



# Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: firearms, culture and public order

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this decline became a feature in all countries where the IWW managed to establish itself before the First World War. One of its main causes was undoubtedly suppression by the state following the IWW's anti-war crusading (particularly in Australia as Verity Burgmann's chapter reveals) and conspicuous support for industrial militancy across North America and Oceania (as chapters 7 to 12 show). Another, equally important, cause, however, was the IWW's conflicted position in the ideological global order established in the wake of the 1917 Russian Revolution.

As the chapters by Matthew White and Wayne Thorpe respectively reveal, the IWW maintained a rocky relationship with Russian-controlled Communist parties during the interwar years, and only an ambivalent one with natural allies like the Berlin-based anarcho-syndicalist International Workingmen's Association. The effect was that American Wobblies became mired in a doctrinaire ideological neutrality that – in a post-war global landscape shaped by jingoism, red scares and economic protectionism – condemned them to long-term insularity (though as White also shows, this trend was briefly bucked during the 1930s with the onset of the Spanish Civil War).

The third and final section of the book aims to go 'beyond the union' (237) by looking at the wider cultural impact of the IWW in a variety of historical settings. Some chapters certainly fit this bill, particularly those dealing with the impact of Wobbly ideas on left-wing Irish republicanism (chapter 15) and Swedish interwar syndicalism (chapter 17), as well as the final chapter on the cultural afterlife of Joe Hill's musical repertoire. Other chapters, namely those by Lucien van der Walt and Paula de Angelis, appear more aligned with the contributions in the book's second section given their focus on IWW-affiliated unions in turn-of-the-century South Africa and the globetrotting militancy of a card-carrying Wobbly, respectively. This, however, is only a minor quirk that cannot distract from these chapters's – and ultimately the book's – remarkable accomplishment, that of restoring this alternately ignored and mythologized union back to its global dimension while humanizing the enthusiastic, brave and flawed men and women who gave it scope and shape.

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**Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: firearms, culture and public order,**  
by Saheed Aderinto, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2018, xvi + 300 pp.,  
\$35.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-25303-161-7

In this very well-researched book, Saheed Aderinto provides a detailed account of the omnipresence of guns in colonial Nigeria and argues that both its culture and society were shaped by the ownership of guns.

In chapter one, Aderinto reminds the reader of the intermittent presence of guns in modern-day Nigeria since the fifteenth century. For example, the kingdom of Borno which controlled the central transsaharan trade of slaves managed to obtain guns and

instructors from the Ottoman Empire to dominate the Lake Chad region at the end of the sixteenth century. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Kano was exchanging slaves for guns in order to wage war against its neighbours. The southern regions of modern-day Nigeria have also been in contact with guns since the fifteenth century because of the Portuguese presence on the Atlantic shores of Africa. In these regions in particular, guns progressively became part of local culture and were not only used to fight but also became part of rituals. For example, one could hear gunshots every time a new king was crowned in Oyo. Since the first chapter covers the precolonial period, would it be possible to learn more about other weapon cultures?

Focusing mainly on the colonial period, this book tries to write a social history of Nigeria through the usage of newspapers and colonial sources. Chapter two clearly shows that the British colonial authorities were responsible for the proliferation of guns in colonial Nigeria. During the 1920s, the British estimated that Nigerians owned around 500,000 Dane guns be it for hunting, religious purposes or prestige. Aderinto gives details about the attempts at regulating the proliferation of such guns and shows to what extent they failed, partly, because guns were used by the members of the Nigerian elite who tried to differentiate themselves from the rest of the colonial population. In chapter seven, Aderinto also mentions how the British colonial authorities tried to control arms of precision such as shotguns. The colonial authorities, however, effectively stopped counting the number of Dane guns in circulation in the colony. In both chapters two and seven, the social dimension of gun ownership is particularly well explored by the author who writes a very convincing social history of gun culture in colonial Nigeria. Similarly, chapter four shows how such weapons were used by colonial officers for game hunting and by security forces to maintain order. As a result, guns rapidly became a symbol of both prestige and authority. Rifles and guns became thus another masculine manifestation of social prestige. The author might have written a few more words about this gendered dimension but, arguably, the lack of sources might be responsible for such an omission.

