

2019

H-Diplo

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Roundtable Review

Volume XX, No. 45

8 July 2019

Roundtable Editors: Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins and Diane Labrosse

Roundtable and Web Production Editor: George Fujii

Alden Young. *Transforming Sudan: Decolonization. Economic Development, and State Formation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. ISBN: 9781107172494 (hardback).

URL: <https://hdiplo.org/to/RT20-45>

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Introduction by Elleni Centime Zeleke, Columbia University

Alden Young's book *Transforming Sudan* was written at the confluence of a number of debates that have dominated African studies over the past decade. Young explores the recently revived but old debate about the role of development economics and the developmental state in alleviating poverty in Africa.¹ He also discusses the proposition that has come to be associated with the work of Frederick Cooper and Gary Wilder that other possibilities besides the nation-state form existed for colonized people during the period of early decolonization from the 1930s to the 1960s.² Finally, Young engages with Timothy Mitchell's work in *Rule of Experts*, where Mitchell suggests that the idea and discourse of the economy played a crucial role in constituting the practices of market exchange as a territorially bound and statically measurable entity within the nation-state.³

The contributions to this roundtable on *Transforming Sudan* also traverse these aforementioned debates, focusing on the tensions generated by the questions raised within them, and the success with which Young is able to synthesize these concerns by considering them. Kevin Donovan's review, which reminds us that it has been over a decade since A.G. Hopkins lamented the decline of African economic history as a field of study that was replaced by the turn towards cultural studies—a field whose themes and concerns Hopkins saw as lying outside of the African continent, is telling. For Donovan, *Transforming Sudan* ought to be considered a touchstone in African studies in that it provides us with a cultural history of the very idea of the economy and so bridges Hopkins's focus on the economy with the cultural turn, by telling us a story about the culture of practicing economics in an African context. Following this claim, Donovan is then able to connect Young's book to Mitchell's concern that links the rise of the nation-state with the rise of the social sciences as a dominant mode of knowledge production in the modern world.

For Mitchell, the economy is not just a way of representing the world but a way of constituting the practices of the nation-state into the social form we now know it to be. In Sudan, the new sciences of the economy constructed racial divisions by discursively associating some groups of people (as opposed to others) with productive markets, by drawing lines in the sand between contributing and non-contributing members of the nascent Sudanese nation-state. Sudan was conceived as a marketplace of exchange and production. The manner in which this unfolded demonstrates connections between the modern bureaucratic state and the nation-state as formed through the processes of decolonization. For Marie Grace Brown, this insight is Alden Young's key contribution to African studies. Young fruitfully troubles the boundaries between colonial and postcolonial state formation. Consequently, Brown sees Young as urgently asking us to search for alternative futures in the moment of territorially bound decolonization. Similarly, Tinashe Nyamunda's review is also less interested in thinking about the heroes of national independence and more interested in understanding how

¹ Thandike Mkandawire, "Thinking about Developmental States in Africa," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 25:3 (2001): 289-313.

² Fred Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014). Gary Wilder, *Freedom time: Negritude, decolonization, and the future of the world* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

³ Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, and Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

bureaucrats became central to the making of the African nation-state. The bureaucrat is a key figure, one that helps us understand the tools that were available to Africans as they began to imagine what could be transformed within the ambit of inherited multi-ethnic and multi-cultural post-colonial entities.

Since the 1980s, Africa has witnessed the near collapse of robust national economic planning and a concomitant rise of neo-liberalism. And yet, both within this roundtable and within Young's book there is an ambivalence about whether this should leave us nostalgic for early Third World nationalism, and for the type of knowledge produced by a state where development economics might have pride of place. The question remains for us: Can we find challenges to our contemporary neo-colonial state-system by uncovering the sediments of an alternative future buried in the moment of early decolonization? In a recent review of Fred Cooper's work on African decolonization, Richard Drayton asks us to consider whether the failures of the African nation-state might not be better found in an examination of the relations of market exchange between Africa and elsewhere, relations that continue to be dominated by commodity brokers in Paris, London, and New York.⁴ Fittingly, it is to this concern that Young's new research will turn. In the meantime, what this roundtable and Young's current book teach us is that any attempt to address poverty alleviation in Africa must also historicize the so-called objectivity of the economic sciences. This will help us clarify the ways in which the structure of market relations, whether state-led or neo-liberal, are less about our natural tendency to truck and barter and more the outcome of deliberate political decisions and the human folly that lies therein.

