

fallout from the rebellion years that is, once again, lost in its detachment from the chronology of his life.

Vaudry proposes strong conclusions: Holmes, “above all others, cast the original vision for medical education and clinical practice in Montreal”; through Holmes and J. W. Dawson in the next generation, “Protestant evangelicalism . . . laid the foundations of a scientific culture in the English-speaking community of Montreal” (255–56). Yet in situating Holmes at the “confluence” (255) of the Scottish Enlightenment and Protestant evangelicalism, he seems to put the cart, with its more diverse Protestant passengers, before the Enlightenment horse. If Holmes and his Montreal colleagues had not spent time in Edinburgh, Glasgow, or Aberdeen, their evangelicalism might have attained a different destination altogether.

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NICHOLAS WESTCOTT. *Imperialism and Development: The East African Groundnut Scheme and Its Legacy*. Eastern Africa Series 50. Rochester: Boydell and Brewer, 2020. Pp. 260. \$95.00 (cloth).

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The Tanganyika groundnut scheme is an oft-cited but little-studied example of a large-scale colonial development project gone wrong. Nicholas Westcott fills this gap with his detailed study of the scheme, *Imperialism and Development: The East African Groundnut Scheme and Its Legacy*, in which he sets the project (ca. 1946–1951) in the context of colonial development and British domestic politics.

Westcott argues that the groundnut scheme merits attention because of the scale of its ambition and the scale of its failure. The project did not fundamentally alter African agriculture or revive the British Empire’s fortunes—key goals of this essentially political effort. But Westcott’s careful study of the scheme’s emergence and failure illuminates the character of late colonialism and the issues at the heart of the thought and practice that drove it.

Westcott’s introduction details the background to the scheme: the Depression and postwar concern about food scarcity; realization that anticolonial activism was connected to colonial conditions; the role of the Second World War in promoting big thinking; and the dedication of the governing Labour Party to significant state interventions (the Attlee government and groundnut scheme led parallel and intertwined lives). In chapter 1 Westcott introduces a cast of characters and their political and economic context, and in chapter 2 he outlines the emergence of the project, geared to fill looming shortages of oil for margarine and other foodstuffs in Britain’s domestic markets. Westcott makes clear the grandeur of both the vision and the numbers of things and people involved: 7,780 buckets; 5,000 cooking pots; 7,500 pieces of cutlery; 84,650 hoes; 2.5 million acres, over 20,000 workers; costs that ran to five times Tanganyika’s annual budget. Combined, these were intended to produce 400,000 tons of groundnuts in five years.

The groundnut scheme, particularly in its early stages, was a complex public-private initiative (the product, Westcott argues, of the kinds of collaboration that emerged in wartime) between the British government and the United Africa Company, a subsidiary of Unilever. While some narratives of postwar colonial development emphasize colonial experts’ hubris, Westcott argues that experts were prescient in their skepticism and conspicuous by their marginalization. Colonial agricultural officers in particular, Westcott notes, were wary, their reservations rooted in knowledge of Tanganyika’s soil and climate, other global boondoggles, and historical examples of ecological collapse.

In chapter 3, Westcott discusses the heated debates surrounding the scheme. He carefully disaggregates the state to examine conflicts between political and expert opinion in the Colonial Office and the role of the British cabinet in structuring the project's terms of reference. These debates, Westcott argues, are important because this project was driven from London rather than from Dar es Salaam, something that ensured its irrelevance to other discussions about reshaping the social and physical infrastructure of eastern and southern Africa.

In the next two chapters, Westcott describes the scheme as it unfolded on the ground, including some of the motivations that drew Britons and Tanganyikans alike to work on the scheme (the former to a more satisfactory degree than the latter). Some claims about the “unnoticed” nature of the scheme by Africans, and other characterizations of Africans’ views go unsubstantiated (89–90). Westcott notes the coerced movement of large numbers of Africans to make way for the scheme, but the apparent limitations of the archive render this retelling somewhat perfunctory. In this section, Westcott also documents the impediments to success. The difficulty of terrain and the inadequacy of equipment was such that workers joked, “give us the job and we’ll finish the tools” (101).

Chapters 6 and 7 reveal the growing realization on the part of British authorities in London that their scheme was foundering. They discovered that the United Africa Company, which acted as the agent for the project, did not so much cook the books as neglect to maintain any. Control shifted to the Overseas Food Corporation, whose role in colonial development, parallel to and sometimes in competition with the Colonial Office, was particularly eye-opening. Against the backdrop of changing political and economic environments in Britain and Tanganyika, the only thing that united divided ministries was their unwillingness to retreat from the project.

The following two chapters describe persistent failures: disappointing yields, missed targets, dramatic overruns of costs. Here, Westcott also explains how the scheme came to assume a wider significance, partly because it coincided with the run-up to the 1951 general election, before which parliamentary debates and media interventions gave the Conservative Party the opportunity to portray the scheme as the inevitable product of a purportedly socialist economy. Desperate to salvage the project, ministers and civil servants speculated about geo-engineering and suggested a seven-year wind-down of the project to avoid the appearance of failure.

In the final chapter, Westcott lays the blame for the project's shortcomings on the failures to generate accurate estimates of costs and risks, poor knowledge of Tanganyika's environment, the speed of execution, and the politics that drove implementation. Westcott concludes that the winners in all of this were “expatriate British enterprises, illustrating again the way the imperial economy operated to the benefit of British capitalism” (195). Although Westcott centers *Imperialism and Development* on politics rather than expertise, the intriguing entanglements of state, industry, and finance described suggest further avenues of study in relation to the kinds of private expertise that were mobilized to counter more local (if still colonial) scientific knowledge and the evolving relationship between capitalism and colonialism.

Westcott draws compelling parallels between Tanganyika's experience during the immediate postwar and the global proliferation of megaprojects that presumed the transplantability of methods, tools, and labor. In the conclusion, Westcott notes the irony of the national state's own development failures in Tanzania during the late 1960s and 1970s but does not discuss or speculate about any concrete relationships between these and the groundnut scheme. Westcott's thorough narrative, thoughtful mediations on development, close reading of colonial archives, and provocative revelations about public and private entanglements and competition to fashion postwar empire make *Imperialism and Development* a work that should interest scholars of late colonialism, development, and East Africa.

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