Preface

The importance of this innovative volume lies in the way it links traditional studies of resistance to the more recent literature on conflict and violence in Africa. In this way it fills an analytical void by allowing a reinterpretation of the old resistance literature and by developing a new tradition of conflict studies. In this way, *Rethinking Resistance* reinforces the field of conflict studies and lifts this interesting and relevant area of research to a higher analytical plane.

A further richness of this collection is its diversity. Firstly, this diversity is geographical: the articles cover areas of Sub-Saharan Africa from the Sahel to South Africa and from the Fuuta Jallon mountains in Guinea to Somalia, not forgetting of course Madagascar. Diversity in time is also to be found: various pre-colonial revolts are treated as extensively as revolts that took place around the time of colonization, as are the anti-colonial insurgencies towards the end of this period of domination and the civil wars following independence. And finally there is the diversity of subjects: most of the chapters are devoted to historical accounts of the phenomenon of resistance and their significance, although at the end of the volume there are equally discussions concerning the memory of revolt and its use towards ends which often only preserve an indirect link with historical reality.

A further interesting aspect of this book is that it focuses more, if not almost exclusively, on revolts, wars and periods of violence about which little or nothing is known than on the well-documented phenomena of resistance. This represents an important contribution to theoretical and comparative research. Let me cite two examples to illustrate this point. The first concerns the analysis of the *Sawaba* insurrection in Niger by Klaas van Walraven. This is the first time that such an account has been presented in the historiography of contemporary Africa, which is important as it will allow a subsequent comparison between the *Sawaba* revolt and that of the Frolinat in Chad. These two insurrections occurred virtually contemporaneously and in neighbouring Sahelian countries. However, the *Sawaba* revolt was destined to failure while the Frolinat-supported uprising evolved into a full-blown civil war that was only ended by the coming to power of a party of former guerrillas. How can two such similar events but with such different outcomes be explained? What were the factors that contributed to these contrasting results? From Van Walraven’s research it might be possible to offer some first interpretations and answers to these questions. A second example is Ineke van Kessel’s chapter on the Black Dutchmen in the Netherlands East Indies. As the author herself indicates, this example of a mutiny by Africans engaged in a colonial army is atypical but deserves to be compared with similar incidents that occurred in the King’s African Rifles and to Senegalese infantrymen.
Rethinking Resistance covers a wide range of issues and constitutes an important step towards a better understanding of the phenomenon of revolt and violence in Africa, as argued by the authors in the introductory chapter.

Robert Buijtenhuijs