Arabic” – in a concise yet coherent form, Dawood has reduced Rosenthal’s monumental three-volume translation of the *Muqaddimah* (Bollingen Series, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958) to a single volume of 465 pages. This he has achieved by omissions: omission of Rosenthal’s long introduction and copious notes, the bibliography compiled by Walter J. Fischel, and sections of Ibn Khaldūn’s text which Dawood deems repetitive, technical, or irrelevant.

Of these the most important, certainly, is the deletion of Rosenthal’s critical apparatus. In the interest of space this decision was no doubt inevitable, but it is to be lamented all the same since it is this apparatus, reflecting Professor Rosenthal’s mastery of the details of Muslim culture and civilization, which constitutes the chief merit of his translation. “The scholar who has no knowledge of classical Arabic” would be well advised, then, to rely on the three-volume version, where he will find Rosenthal’s elucidation of the obscurities with which the *Muqaddimah* abounds. The textual excisions will not be so sorely missed except by specialists interested in Ibn Khaldūn’s presentation of such esoteric subjects as the map found in the *Book of Roger* (comprising fifty-seven pages in the Bollingen edition); divination by stand and by letters of the alphabet (fifteen pages); data provided by treasury receipts (eight pages); the Shi’i theory of the caliphate (twelve pages); the art of Arabic calligraphy (thirteen pages); the science of Prophetic traditions (sixteen pages); alphabet sorcery (fifteen pages); Ibn Bishrūn’s treatise in alchemy (sixteen pages); and examples of contemporary Arabic poetry (sixty-four pages). Yet it cannot be denied that Ibn Khaldūn’s views on these subjects formed at least a peripheral part of his theory of civilization so that it would have been helpful if Dawood had provided summaries of these passages or some other indication of their content.

Besides deleting such material, Dawood has tried to make Rosenthal’s scholarly translation more readable. Thus he has dropped many, but not all, of the parentheses which Rosenthal used extensively to indicate English words which had no equivalent in the Arabic text but which were necessary to round out the English sense. Otherwise, Dawood has introduced “idiomatic” changes. As far as I have been able to discover improvements are few and minor. Thus Rosenthal’s “they report the historical information about is (mechanically)” Dawood renders “they report the historical information parrot-like”; “I arranged it in an orderly way” becomes “I arranged it methodically”; “periods and races that will be before his time and that will be after it” reappears as “periods and races that will be before his time and that will obtain thereafter.” In effect, then, Rosenthal’s English, with its virtues and its defects, remains almost intact. It seems an unavoidable pity that his notes do not remain intact too in this welcome re-edition of his work.

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This book is intended to fill what its author considers to be an important gap in previous ethnographic studies of Africa, namely the analysis of a social
form intermediate in character between pure “traditional systems” and urban centers: “the small town which is still based on agriculture, but which has numerous links with the city and the wider world.” Such intermediate communities are rooted in local ascriptive solidarities but are also tied in with much larger-scale communications systems, and they therefore raise important problems concerning changing social boundaries and networks. A detailed description of this distinctive form is to be welcomed.

This community study of Larteh, in southern Ghana, was undertaken from a base at the University of Ghana where Brokensha had a teaching position, and the data gathered cover a wide range of phenomena. After a section outlining major historical developments in the area, the author turns to his main purpose, a description of the major social “institutions” (organizational forms), in order to “illustrate the processes of accommodation” of these structures to the forces of change. The impact of the Christian missions on Larteh is described and assessed and then economic changes wrought by the introduction of cocoa are considered. There follows an examination of community development projects stimulated by cocoa wealth, mission education and other factors. The author then briefly describes the Brongs (descent-based residential units comprising the basic building blocks of the traditional Larteh policy) and presents chapters on civic political organization, judicial processes, “ritual and medicine,” death and inheritance, marriage, and the school system, to illustrate major trends of development in these spheres. His major conclusion are: the two most important factors precipitating change in Larteh have been the Christian missions (together with their schools) and cocoa; the traditional institutions of Larteh have shown a remarkable vitality under pressure from these forces; and the processes of “blending” and “accommodation” of the old and the new have been much more prominent here than those of “conflict” or “social breakdown.”

The major strength of this book is its broad range of descriptive detail. For example, the chapter on ritual and medicine contains a discussion of contemporary (as well as traditional) relevance of important community shrines, including court cases showing the significance of shrines in public and private affairs, the changing status of shrine officials, and shrine organization changes in relation to national politics. The chapter on local schools provides an indication of the remarkable range of educational activities and organizations. Such details suggest how various organizations relate to one another in this most interesting Ghanaian town.

Yet, curiously, family organization is barely touched upon, although this is a topic of great interest to students of African social change. Moreover, certain implicit theoretical biases appear to weaken both description and analysis at various points. Repeatedly throughout the work the author stresses the view that “abstract, rigid norms” are far less important in Larteh social life than are “situational” factors. This emphasis, apparently aimed against some (unspecified) extreme idealist perspective, seems in some cases to induce him not to attempt any orderly account of normative structures at all, and in others to be satisfied with very sketchy descriptions. A systematic use of the concept of “role” would have made this radical dichotomy between formal rules and situational variables appear less absolute. In addition, Brokensha appears to conceive of “adaptive” or “accommodative” change and “social conflict” as mutually