

Education. (The word 'ART' in capitals was often used by alumni to describe what they had learned at Ndaleni.)

Ndaleni closed in 1981 and its surviving faculty member, Lorna Peirson, archived her former students' artworks, letters, and other miscellany. Yet, in Magaziner's book, the 1981 closure did not actually mark the end. In the epilogue, aptly titled 'The art of the past', Magaziner demonstrates the many ways in which some alumni, teachers, and art historians purposefully forgot Ndaleni or abbreviated its role in the creation of black artists in South Africa. Not only was the institution overshadowed by other training schools such as Cecil Skotnes' Polly Street and the Lutherans' Rorke's Drift, some of Ndaleni's artworks were simply lost in transit as they travelled from one site to another. Ultimately, what Magaziner's book demonstrates is that we should read with suspicion any volume or moment that purports to represent something called 'Contemporary South African Art', since this category is loaded with not just incompleteness but with deliberate forgetfulness.

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A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE IN CENTRAL AFRICA

Searching for Boko Haram: A History of Violence in Central Africa.

By Scott MacEachern.

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Searching for Boko Haram offers a summary of research led by archaeologists in the *extrême-nord* region of Cameroon since the 1980s. Based on Scott MacEachern's personal experience in the region, this book aims at providing up-to-date background information to journalists and academics studying the Boko Haram insurgency. The years spent in the field make this study invaluable for those interested in the Cameroonian dimension of Boko Haram. Indeed, MacEachern has been working as an archaeologist in Northern Cameroon since 1990 and his analysis of the complex and varied Northern Cameroonian societies is extremely well-written. It is worth noting, however, that *Searching for Boko Haram* hardly examines modern North-Eastern Nigerian history; MacEachern relies on sources he gathered in Northern Cameroon and secondary sources on Nigeria. The introduction makes a very clear point: this is not merely another publication on Boko Haram but rather one that focuses on the 'cultural logics within which violence takes place' (26).

Chapter Two provides an archaeological and historical background that stretches well before the origins of Boko Haram. In very clear language, the author describes the climatic history of the Sahara and the Lake Chad Basin. Beginning his narrative with the 'Green Sahara', the author delves into the history of the first populations living on the shores of Lake Mega-Chad. For example, he mentions that one of the oldest watercrafts in the world (built between 7,000 and 8,000 years ago) was discovered in Yobe, Nigeria.

Using linguistic and archaeological evidence, MacEachern shows that the populations in the region are of mixed origin. Even if not connected to Boko Haram or to the question of violence, this first chapter can be read as a fascinating history of the linguistic and cultural wealth of the Lake Chad region.

Chapter Three explores the deep history of the inhabitants of the Mandara mountains, which are located along the border between Cameroon and Nigeria. The ‘dichotomy [...] between mountains and plains’ seems to be a constant in the history of the region, as MacEachern reminds the reader in narrating the history of the mountain communities and that of the Muslim states located mainly in the plains (58). As an archaeologist who has regularly worked in the Mandara mountains, the author offers an abundance of detail about the early mountain populations. This chapter might be the best of the book, as the author is one of the only specialists of these Northern Cameroonian settlements. For example, MacEachern devotes a few pages to the history of the DGB (acronym for *diy-ged-bay*, ‘ruins of chiefly residence’ in Mafa) archaeological sites and uses it to explore 500-year-old concepts of political power.

Chapter Four focuses on the long history of slavery and uses the well-studied figure and twentieth-century slave raider Hamman Yaji to discuss the predatory nature of the states in the region. In contrast to the previous chapter, the author does not attempt to write a thorough history of the political and religious states in the plains. Devoting only one chapter to such a complex and debated topic might have been difficult. Instead, the author concentrates on the legacy of slavery. Slave raiding was rife in the region until the 1920s and MacEachern is right to point out the similarities between the actions of Boko Haram and those of past slave raiding societies.

Chapters Five and Six explore the nature of violence in the border communities of Northern Cameroon, and they rely very heavily on Cameroonian sources. Nigeria’s history of colonialism is mostly glossed over. The reader will thus learn much more about Cameroonian *coupeurs de route*, or bandits, than about the roots of violence in Borno, Nigeria where Boko Haram was born. Numerous studies have been undertaken on the Nigerian roots of the conflict and it would have been interesting to know the author’s opinion on those publications. Nonetheless, the Cameroonian angle that MacEachern presents will be useful to those who do not read French or do not have access to Cameroonian sources.

Finally, Chapter Seven summarizes the author’s main findings in *Searching for Boko Haram*. Written in very lucid prose, this last chapter could function as a stand-alone essay and shows to what extent MacEachern’s archaeological and historical arguments can inform our understanding of current violence in the region. Compared to other scholarship on Boko Haram, this short book is rather unique. In a context where most publications on the region focus solely on the last ten years of the Boko Haram conflict, MacEachern’s far-reaching conclusions — despite their Cameroonian focus — bring an archaeological dimension to our understanding of the region.

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