Relatively few of the contributions reflect in a self-conscious way upon the historiography of church-state relations in the third world. One exception is Christopher Abel, who provides a damning critique of the literature on Catholic Church-state relations in Latin America before providing a case study of Colombia in the 1940s & 1950s. Andrew Wheeler’s project in examining the role of missionaries in the Sudan, also examines these themes. Driven by a need to reconsider and defend the missionaries’ reputation, “abused as imperial agents” on the one hand and criticised for “minimal achievements” by the other (284), he is more concerned with popular attitudes than scholarly work. While he recognizes that missionaries must accept partial “responsibility for the gulf of incomprehension that developed between North and South” he also argues that they provided the southern Sudanese with “resources for the new struggle for cultural survival” in post-1956 Sudan (296).

This book does not quite do everything it says on the cover but it is an excellently diverse but well-edited collection with great empirical richness, which many researchers and students will find useful.

Sara Rich Dorman
University of Edinburgh


Shrines of the slave trade is a substantially transformed version of the PhD which Robert Baum defended at Yale in 1986, under the supervision of David Robinson. It proposes a history of the Diola, a people long considered “without history”, found essentially in Casamance, south Senegal, from the XVIth century to the late XIXth century. It is based on the hypothesis that to study such a people without history, it is the history of traditional religion which can provide the chronology and much of the data, serving thus both as a tool and as an object of study. Baum proceeds through a careful historical anthropology, based on twenty years of contacts with the Diola community of Esululu, including a three-year fieldwork at the end of the 1970s. He also makes use of European sources on pre-colonial coastal West Africa. From a religious history, Baum develops a history political, social and economic which frequently calls into question received wisdom on Diola society.

Against Robin Horton’s famous view that African religions were doomed because of their incapacity to resist changes brought about by global forces, Baum insists on the resilience of Diola society and the successful adaptation of Diola religion since the XVIth century. Here lies the great originality of the book: it breaks with the postulate (upheld, among others, by Louis-Vincent Thomas, the lineage elder of Diola ethnography) that the Diola lack historical consciousness. In
fact, history, and particularly the history of religious practices, matters much to the Diola, to the point that they hide it under a layer of synchrony which only intensive fieldwork can penetrate. Going beyond "the ideology of absolute continuity" (p. 173), Baum borrows from Vansina's approach to oral traditions and suggests to deal with them as palimpsests, compositions of religious "texts" dated from various periods; from then on, he can analyse the changes in those religious institutions that are still improperly designated as "animist" - he himself uses the Diola word awasena. Then, he goes on to analyse the interaction between changes in awasena and the broader context, in a non-deterministic fashion: Baum insists that "This should not be taken to suggest (...) that the awasena path merely reflects changes within Diola community life. (...) It is a Diola system of thought that interprets and gives meaning to these forces for change within Diola society." (p. 174).

Using this approach, Baum describes how, in Esulalu, the population which now calls itself Diola was formed from the progressive fusion of two groups, Bainunk-speaking autochtons which are remembered as Koonjaen, and migrants originating from the Floup kingdom, further south, who spoke a language close to present-day Diola. During the XVIIth century, the Koonjaen were conquered by the Floup and became their dependents. With the collapse of the Floup kingdom, the Floup of Esulualu were isolated. In an interaction with the new diseases and the new economic opportunities of the era brought about by the slave-trade, Floup and Koonjaen religious practices combined during the XVIIIth century to produce the Diola culture. Baum describes for instance how the lineage shrines Hupila adapted to the slave-trade, transforming into arenas in which newly-acquired wealth could be transformed into notability: wooden fetters were added to the shrine, and one had to have captured a slave to become a priest. The strengthening of European presence - primarily French - in Casamance during the XIXth century led to the formation of mixed communities near Esulalu. Those were times of an equal exchange of religious techniques between Esulalu and these immigrant communities - only the Tijani Muslims coming from north Senegal strove to preserve their religious "purity". New trade multiplied opportunities for social stratification, and while the slave-trade was suppressed only late in the XIXth century, a domestic slavery developed. Continuing warfare, an increase in witchcraft accusations, the changed availability of certain goods, such as cloth or iron, transformed the local religious balances, leading to new transformations in the religious sphere: blacksmiths thus gained much influence, including religious; the sense of gender separation grew and women appropriated the major shrine of Ehugna.

The quest for African sources on African history is a crucial enterprise, and while it seemed the Diola had little to offer, since they have neither aristocratic genealogies nor Islamic written tradition, Baum suggests a new alley of research, whose originality should set an example. As is well known, this is