Participants:

Alden Young is a political and economic historian of Africa. He is particularly interested in the ways in which Africans participated in the creation of the current international order. Starting in July 2019, Young will be an assistant professor of African American Studies and a faculty member in the International Institute at UCLA. In 2019-2020, Young will be a member of the School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. Previously, he was an assistant professor in African History and the Director of the Africana Studies Program at Drexel University. His first book, *Transforming Sudan: Decolonisation, Economic Development and State Formation*, was published by Cambridge University Press in December 2017.

Elleni Centime Zeleke is an Assistant Professor in Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies at Columbia University. Her book *Ethiopia in Theory: Knowledge Production and Social Change: 1964-2016* will be out from Brill in December 2019 and in paperback from Haymarket Books in December 2020. Her work seeks to understand the appropriation and indigenization of Marxist and mainstream social science ideas in an Ethiopian and African context.

Marie Grace Brown Marie Grace Brown is an Associate Professor of Middle East History at the University of Kansas. Her award-winning first book, *Khartoum at Night: Fashion and Body Politics in Imperial Sudan* (Stanford University Press, 2017), argues that Sudanese women used fashion and their bodies to mark and make meaning of the shifting sociopolitical systems of imperial rule. Her research has been supported by grants and fellowships from the American Association of University Women, the Social Science Research Council, and the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation.

⁴ Richard Drayton, "Federal Utopias and the Realities of Imperial Power," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 37:2 (2017): 401-406.

Kevin Donovan is a Lecturer in the Centre of African Studies at the University of Edinburgh. He works on the history and anthropology of smuggling, central banks, infrastructure, and money.

Tinashe Nyamunda is senior lecturer in History within the School of the Humanities at Sol Plaatje University. Previously, he was a National Research Foundation Free Standing Postdoctoral Fellow based at the International Studies Group at the University of the Free State, South Africa. Among several articles in journals such as *Imperial and Commonwealth History*, *African Economic History*, the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, among others, he is the author of *Finance, Settlers and Empire: Money, Sanctions and War Economy in Colonial Zimbabwe* (Routledge: forthcoming 2019). He also co-edited with Richard Saunders *Facets of Power: Politics, Profits and People in the Making of Zimbabwe's Blood Diamonds* (Harare: Weaver Press, and Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2016).

Review by Marie Grace Brown, University of Kansas

It is a privilege to be asked to comment on Alden Young's *Transforming Sudan: Decolonization, Economic Development, and State Formation*. Young and I belong to the same recent wave of American scholars of Sudan and our paths have crossed numerous times over the past decade. Thus, it is with the sense of being a fellow traveler that I respond to this ambitious and compelling work.

Young opens with a deceptively simple question, "Why Sudan?" The answer lies in Sudan's particular racial conception of itself as a nation and the economic policy that resulted from this imagining. Unlike their neighbors in sub-Saharan Africa, Sudanese nationalists invented a "creole identity" of *Sudani-ness* that subsumed ethnic and regional differences along with any attempts at creating regional autonomy or federations (16). Following this logic, *Transforming Sudan* recasts the familiar political narrative of decolonization into a story of economic and managerial choices in which the "project of governing Sudan was transformed from the management of a collection of distinct populations ... to the management of a national economy made up of equal individuals, whose preferences policy makers assumed could be aggregated and even maximized" (16). Young takes care to avoid presenting Sudan as merely an exceptional case study or outlier. Instead, *Transforming Sudan* offers a model for rereading economic concepts and development theory as "valuable tools for inferring the lived conditions of historical actors" (151).

