Politics in the Book of Judges: Men and Women of Valor.* By John C. Yoder.** Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015. Pp. 273. \$37.00 cloth.

At first glance, readers of this review may puzzle over its inclusion in a journal on African historical studies. What does a book in the Hebrew Bible chronicling a period of Jewish history between the Exodus and the establishment of Israel's monarchy have to do with African history? More than you might think according to John C. Yoder, author of *Power and Politics in the Book of Judges: Men and Women of Valor*. The book is about the political culture and behavior of the individuals portrayed in Judges. What makes the study relevant for scholars of Africa is Yoder's methodology, which uses practices found in traditional and modern African societies as a framework for understanding the political maneuverings of men and women in ancient Syria-Palestine. Yoder argues that the accounts in Judges depict a complex and value-laden political system in which warriors, warlords, and influential women used the mobilization of local knowledge, the establishment of trust and honor, connections to the supernatural, and the redistribution of resources as alternatives to strategies that relied on the use of force.

Yoder, professor emeritus of history and political science and former director of Peace Studies at Whitworth University, brings to the study a wealth of experience teaching and conducting research in Sub-Saharan Africa. Fusing his knowledge of Africa with his firm handle on biblical studies, he mines Judges for the strategies that allowed a warrior like Samson, a diviner like Gideon, and a seductress and assassin such as Jael to accumulate power, wealth, and prestige while surviving the fragility of patron-client politics. After an introduction, the book divides into four chapters, each dealing with a (primarily) non-violent political tool. Chapter 2, "Power and Knowledge," draws on Jane Guyer's model of indigenous knowledge in Equatorial Africa to explore the use of local traditions and expertise. Yoder finds that the ability to acquire and dispense knowledge was one of the most valuable political resources available in a context where knowledge gained through dreams and divination was in some cases "regarded as more valuable than military strategy, brute strength, or a reputation for mercilessness" (p. 65). Chapters 3 and 4, "Power and Trust" and "Power and Honor" respectively, examine individuals' efforts to reduce the amount of violence required to maintain power by building reputations for trustworthiness and honor, drawing parallels to the work of Joel Migdal, William Reno, and John Iliffe. Chapter 5, "Power and Wealth," considers how acts of plunder, tribute, gifting, and sacrifice to the gods allowed people to strengthen kin networks and legitimate positions of power.

The book is written for several audiences—political scientists and historians, Hebrew Bible specialists, people of faith, and general readers. In his conclusion, Yoder addresses social scientists, people of faith, and adherents of nonviolence. He maintains that while scholars often discount Judges, the book contains rich data about the political behavior of ancient Syria-Palestine. For people of faith and those who would whitewash the violence and brutality of Judges, the book provides an honest portrayal of human nature and depicts God's willingness to accept incremental efforts towards faith, however small. Finally, Yoder urges students of nonviolence and peace to seek parallels between a text which

celebrates martial values and the acts of structural and physical violence perpetuated in today's world.

Yoder succeeds in providing an innovative and accessible analysis of *Judges* that offers something of interest for each of his target audiences. While his attention to lay readers means that many conversations relevant to scholars of Africa are only partially developed or take place in the notes, the parallels he draws between modern African societies and ancient Syria-Palestine present a unique methodology that could spark discussion about the possibilities and limitations of such comparison in cases where written and oral evidence is limited. His argument—that the men and women depicted in *Judges* possessed an array of non-violent political tools in addition to violent tactics—is convincing, although when and why individuals chose the former over the latter is less clear. While Yoder does not shy away from the brutality and violence in *Judges* by any means, this reviewer felt that a chapter devoted to power and violence would have been useful for furthering understanding about the interplay between non-violent and violent strategies and the social and political utility of force.

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***The Emergence of the South African Metropolis: Cities and Identities in the Twentieth Century.*** By Vivian Bickford-Smith. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp. xxiii, 319. 16 b/w illustrations, 1 color illustration, 7 maps. \$99.00.

Vivian Bickford-Smith, Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Cape Town and an authority on South Africa's urban history, focuses in this study on its three largest cities: Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg. He explores the intersections between how they have developed and how local people and outsiders have perceived and experienced them, including broader comparative observations.

After a short introduction, the author examines efforts from the late nineteenth century to create “British” cities through street names, architecture, or institutions such as schools, churches, and municipal councils with “British” symbols and traditions. He analyzes not only British-descended Whites’ creations, but how White Afrikaner and Black (in which he includes African, Indian-descended, and mixed-race “Colored”) inhabitants were influenced by and even embraced a “British” identity.

The next chapter contrasts the association of urbanization, “Britishness,” and progress with fears about effects of urbanization on Blacks and Afrikaners such as poverty, crime, disease, and interracial sexual relations. Segregation, supposedly offering a partial solution, was undercut by the costs involved and Blacks’ preference for living closer to their workplace. Meanwhile, nationalist mobilization of Afrikaner workers displaced cross-ethnic Anglo-Afrikaner radicalism, especially after white miners’ 1922 revolt was crushed,