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*Biometric state: The global politics of identification and surveillance
in South Africa, 1850 to the present*

**(Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, 252 pp., bibl., index.
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I have been peripherally associated with this research project and have been aware of some of the paths that have converged to create this significant contribution to the history of science and technology in South Africa. In his account of the role of fingerprinting and the gathering of biometric statistics in South Africa throughout its history, Keith Breckenridge is able to consider both the centrality of South Africa in the biometric project but also look at the ways in which imperial networks of knowledge and control were formed – the repercussions of which resound in the present.

The narrative takes as its starting point the work of Francis Galton, an early proponent of biometrics and statistics with a special interest in the use of fingerprinting as a means of identification and verification. Rather than South Africa as being emblematic of the colonial encounter in terms of being shaped by imperial science and technology, Breckenridge argues that it was, in fact, Galton's experiences in South Africa contextualized by the brutal violence of frontier conflict and his own nascent racism that provided the inspiration

for his views of scientific racism, eugenics and the use of statistics to classify populations. His return to England provided Galton with an audience for his views which grew in influence, so much so, that he was able to persuade his more celebrated relative, Charles Darwin, dissuading the latter from the more egalitarian bent of his theories of human evolution contextualized by movement to abolish slavery to one that became increasingly slanted towards eugenics, giving the axiom “the survival of the fittest” a far more ominous connotation.

While South Africa had provided the inspiration for Galton’s advocacy of fingerprinting, it was in the other British colony of India in the wake of the 1857 Rebellion that the system was used as a means of identification along with other methods such as tattoos and the use of photographs. While the unique patterning of individual fingerprints made them the ideal means of identification, from the outset their utility was offset by the difficulty of classifying them. This was in part addressed by Edward Henry, Commissioner of Police in Bengal, and created of the “Henry System”, an efficient means of mathematically classifying fingerprints. Henry was subsequently tasked with creating a police force on the Witwatersrand, complete with fingerprint identification system. With the needs of the mining industry paramount, the surveillance and control of a largely illiterate African population and concerns regarding fraudulent means of identification, fingerprinting was perceived to be the cure-all and was inextricably associated with coercion and the criminalisation of black labour.

The early twentieth century saw Gandhi’s involvement in the use of fingerprinting to identify the Indian population and regulate their movement into the Transvaal. Breckenridge argues that it was Gandhi’s compromises with the Transvaal government over the use of fingerprinting and the subsequent use of these records by the state to apply discriminatory policies against Indians and restrict immigration that disillusioned him with “technologism”. It would culminate in a full rejection of Western modernity and inform his political activism in India.

Under apartheid the use of biometrics represented the apex of state attempts to classify, control and discriminate and resources were devoted to attempts to create coherent and all-encompassing forms of identification harnessed to new computer technology. This attempt at creating the all-knowing and powerful state as envisaged by Michel Foucault repeatedly fell short although, in an ironic twist, the biometric measures put in place in the Bantustans

became the foundation on which existing state welfare provisions are based. Breckenridge's work suggests that the use of biometric technology has been shaped by its history and present concerns. In the developing world it has become the means by which economic inequalities are ameliorated – biometric systems with their origins in South Africa are being utilized in Mexico, Brazil and India where earlier dissent over their use has largely disappeared. In the west, however, the association of biometrics with coercion has made it incompatible with civil liberties. It is nonetheless utilized here as a means of identifying and controlling the movements of those deemed to be unqualified for full citizenship – criminals, immigrants – under the aegis of national security.

This is a book that is clearly and succinctly written and persuasively argued but, more significantly, makes history relevant by highlighting the ways in which existing and ambitious attempts to identify human beings – both for the purposes of social welfare and international and domestic security – have been built on earlier projects with their origins in British imperial ambitions to know and, by so doing, control the vast, diverse and largely illiterate populations that fell under its ambit.