The book's core argument focuses on the constructed-ness of the economic imagination and its overlap with the parallel development of the national imagination. Young offers a sweeping definition of "economic imaginaries" as "a type of sociotechnical imaginary that ... [was] made possible or constrained by the different ways in which the physical structure of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan was built, the networks of commercial production ... and the arrangement of people, finance, expertise, and violence that ultimately determined how wealth was distributed and controlled" (26). Drawing on the writing of one of Sudan's first economic policy makers, Sa 'ad al-Din Fawzi, Young explains, "the economy did not simply grow out of geography as a sort of natural feature, but rather was tied to political concepts and institution building" (93). This resistance to a "natural" economy, one that is both based in nature/geography and inherent or primordial, underscores the dynamism of the postcolonial period. Young convincingly argues that the development of economics as a discipline in Sudan was a highly politicized process that worked hand in hand with the re-imagining and establishment of Sudan as a unified independent state. Those who imagined Sudan as a singular state (thereby glossing over local particularities and inequities), imagined and enacted economic policies that ran along the same lines. No surprise then that in the years leading up to and immediately following independence, the political and economic elite and the politically and economically rich geographies (the Omdurman-Kosti-Sennar triangle) overlapped.

The third chapter, "Calculable Development" stands as a pivotal moment in *Transforming Sudan's* narrative and a prime example of Young's analytic process. Here Young demonstrates how a careful reading of *the form* of archival documents, in addition to their content, reveals deep biases within budgets. Contrary to common assumptions, Young instructs, "budgets ... are chock full of ideology –framing questions of who, what, and where are worthy of receiving resources of the state" (20). In this instance, members of the Jongeli Investigation Team, charged with crafting proposals for the economic development of the south, disagreed on whether to render their report in numbers or prose; a difference, Young argues, not just of methods but of the very aims of development: "Those who favored planning in prose believed that the purpose of the development process was to imagine potentially different futures, while those who favored planning with numbers believed that the function of planning was to use past historical data to develop linear projections

into the future” (77). Put another way, was the goal of development to construct a unified national identity or raise revenues? In the end, imagined possible futures ceded to quantifiable figures and a centralized, territorially defined economy.

A narrative that turns on economic markers has the potential to recalibrate the boundaries between colonial and post-colonial periods. Young makes a strong case for the hand-in-glove relationship between politics and the economic imagination, though one needs to be familiar with Sudanese history to follow many of the references to political events. Even so, the pacing and periodization of *Transforming Sudan* produces unexpected moments of continuity and disruption. Young identifies the period of 1945-1951 as the start of imagining and developing Sudan as a territorially defined economy. Still unanswered, for Sudanese officials and economists, was the question of where political and economic authority would be located. This moment was followed by an intense and ungainly period of Sudanization and self-government in which British administrators and experts were replaced by Sudanese. Young acknowledges this shift from the imperial perspective when he acknowledges finance officials’ “evolution from being the expatriate officials of a wider empire to the servants of a self-governing state” (87-88). However, I wanted to know more of the intellectual (and political) trajectory of the newly promoted Sudanese experts. Indeed, the chapter, “The New Finance Officials,” makes a bold choice to straddle the moment of independence, focusing on events from 1954-1958. In contrast to the other chapters in which Young presents multiple economic imaginaries, here the dominance of the elites of the Omdurman-Kosti-Sennar triangle and their investment in both cotton and a territorially defined economy are presented without opposition. Yet I was left wondering if the optimism of independence brought any alternate imagined economies from other groups, especially those who envisioned and worked for alternate national formations.

I’d like to push Young even further on the question of continuity and legacy. In his conclusion, he characterizes both British and Sudanese officials as “reasonable men, men who when tasked with the object of developing Sudan frequently fell back on similar choices, using similar calculative tools.” This echoes Fawzi’s assertion that economies are negotiated from political philosophies, not so-called natural geographies. Here, Young finds “commonalities ... across the colonialism-nationalism divide” and notes that “serious ruptures” occurred outside the standard political timeline of colonialism, nationalism, civilian and military governments (148). This is a critical insight; one that points to the stickiness of the economic imagination even as national identities changed. I wish Young had been more deliberate or explicit on how his work disrupts accepted chronologies. Viewed through economic imaginings rather than political ones, were the African anti-colonial movements of the mid-twentieth century less revolutionary than they appear? Conceived in a world of territorial development theories, did independent African states repackage old economic wine in new political bottles?

