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Edward Kissi. *Revolution and Genocide in Ethiopia and Cambodia.* Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006. xxxvi + 187 pp. $77.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7391-0691-4; $27.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7391-1263-2.

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Where's the Beef?

In a conscious imitation of the groundbreaking work of comparative genocide by Robert Melson, Edward Kissi has made the laudable attempt to explore the same sets of questions for the less well-known events in Ethiopia and Cambodia in the late 1970s.[1] The approach adopted by Kissi is one commonly found in political science texts: he reports what others–journalists, government officials, and academic specialists–have said and then looks at how local circumstances undermine the application of general premises of several theoretical or legal approaches to the study of genocide. Kissi's conclusion that Cambodia experienced a genocide and that Ethiopia did not will surprise very few of those interested in the issues he explores. This text, however, delineates some important areas for further research and highlights a few questions that scholars of comparative genocide must increasingly grapple with in the current international legal environment.

Other than a workmanlike introduction and a brief conclusion, the book is divided thematically. It is thoroughly comparative. In the first chapter, Kissi sets the stage by analyzing "Society and State." His analysis of the differences between the two countries forms the basis for most of the divergences between the two experiences. "Growth and Dissemination of Revolutionary Ideas" is the subject of the second chapter. From there, Kissi moves on to the revolutionary events of the two countries. "State-terror and the Quest for Total Power" delineates the nature of the revolution in each nation. For the purposes of this list, the fifth chapter, "Determining and Prosecuting Genocide" will be at the heart of its members' interest in this work. Kissi concludes the analysis with an exploration of foreign relations and their impact on territorial politics.

Kissi's true area of expertise is Ethiopia and it shows. He certainly made a good-faith effort to fashion a genuinely comparative analysis, but the evidence he has marshaled is lopsided in some interesting ways. The treatment of Ethiopia relies on numerous personal interviews, but the secondary source support for his interpretation of events is extremely thin. Perhaps the sources do not exist (p. xviii), but the methodological contrast with Kissi's comprehensive use of the existing accounts of the situation in Cambodia is striking. His knowledge base also leads him to emphasize continuities in Ethiopia's experiences that few others would have recognized (p. 125). For example, the use of sources becomes particularly problematic in the chapter that focuses on genocide: a one-page newspaper article is given equivalent analytic weight to academic monographs (p. 119).

The author's background in Ethiopian issues is also at the heart of the book in another way. Kissi's underlying aim appears to be to defend the Ethiopian revolution from charges that, because it took place at approximately the same time (1975-79) and was also Marxist, it paralleled Cambodia in the practice of genocide (pp. 45-46). Several sections of the book read as explicit attempts to separate Ethiopia from the opprobrium heaped on the Democratic Republic of Kampuchea and on Marxist revolutions in general (pp. xv, 47-48, 53, 67, 98, 117, 123, 125, 129). Since the issue of whether all Marxist revolutions lead to genocide has faded from view (with only a few exceptions sunk by the poverty of its analysis), Kissi has made his argument implicitly rather than explicitly. As a result, the coherence of his comparisons and the justification for the work in the first place suffers.

Kissi's conclusions about the fruits of the revolutions he discusses are a bit deterministic. For Kissi, "the form that revolution took in Cambodia and Ethiopia depended largely on how the two revolutionary regimes acquired power" (p. 47). The degree of control over society achieved by the leaders also determined the magnitude of the changes undertaken. Ethiopia, Kissi contends, did not experience a "true" revolution, Marxist or otherwise. The only thing "revolutionary" about the rule of the Dergue was "its successful land reform pro-

gram" (p. 48). Downplaying the revolutionary character of events in Ethiopia underlies his rejection of charges of genocide. Kissi also argues that class was more important than race in Ethiopia while the reverse was true in Cambodia. If Ethiopia's revolution was not radical, Cambodia's was. Relying on Ben Kiernan's eight characteristics of the revolution in Cambodia, Kissi demonstrates the thoroughgoing, uncompromising plans of the Khmer Rouge to restructure society. Kissi also contrasts the coherence, training, and size of the leadership cadres of the two revolutions (pp. 53-57). The final issue raised in this chapter is the revolutionary role of the peasantry. He concludes that "the two revolutions were not peasant revolutions, but revolutions that sought peasant support when and where expedient for legitimacy and survival" (p. 71). Kissi successfully demonstrates the basis of this assertion; it is also the most interesting and useful of his observations, and deserves exploration in other contexts.

With regard to genocide, Kissi's conclusions are much more modest. A major factor in Kissi's determination that there was no genocide in Ethiopia is the fact that although the Dergue's application of violence was disproportionate, "political murders" were also committed by their opponents (p. 118). No such opposition to the Khmer Rouge existed: "Cambodia under Pol Pot earned its image in contemporary memory as a 'killing field"' (p. 117). Kissi's discussion of the course of genocide in Cambodia and Ethiopia is clearly geared toward the linked assertions that, in Ethiopia, only "armed political groups that opposed the Dergue" were the target of extreme violence, which means that they were guilty of crimes against humanity but not genocide as defined by the UN Genocide Convention (p. 129). Although Kissi takes the views of those who challenge whether the Khmer Rouge committed genocide seriously (pp. 108-109, 117), his conclusion that they did is far less nuanced or important a conclusion than the treatment of Ethiopia.

In style, the book is competent if a tad sterile. Unfortunately the publisher is Lexington Books, a division of Rowman and Littlefield. As with all their books that I encounter, you do not have to look very long or very hard to find printer errors as well as fragmented or ungrammatical sentences. The publisher's lack of professionalism also shows in the "select" bibliography. Seemingly, a majority of the authors referred to in the text are not found in the bibliography (although they are in the notes). The too-short length and too-steep price of the book–particularly for the hardback–also should be mentioned.

Kissi has made a contribution to the comparative study of genocide. The emphasis on rural issues in examining genocide comparatively deserves emulation. His exploration of the concept of politicide in the context of Ethiopia is also invaluable and expands our understanding of the use and misuse of this term. However, Kissi's conclusions will be of more interest and appear to be more relevant to those who are interested in comparative revolution rather than comparative genocide. At slightly less than half the length of Melson's monograph, Kissi's work does not provide the historical background and depth of analysis that makes the former book so important, if controversial, and the latter book so disappointing.

Note

[1]. Robert Melson, *Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

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