Quite interestingly, the author stresses the 'economics of gunpowder' in a short chapter three. The history of gunpowder trade shows how the colonial government tried to benefit financially from this Nigerian gun culture. If they could not regulate the number of Dane Guns, the British colonial authorities could pragmatically make money from the gunpowder trade or gun licences sales as mentioned in chapter seven. Aderinto was right to stress the commercial dimension of the Nigerian colonial gun culture and this topic clearly deserves further investigation.

Aderinto also argues that this gun culture is partly responsible for the scale of mass killings during the colonial period. Thus, during the Women's War of 1929, 39 women of the south-east were killed by the Nigerian Police Force. In 1949, 21 miners from Enugu were also shot by the police. According to the author, it would be impossible to understand the rise of Nigerian nationalism without an analysis of the gun culture and society created by the British colonizers. This last argument developed in chapter five is convincing and the author manages to show the link between gun society and politics. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria* also argues that post World War Two political tensions were exacerbated by the omnipresence of guns. The 36 victims of the Kano revolt of 1953 can partly be seen as the logical consequence of such a gun culture. In a decade which saw the rise of regional and ethnic tensions in Nigeria, guns became an integral part of the problem of political violence in Nigeria. This last argument might seem a truism but the author who currently works in the United States of America is of course aware of its political dimension.

The strength of Aderinto's book also comes from the fact that it analyses everyday gun violence in 1950s and modern-day Nigeria. Rural and urban violent manifestations of this 1950s gun culture are thus explored in chapter six. The rural dimension of this violence is particularly interesting because it was unchecked and arguably under-reported. Violent crime was not limited to bank robberies but could also be found in border regions. As a result, Aderinto addresses the question of policing. The dilemma is still present in modern-day Nigeria: should the government allow private community policing when the levels of violence are rising? As elsewhere in Africa, guns are proliferating in modern Nigeria and the epilogue recognizes the difficulties faced by the Nigerian State to control the number of lethal arms circulating in the country. For the author, levels of violence were high during the colonial period but they cannot be compared to their postcolonial equivalent. It would be, as a consequence, difficult to compare both situations.

Aderinto has written a very persuasive book: not only did the omnipresence of weapons influence Nigerian colonial culture but it also created a gun society. This convincing argument reminds us that American political debates on firearm regulation and policing deserve to be historicized.

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**Survivor Transitional Narratives of Nazi-Era Destruction: the second liberation**, by Dennis B. Klein, London and New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, x + 278 pp., £85/\$114.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-35003-714-4

Dennis Klein's analysis of the emergence of a renewal in Jewish survivor accounts of the Nazi period sits in a temporal frame involving two significant socio-legal events. The first key is the series of legal proceedings against Nazi perpetrators known as the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials. The second, contemporaneous point of departure is the political and legal controversy surrounding the attempt in France and Germany to allow the statute of limitations (*la prescription*; *Verjährung*) for Nazi crimes to run out. Each socio-legal context, in its own way, brought to the fore debates about a collective willingness to forget Nazi atrocities, and the attempt by prominent Jewish intellectuals in particular, to combat any form of amnesia or amnesty for perpetrators.

The study focuses on the works of three such Jewish writers – Jean Améry, born Hans Meyer; Vladimir Jankélévitch, and Simon Wiesenthal – each of whom intervened in his own way into debates about memory, forgiveness and survival. The significance of these Jewish writers and their works is to be found in the fact that they entered these vital social, political, legal and moral debates through the very public means of writing. By making their thoughts on the issues surrounding Nazi atrocities, memory and forgetting, public and open in this way, they voiced not just their own personal ideas and experiences but granted permission and validation to others to express their stories of Jewish suffering. The underlying focus throughout the book is