Nearly a decade ago, the distinguished historian A.G. Hopkins lamented the decline of the very field he helped to pioneer: “What has happened to the study of Africa’s economic history?”¹ Death by neglect, he concluded, blaming a more general decline of economic history since the 1980s and the more specifically Africanist turn “from material to cultural considerations.” The “rise to prominence of postmodernism,” he wrote, turned his disciplinary colleagues to “cultural analysis, which was removed from economic considerations and, though historical in intent, was sometimes defective in its use of historical sources.” Decades of social and cultural history were not merely defective, in his view, there were misleading, focusing on “themes that have their origins in the Western world rather than in Africa.” And yet, poverty—which Hopkins suggested was the central object of African economic history—did not disappear from the world, even if “historians abolished poverty by the simple device of taking it off the agenda.”²

Despite its polemical opening, Hopkins’s article was not primarily concerned with condemning his colleagues who followed the cultural turn; rather, it “sound[ed] a trumpet... to alert historians” to the work being done on the other side of campus, especially by the “new institutional history” carried out by economists.³ It was to these economists—all in good standing with their orthodox, positivist colleagues – that African historians should turn for writing economic histories of the continent, Hopkins argued. The economists might learn a thing or two from historians—the instability of ethnicity, for instance—and they might be more cautious with their data, but by and large, the onus was on historians to come to terms with “the new economic history of Africa” and “help to eliminate poverty among the bottom billion people in Africa.”⁴

Something certainly rings true in Hopkins’s diagnosis: his 1973 *Economic History of West Africa* is obviously the product of a very different intellectual milieu than what prevailed in the subsequent decades.⁵ Yet while overtly economic issues waned – and the quantitative analysis valorized by Hopkins is rarely pursued – much of the best social, cultural, and intellectual history of the past decades has remained tied to historical materialism. Rather than neglecting the economic, historians have shown the manner in which land disputes, distributional concerns, changes in labor, and crises of social reproduction have animated a range of cultural production and how the same putatively economic issues have been shaped by those cultural practices that economists routinely neglect. African historians, in other words, have not ignored the economic; rather, they have shown the inadequacy of purifying the economy from other realms of life, such as religious commitments or gendered norms.

¹ A. G. Hopkins, “The New Economic History of Africa,” *The Journal of African History* 50:2 (July 2009): 155-177, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853709990041>.

² Hopkins, 157.

³ And some more economically minded political scientists. The quotation is from Hopkins, 155.

⁴ Hopkins, 177.

⁵ A.G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London: Routledge, 1973).

Going forward, Alden Young's *Transforming Sudan* is sure to be a touchstone, not because it necessarily heeds Hopkins's trumpet, nor because it reflects current strands of African history, but because it might serve as a bridge between—and subtle critique of—the two. His careful exposition shows how 'the economy' was both made thinkable and cultivated in decolonizing Sudan. Rather than institutional economists, the central inspiration for this is the postcolonial theorist Timothy Mitchell, whose own work has called attention to the rationalities, techniques, and infrastructure through which we have come to presume there is something called 'the economy' that is more-or-less coterminous with the nation-state and its territory.⁶ Sudan is an apt place for this approach, since it was administered before independence in a unique fashion as a "condominium," leading imperial officials to view it less on its own than as a province of Egypt or even a department within the Egyptian government. "Getting to the point where colonial or postcolonial officials in Sudan would even ask what was good for the Sudanese economy," Young writes, "was a long process" (54).

Analyzing a generation of Sudanese and British economists and bureaucrats, Young shows how those objects taken for granted by mainstream economics and economic history—such as calculating statistics or developing national plans—were the result of particular intellectual cultures, bureaucratic struggles, and knowledge infrastructures. By honing in on the decade on either side of Sudanese independence in 1956, he presents a very different account of African states than those that emerged from research in Francophone Africa in the 1980s and foreground the aesthetic and violent exercise of power.

These financial officials shared a vocabulary and a vision for the country. Adopting statistical, budgetary, and planning methods gave them a series of cognitive and technical infrastructure from which to advance their position within the state, eventually centralizing power through changes to the budgetary process. They were committed to cotton, seeing its expanded export as the key to development for the entire country. The trouble was, their ways of knowing the Sudanese economy—quantitative budget surpluses or national income per capita—were aggregative and averaging, leading official figures to omit vast sub-national inequalities. Local knowledge and preferences, too, were neglected in favor of centralized project budgeting, design, and implementation. Massive investments in an agricultural archipelago were justified as necessary and beneficial to the entire nation, but what rewards there were excluded large swaths of the population and territory.