The new radicals: A generational memoir of the 1970s

(Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd, 2014, xi +283 pp. ISBN 978-1-4314-0971-6)

Glenn Moss

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Moss's *the new radicals: A generational memoir of the 1970s* explores three distinct but related themes. It chronicles a "political, ideological and organisational journey undertaken by a group of students". In a manner suggested by Amilcar Cabral, they are ready to commit class suicide. These students move from "relatively insular liberal protest and symbolic politics of

¹ Until recently, Lebelo was teaching history at Unisa. He is also co-author of *Soweto, 16 June 1976 – It all started with a dog* and *Nine family histories: Completing the circle*.

an elite university to help in creating the preconditions for a radical challenge to a society which had formed them”.

The second theme, to which Moss pays no more than a customary genuflection, is the emergence of the black radical tradition. Inspired by Steve Biko, the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) is a parallel radical formation, whose Black Consciousness (BC) philosophy Moss and the new radicals contemptuously dismiss as “false consciousness”.

The third, and probably the most significant theme is the historical moment when the paths of the new radicals and the exiled African National Congress (ANC) converged. The new radicalism becomes part of “embryonic initiatives which moved South African resistance movement from its historical low point at the end of the 1960s to the organisation, mobilisation and rebellion evident by 1976”. Moss’s memoir contributes to and reinforces the contested orthodoxy asserting that opposition to apartheid was defined by the unbroken thread of non-racialism.

Having demonstrated a penchant for radical action at the conservative Pretoria High School by burning the old South African flag, Moss’s radicalisation was quickened with what was a chance encounter with John Harries. Harries is the Johannesburg station bomber who was a member of the Armed Resistance Movement (ARM).

The new radicalism, presented in an autobiographical form, appears as a critique of liberalism, articulated by the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). Moss had already internalised radical tendencies when he entered Wits University in 1970. Moss’s political struggle in his formative years mirrors the radicalisation of NUSAS. He drew attention to himself soon after entering Wits in 1970. In March of that year he joined a lone picketer in Jan Smuts Street. The picketer turned out to be Wits Student Representative Council (SRC) President, Ken Costa. It being ten years since the Sharpeville massacre, Costa was reminding the public of the tragic events of that day.

For a while Moss’s radicalism was focused on student matters and articulated as a negation of liberalism and a radical challenge to the apartheid state’s policies. But the Anti -Republic Day campaign was very significant, both in the way it drew the attention of the Wits community and also in the way in which it heralded a change of paradigm in the university’s opposition to apartheid. In 1971 he was at the centre of the Anti-Republic Day campaign.

But it was the annual Richard Feetham Academic Freedom Lecture at Wits University that offered Moss an opportunity to reach out to the university community, appealing for a paradigm shift in understanding the opposition to apartheid. The choice of Joan Lestor, the British Member of Parliament and an activist with the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM), to deliver a keynote address for that year raised a few eyebrows. But it also established Wits' reputation as a radical campus in the next two decades.

But it was Moss's interaction with Ahmed Timol's family that steered him towards the politics of the African National Congress (ANC) and its armed formation, Umkhonto we Sizwe. For Moss and the new radicals, the decisive antagonism was defined by the specificity of the apartheid social formation. And understanding the complexity of apartheid capitalism or Colonialism of a Special Type (CST), was an esoteric exercise requiring specialised skills taught at the University of Natal's Political Philosophy Department by Rick Turner.

Moss and his "comrades" in NUSAS were determined to apply and test the validity of the claim that capitalist exploitation and not white supremacy is the decisive antagonism. In their view, class as opposed to racial antagonisms, "both as an analytical tool and a basis for organisation, found its expression in the prioritisation of worker rather than black interests... and in the new worker organisations were beginning to emerge" (pp. 100-101).

The Wages Commission and the Industrial Aid Society (IAS) were at the cutting edge of the mobilisation of workers, invariably black workers, against employers. The fatal shooting of 11 mineworkers at the Western Deep Level Mines in 1973 created a context in which the Wages Commission and the IAS could illuminate and expose the ways in which apartheid was a rational instrument of capital accumulation and not an irrational system of racial oppression.

