Buxton’s travels were motivated by two sources. One was to survey possible breeding areas of the desert locust. His other was to explore and understand, in the time he had, the intricate monastic and clerical life of highland Ethiopia. The first motive took him into areas where self-announced brave men feared to tread, were killed, or endured historic sufferings. His description of the Dankali is the sanest in print, and his photographs are magnificent. The second motive, investigating the rock-hewn cliffside monasteries provides a lesson in patience. Most of the sites Buxton mentions have not since been investigated by inquisitive outsiders who are now pouring into Ethiopia, nor will they be unless they have Buxton’s tact.

Speaking of the Dankali, who call themselves ‘Afar, Buxton says, “Of all the nomad tribes of the Ethiopian deserts the Danakil have earned for themselves the most sinister reputation for ferocious savagery.” Of this there is no doubt. He continues, “...My own reception among the Danakil, during two trips to different parts of their deserts, had been friendly enough. And I have wandered far among their villages, unarmed and unescorted.” Insiders may compare this with Nesbitt’s horrifying description of crossing the Danakil desert as reported in Desert and Forest and elsewhere.

Speaking of his rope ascent to one of the creviced monasteries, Buxton says, “...some monks had appeared at the top and were peering down at us, protesting at our audacity.” When he reached his goal, “The Abbot with a retinue of monks was awaiting us, and gave us a most friendly welcome.” Again, one must see the photograph to appreciate the situation.

Travelers and missionaries must always be doubted. They and their followers are usually sponsored by sources wishing to intensify contact to their own advantage. Buxton’s Desert Locust Control, probably responsible for saving hundreds of thousands of lives from starvation, nevertheless collects information regarding things other than ‘hoppers these days. Currently Americans are the dominant travelers and missionaries, the vectors of change. Buxton might be unsettled if he knew his remote monastery was fewer than two hundred miles from several thousand U.S. troops stationed in Asmara.

Still, the gentility of Buxton is comforting. He says, (Geographical Journal, 1949: 172) “...I valued very highly the experience of sharing the life of a community whose customs, founded on the most ancient traditions, belong essentially to an earlier and to me a congenial age. This was one of the compensations for living in a country where life is necessarily a strain, since the inquisitive foreigner is not really welcome.”

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It was Dwight Waldo who, reviewing a collection of books on management, characterised them by referring to the old tale of the blind man describing an
elephant. Chambers is far from blind, and the animal he is describing is unmistakable!

*Settlement Schemes in Tropical Africa* is an attempt to locate such schemes within the genus *organisations*. Robert Chambers has had extensive field experience with one particular scheme — the Mwea Irrigation Scheme in Kenya — and has had the opportunity to study a number of other schemes in tropical Africa. His approach has been to identify the emerging organization and those environmental elements which were critical for its creation, or which became critical for its survival. After an opening part in which Chambers places tropical African development schemes in their socio-economic-political-administrative setting, he describes the Mwea Scheme from its inception in 1952/53 until the time of writing — 1967. The third part of the book is an analysis of settlement schemes as organizations; the final part presents a typology of settlement schemes together with some tentative conclusions.

The book is fascinating and frustrating. Its fascination comes from the impression of intimacy with the Mwea Scheme and from the clarity with which Chambers handles his data. The frustration — for this reviewer — comes from his failure to make explicit use of the valuable tools available for the gathering, analysis, and interpretation of data about organizations.

The detailed description of the emergence and adaptation of the Mwea Scheme is one of the most insightful accounts of organizational life in the literature. It provides, at an institutional level, what Dalton (*Men Who Manage*) gave us at the managerial and technical levels in the Milo study. Perhaps the richest aspect of Chamber's account is the attention given to the dynamics of the relationships between the Mwea Scheme and the principal elements in the task environment. The data give a vivid description of the coalitions that formed and re-formed and the search for survival goals and for criteria of assessment which would satisfy the dominant elements on whose approval the continuance of the Scheme depended.

The descriptive sections of the book are excellent. Chambers' analysis is perceptive and comes closer to a sense of dynamism than almost any other writing in this field. Every statement made, every conclusion offered, is consistent with general systems theory, and with the propositions which can be derived from that fruitful source of integrative ideas. Anyone familiar with James Thompson's propositions (*Organizations in Action*) will find himself continually applying these ideas to the material contained in Chambers' book and will be gratified at the closeness of the fit. The fact that the Mwea Scheme reacted to its particular environmental constraints in the way described is all the more convincing because Chambers gives no sign of having heard of Thompson's ideas.

In the final part of the book, Chambers essays a typology of developmental schemes. He approaches the task with humility, and is able to derive a logical scheme of classification based primarily on the degree of control over the technical core of the undertaking. The three main classes, two of which are sub-divided, are then used to classify the schemes referred to in the book. The resulting arrangement seems valuable in distinguishing real from superficial differences in the various schemes as organizations. Here again, it is surprising that Chambers did not take the one further step and link development schemes with an existing typology of formal organizations.