Young's focus is the economic and financial ways of knowing that facilitated the denigration of equality in favor of growth, yet he acknowledges that "the economic was always refracted through [the planners'] own social imaginations" (16). The finance officials who populated the key offices overwhelmingly hailed from the same background as the country's commercial and political elite, namely the well-to-do north. *Transforming Sudan* explicates how seemingly objective technocratic means could facilitate uneven development within Sudan; this was not so much because partisans wielded them cynically, but because state planners lacked a discourse or infrastructure for the centering of equitable development. More attention to the social world of the planners—their working culture, their leisurely pursuits, their moral universe—would allow us to more clearly grasp what Young calls the "cultural history of political economy" (18).

It may also elucidate the faltering efforts to know and govern the economy. Across the continent, by the mid-1970s, the more muscular modernization ethos of the immediate decolonization period gave way. By 1975, economic performances that had kept pace with world averages slowed and then collapsed. There were world-

⁶ Timothy Mitchell, "Fixing the Economy," *Cultural Studies* 12:1 (January 1998): 82-101, <https://doi.org/10.1080/095023898335627>.

systemic reasons for this—declining returns to commodity exports, shifting international trade regimes, and extended drought among them—and Young usefully places Sudanese history within the renewed historical interest in the New International Economic Order, showing that the “limitations of national development as a project were readily apparent to Sudanese officials even during decolonization’s moment of possibility” (129).

Yet in East Africa, which is the subject of my work, it was not merely changes to global capitalism or flawed state planning that limited the project of national development. What I think of as the unmaking of ‘the economy’—the subversion of regulation, the escape from enumeration, and the pluralization of value—also unfolded on more local scales. One of the reasons that the economy could be so quickly undone is that stylized facts, national statistics, and planning heuristics translated so poorly into popular consciousness in East Africa. Planning expertise exerted limited influence on popular sensibilities or economic practices. Economically loyal citizens—those whose production was willingly amenable to state measurement and expropriation, and whose consumptive circuits were readily routed through state channels (or at least did not escape the state’s gaze)—were in short supply. There is good reason for this. The parsimony and thinness of the colonial state was more or less adopted by the postcolonial national bourgeoisie; likewise, citizens carried forth repertoires of behavior and relations that eluded containment within the state’s regulatory apparatus. The art of being neither economic subject nor citizen was often a sensible response to predation and exploitation. Moreover, it was often a viable—even lucrative—way of providing for oneself and one’s own.

My point is not so much about the limited enumeration, legitimacy, or compulsion of postcolonial states that sought to manufacture and manage national economies. Rather, it is about the divergent economic ethics that existed within populations and across borders. Manifold ideas about work, wealth, and well-being—precisely those “cultural considerations” decried by Hopkins—conflicted with those goals and techniques available to East African technocrats.

Young’s book suggests a similar dynamic at play in Sudan. Finance officials, for instance, directed their calculative attentions to cotton, ignoring the herds of cattle held by pastoralists. *Transforming Sudan* justifiably sees this as indicative of the cultural world of riverine finance officials who were inordinately focused on cotton. They viewed nomadic herding with more than a whiff of elitist conceit, seeing herding as based in mere “social prestige” rather than proper “economic value” (as the *1961/62 Ten Year Plan* put it) (2).

Yet, whether finance officials recognized it or not, the investment in cattle by Sudan’s nomads was not merely about prestige, status, and reputation. Although it may have been outside economists’ purview, it was decidedly not extra-economic. Instead, cultural attachment to cattle unified social, economic, and political concerns. As E. E. Evans-Pritchard put it in his seminal interwar study of the Nuer, “*cherchez la vache* is the best advice that can be given to those who desire to understand Nuer behaviour.”⁷ The limited state attention to cattle, I am suggesting, must be understood as emerging not merely from the disinterest of officialdom, but from a history of interaction between state officials and pastoral communities. This is a history riven by misunderstanding, expropriation, and violence, and therefore generative of local practices that limit the state’s economic regulation. But, as Sharon Hutchinson importantly emphasized in her own study of the Nuer in

⁷ E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

the 1980s, it is a history that also includes processes of mutual reciprocation, such as the employment on cotton plantations or within police and military bureaucracies of thousands of men from populations who had previously been presumed to be pastoral.⁸

Through writing such a clear-sighted history of Sudanese economic planning, Young opens the way for a new generation of scholarship that can examine the tactics and techniques through which the rationalities and cultures of bureaucracy articulate with communities under their authority. It can symmetrically analyze the infrastructure, institutions, and expertise of postcolonial states and those citizens who warily watched them. Such an approach would embrace the local meaning of development, and the particular social structures and vernacular idioms through which it is encountered. In other words, the ethnography and microhistory at which African history excels are not anathema to a new African economic history; they are foundational to understanding the perturbations of that history.