To deepen this understanding of the relationship between racial oppression and capitalist exploitation among black workers, the Wages Commission and IAS established worker education programmes in factories in the Witwatersrand, Durban and the Western Cape. Throughout 1974 Moss continued to work tirelessly as an IAS organiser reaching out to workers in factories.

These initiatives attracted volunteers, notably Wits academics like Phil Bonner, Sheldon Leader and Bernie Fanaroff, who helped with the production of educational material. It is not clear how these initiatives impacted on the growing number of student, youth and cultural formations affiliated to the BCM that began to proliferate in and around Johannesburg between 1974 and the eruption of the student uprising in June 1976. This is a subject of intense ideological contestation between the congress tradition, to which Moss's new radicalism was affiliated, and BCM formations.

Some individuals within these BCM formations, and in some cases whole formations, embraced this new radicalism. They did not seem to discern the sharp ideological differences between the new radicalism and BCM philosophy. If they did, they seem to have embraced the new radicalism, impressed by what they considered its scientific approach to an understanding of the liberation struggle. This view, not reflected in this text, is often expressed in the narrative of the liberation struggled on the African National Congress Underground. Among these were members of the National Youth Organisation (NAYO), who also attended educational programmes run by IAS.

So by a circuitous route, Moss arrives at a figure that has become a common denominator in accounts of the ANC underground in the 1970s and its overstated impact on the Soweto revolt: Joe Gqabi. Gqabi was an ANC activist in the 1950s and 1960s and spent 10 years on Robben Island. Released in 1974, Gqabi operated underground networks that recruited cadres for the ANC. Among those recruited in this way were Tokyo Sexwale and Murphy Morobe, both of whom were considered active in the South African Students Movement (SASM).²

And while the new radicalism appears to have been making headways in organising black factory workers in the Transvaal, it was racked by internal conflict that would undermine its ability to influence developments that would erupt in just under twelve months in Soweto. Internal conflicts within the new radicalism, articulated through IAS, the Wages Commission, The Trade Union Advisory Coordinating Committee (TUACC) and the Institute for Industrial Education (IIE) concerned relationships between labour formations and political formations. The outcome of these tensions was that Moss was expelled from IAS and shortly thereafter, Steven Friedman and

² For a more detailed discussion of the ANC underground in the 1970s see G Houston, B Magubane, "The ANC's Armed Struggle in the 1970s", *The road to democracy in South Africa*, 2 (Pretoria, Unisa Press, 2006).

others in the core group that set up these initiatives left.

When the Soweto uprising erupted, Moss and some of IAS's activists were in police detention. Moss was facing charges under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act. And soon after 16 June 1976 some of the NAYO activists, with links to the ANC underground, were either in hiding or had been detained under the Terrorism Act. These developments limited the impact the new radicalism could have had on the Soweto revolt.

It became apparent that whatever influence the new radicalism may have had on the Soweto revolt would have been in the early days of unrest. Between 16 June and early August students in Soweto reorganised themselves. On 2 August 1976 the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC) was founded. Members of NAYO and other formations that had embraced the new radicalism were not represented in the meeting. The SSRC pledged its loyalty to BCM and proceeded to call for a student march into Johannesburg and a stay away by workers. Police intercepted the march before it left Soweto. But the stay away was an overwhelming success. It was reported that over 80% of Soweto residents stayed away from work on 4 August 1976.

The student campaign was condemned by those embracing the new radicalism for failing to mobilise the working class. This criticism emanated from those who had expected worker formations that had been established as part of the Wages Commission and IAs to provide the organisational support and leadership in the stay away of August 4. This criticism overlooks the fact that it was the historical self-awareness as back people that influenced and shaped patterns of mass mobilisation in the 1970s.

These are developments that Moss may have observed from prison. The chasm between the students' movement and the new radicalism became apparent when the first president of the SSRC, Tsietsi Mashinini condemned the exiled movement on his arrival in Botswana. Khostso Seathlolo, the second president of the SSRC, urged students leaving the country never to join the ANC or the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in exile. A rejection of the ANC was simultaneously a rejection of the new radicalism.