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⁸ Sharon Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

The Pitfalls of the Developmental State: The Fate of the Sudanese Economic Model

I have lately been grappling with the question of how African states came into being, not just as political, but especially as economic territorial units. Connected to this are questions of how experts, especially economists, came to influence and account for what became national economies. At the centre of the state, economy and society are critical to questions of development and welfare. How did independent African countries make sense of the postcolonial condition and what mechanisms did they deploy to transform themselves into coherent nations of multiple but entangled identities with disparate circumstance but common material goals united by the logic of a national economy? As I grappled with these issues, a great new monograph informed by an impressive historiography arrived. The author grounds his work in an archivally based history of the transformation of the Sudan into an economic unit between the 1940s and the 1960s. Alden Young's *Transforming Sudan: Decolonization, Economic Development, and State Formation* is centred on addressing these questions using the history of a territory that transformed from being an Anglo-Egyptian Sudan condominium into the independent state of Sudan.

The ideological making of the colonial—and post-colonial—state

Young's book is "concerned primarily not with the heroes of the independence movement in Sudan, but with the officials who strove to govern Sudan after January 1, 1956" (vii), the date at which that country (now separated into two countries) attained its political independence. This is only slightly misleading, as Young brilliantly traces Sudan's Anglo-Egyptian administrative history precisely to map out how colonialism transformed itself through officials who used the logic of economic development to govern and ironically further embed colonial relations of exchange in the a postcolonial setting. Among the critical questions he addresses is: what is an economy? But to address this question, Young first determines the nature of an African nation-state in which an economy is the central organ that breathes life into it. Still a problem that political science has to continue examining, Young observes that "[d]espite all of the political and intellectual activity that aimed to find alternatives to the nation-state, it still emerged as the chosen, almost ready-made, or modular solution at independence, as one country after another emerged from European colonialism" (15). In this setting, the infrastructure of an economy had been established in ways that were difficult to reconceptualise for early planners, as the 'economy' was "represented as a combination of the aggregate figures collected by the state's statistical agency" (16).

To facilitate economic growth, the governments' role was to develop infrastructure and to support policies that would encourage economic activities. Aggregate figures measured major exports, particularly cotton, in relation to domestic consumption and imports. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was then calculated based on these national income accounts to discover rates of economic growth and determine the success of the government. Building upon this analysis, Young challenges theories that only "imagine the African state as rapacious and predatory, with official institutions serving little purpose other than legitimization and patronage." Although the point "is not to argue that postcolonial states are not rapacious," the key thesis of the book lies in the ability of its author to use economic logic, imaginaries and infrastructures, in combination with his archival research into the Sudan to "question whether the study of their institutions can be dismissed so easily" (19). This background sets up what makes the book so interesting, that the making of colonial and the inherited postcolonial states was "chock full of ideology—framing questions of who, what, and where are

worthy of receiving the resources of the state” (19). Added to this, I suppose, is where, why, how, and for what purpose the state derives its resources, questions adequately addressed in the book in the case of Sudan.

Young traces the history of the territory from its precolonial polities to its consolidation as disparate parts of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. He argues that the governance of pre-war Sudan as separate regions with their own economies provided little space in which to imagine it as unified territory. Barely a country, “the most consequential economic impact of ‘indirect rule’ was the creation of ‘the closed door policy’ [which separated northern Arabs and Africans to the south] between 1922 and 1930” (35). Indeed, there were prominent closed districts such as the Nuba Mountains, the Beja Mountains, Blue Nile State and parts of Darfur. The separation of Arab from African “closed districts” in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan formalised “a vision of the country as an economic core surrounded by semi-autonomous regional economies that, when they interacted with the core at all served primarily as labour reserves” (35).

Colonial (and Post-Colonial) Economic Planning and the Emergence of a Territorial Perspective

But to manage this strategic colony which was maintained to defend the Nile from the south-east and defend the British military bases up north, the colony had to contribute towards its sustenance while supplying the metropole with critical raw materials, and the answer came through irrigated cotton production. Such plans as the Sudan Gezira scheme were the product of the imperial imaginary, conceived before the First World War, but only becoming fully operational after the construction of the Sennar dam and the laying of irrigation canals in 1926 (36). This planted the seeds of the imagination of a Sudan territory unified as a self-contained economic unit in a post-World War Two context. A resident government, increasingly controlled by the British at Khartoum could, while meeting the interests of textile manufacturers in Lancashire, allow its subjects economic activities and benefit from the taxes imposed. Colonial economic nationalism, based on British raw material and Sudan’s revenue needs, increasingly became anchored on developing irrigation for the expansion of cotton cultivation.

Young then expands his analysis to examine how the establishment of irrigable cotton cultivation became the subject of economic planning and the basis upon which a territorial perspective became entrenched by British colonial officials residing in Khartoum. The basis of his argument is that the state and nation of Sudan arose out of the British colonial administrators’ desire to define a self-contained economic entity that could both supply metropolitan markets in a period where Britain needed sterling markets to save on dollars, but also one that could pay its own way. If cotton cultivation was expanded sufficiently enough to sustain fiscal receipts to a state bureaucracy, then that machinery would continue ensuring that production always continued to keep the system going. If production was disrupted, then revenue to the state would be compromised. If the state did not function properly, it would not be able to properly facilitate the development and maintenance of infrastructure necessary for production for the market.

But what was this market and how did the state maintain it? What does the nature and structure of the state mean for Sudan and what are its legacies? These questions are at the heart of the remaining chapters in Young’s book. The market, as perceived by colonial administrators, was primarily the British economy in a post-Second World War context. Forces surrounding British colonial policy heavily influenced how the economy of Sudan came to be shaped and how a state arose out of it. Even as the country attained its independence, its dependency on cotton production, no longer just for Britain but for the world market which ostensibly tended to be the global north, increased.

To manage the state, accounting, quantifying production, and determining tax income receipts became the basis of planning. Development was heavily anchored on ways in which production could be increased in the primary production of cotton. Earning foreign exchange became the primary motivation of state-building, and the country would borrow and invest in dams, construction of road, rail, water-based, hydroelectric, and irrigation infrastructure to achieve this.

Guided by an economising logic, the planning infrastructure was heavily dependent on calculating what could be earned from exporting cotton. So, what was transformed in Sudan by the 1960s was not so much the colonial economy as it was the people who planned and managed it at independence. Young makes an important observation in demonstrating the extent to which economic development was at the centre of state formation in Sudan, and that the only transformation worth noting before the 1960s is that of the planning regime that was inherited and which endured after independence. Crucially, his case study of Sudan provides an important example from which to appreciate developments in other contexts on the African continent.

The Role of the Empire's Currency

Young's focus is limited to questions of planning and development, for which he makes a very compelling case, but he could have engaged more with the role of currency to make his case clearer. The anchoring of colonial currencies with that of empire, and the subsequent peg against the U.S. dollar after the mid-1940s, were an important mechanism in setting up these economising infrastructures. In this sense, then, planning was almost entirely based on earning as much of the anchor currency as possible to balance trade and maintain the value of the local currency.

In a context where prices are determined by the markets of the so called developed countries, a hard-soft currency spectrum in which anchor currencies become the basis of economic pursuits in so-called developing countries endures. Primary production then strengthens the anchor currencies, while reinforcing dependency on prices and manufactured imports, all of which softens/weakens the currencies of countries such as Sudan. To sustain this relationship, African countries then formulate monetary and fiscal policies targeted at maintaining the value of their currencies and balancing their earnings to maintain required imports by producing what appeared to be their comparative advantage (but really is what the metropolitan economic centres have structured them to produce), primary products at prices exogenously determined. Although this is not as explicit as it should have been from the outset, it is very strongly implicit in the book's discussions about statistics, GDP and planning. It is an implicit thread that runs through all the chapters.

Transforming Sudan is timeous and a must have for anyone interested in different aspects of development and economic history. Young's engagement with the literature and fusion of that work with primary source material to provide a picture of Sudan in a specific period helps readers imagine African economies in different contexts and at different times. It also provides an excellent opportunity to evaluate the currency of economic planning using orthodox economic tools, especially with regard to their value in African economies.

Author's Response by Alden Young, Drexel University

First off, I would like to thank my reviewers for their critical generosity. They have each engaged the book thoughtfully, picking up in different ways on the strengths and limits of the framing of *Transforming Sudan*. I conceived of *Transforming Sudan*, however inchoately, after reading Timothy Mitchell's 2002 book, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, and Modernity*. In particular, I was struck by his claim that

“one important contribution to the making of the economy was the collapse of a global network of European and other empires. Before the 1930s it would have been difficult to describe something called the ‘British economy,’ for example, in part because the forms of trade, investment, currency, power, and knowledge that might be constituted as an economy were organized on an imperial rather than a national scale.”¹

This thesis shaped the contours of my dissertation, *Accounting for Decolonization: The Origins of the Sudanese Economy, 1945-1964* and later the book under review.² My driving question was to examine how the process of economy-making shaped state-formation. In particular, I wanted to see how finance and economic officials in Sudan wrestled with the dual mandate to develop a Sudanese economy and to bind that economy to the territory of Sudan in the postcolonial moment. Studying the official mind of finance and economics officials in Khartoum, I show what the state was able to see and what it either could not see or choose willfully not to see. I then demonstrate how decisions to measure, count and to see were informed by political economy. In contrast to the view of social sciences such as political science and economics, I argue that political economy cannot be parsed into politics and economics. Instead of being corrupt or incompetent, the colonial and later Sudanese officials I studied frequently carried out their measurements and made their calculations according to economic and accounting rules as they understood them. Rather than externalities intruding on the minds of Sudanese planners as a result of Sudanese society, political, racial and cultural assumptions were deeply embedded in the various instruments of measurement and calculation circulating from the global north that these officials deployed in the development of Sudan.

In trying to answer how the formation of the economy and the nation-state were related, the narrative of *Transforming Sudan* was bounded by the contours of the Ministry of Finance. This limitation is a criticism picked up by all three reviewers in different ways. Marie Brown laments the lack of a discussion of the intellectual formation and trajectories of Sudanese intellectuals and policymakers. Kevin Donovan asks about all of the economic activity and commercial transactions that escape the attention of the state and wonders whether an accounting of these activities alters the nature and trajectory of our story. Finally, Tinashe Nyamunda asks if our understanding of the modern Sudanese economy would be different if we traced the need to accumulate currencies such as the Pound Sterling and the dollar in economic decision-making. In different ways each of the reviewers is asking me to expand the story beyond the state and to trace the various actors as they traversed global networks. In *Transforming Sudan* one of the methodological choices I made was to attempt to write a global history without tracing the transnational networks of development in which the

¹ Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, and Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 6.

² Alden Young, “Accounting for Decolonization: The Origins of the Sudanese Economy, 1945-1964,” (Princeton: Princeton University, 2013).

various actors were involved. Instead, I attempted to resist mobility in favor of the argument that we can see the global from Khartoum. I argue that the global itself is inscribed inside instruments of development such as budgets, plans, national accounts, and surveys. But one way of highlighting the very Sudanese-ness of the story is to refuse the impulse to privilege a narrative of the mobility of the actors and objects.

Yet, I take this criticism to heart and as I work on my next project, which is tentatively entitled *Elite Retreat: Sudanese Political Economy in the Age of Dollar Hegemony*. I intend to explicitly start with the view of the Sudanese economy outside of the state, looking through the eyes of intellectuals, businessmen, and the circulating U.S. dollars. I am interested in thinking about how the power of the U.S. dollar and its connections to global markets constrained Sudanese political actors even as during the nineties many of those actors articulated a revisionist and frequently at least rhetorically anti-systemic international relations in regard to the United States and its role in the Middle East. What were the global and local networks of power symbolized by the circulation of the dollar that made reimagining Sudanese society and its role in the world so difficult? What were the paths not taken or possibilities not seized?