It can therefore be concluded that the new radicalism did not define the decisive antagonism in the opposition to white supremacy in the 1970s. On the contrary, the decisive antagonism was defined by the Black Consciousness (BC) philosophy. The impact of the new radicalism on mass mobilisation

was deferred, becoming particularly evident in the 1980s and early 1990s. And even then its impact was more rhetorical than transformative. Moss's memoir can be located within existing literature on the liberation struggle in the era of mass mobilisation, 1952 to 1991. In this instalment Moss merely reinforces existing accounts that upholds the myth of the unbroken thread of non-racialism in the struggle for liberation.

The concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer War: A social history

**(Auckland Park, Jacana, 2013, 391 pp., notes, diagrams, pictures.
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Elizabeth van Heyningen is a historian and an experienced writer who has written about the history of Cape Town, the social history of medicine and the history of colonial women. The book that Dr. van Heyningen has recently published on the concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer War contains evidence, case studies, statistics and historic facts in an attempt to write a more balanced history of the Anglo-Boer War, also known as the South African War. The history themes encompassed in this book are on social, political, economic, psychological and religious issues, and the book depicts the experiences of the Boers and black people in the concentration camps. The book contributes largely to the historiography of the Anglo-Boer War and offers a fresh insight into the inmates' experiences that have often been neglected by other historians in this field. This book can be used by a large audience, ranging from the tertiary history student to anyone interested in the Anglo-Boer War as this work is a significant addition to the existing work on the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902.

Although there has been work done on the Anglo-Boer War by a number of historians in South Africa, few have focused on the day-to-day lives of the people that were interned in the concentration camps. In the four parts of the book, van Heyningen gives an informative analysis of the camps and

offers an important discussion on the diversity of the people in the camps with accounts from different races and classes. Interestingly, van Heyningen follows the lives of some of the inmates before they were sent to the camps. Most people's lives changed for the worse due to the war. Based on the stories given, most families were affected because they lost their belongings and comfortable homes to the flames of war. Some women reminisced how their expensive furniture and pianos perished in the fire (p. 60). Van Heyningen offers a balanced study of the war when she also looked at the effects of the war on black people. Although the Boers suffered in the war, she maintains that black people's suffering was twice that of the Boers. Blacks, for instance, were treated as "hewers of wood and drawers of water", disregarded and neglected (p. 178), thus, showing inequality in the camp experience.

As an expert in social medical history, van Heyningen offers a fascinating chapter on the practice of medicine in the Boer community in the camps. There were many cases of life threatening illnesses in the camps and the Boers attempted to cure these diseases and illnesses, based on their own understandings of medicine. An aspect of Boer medical practice that the British found outrageous was the use of animal parts, blood and dung to cure illnesses (p. 210). The health conditions in the camps were hazardous and many lives were lost due to illness. The authorities sent doctors and nurses but their numbers were insufficient. In addition, the appointed medical personnel in the camps experienced unfavourable living conditions, which adversely affected their ability to provide effective medical care. Aspects of the book that some scholars and researchers might find very intriguing are the accounts told by Boer women. Emily Hobhouse who visited the camps and witnessed the conditions first-hand was the first person to publish the women's accounts of the camps. Without her intervention, the plight of the camps would have been entirely ignored. Hobhouse's report on the camps showed the hardship that many women and children went through during the war to their experiences that led to them being interned in the camps. Most women were without their husbands, they were deprived of their comfortable lives and endured harsh conditions in the camps.

One of the most important features of the camps focused on by van Heyningen looks is the attempt by the British to Anglicize the camps' inmates. The British attempted to spread their influence on education, recreation and celebrations, religion and philanthropy in the camps. Although they were successful to a certain extent, especially with regards to education, most children did not go

to school and their anglicization was confined to the singing of old English rhymes and songs. Additionally, most Boers were orthodox in their beliefs. Births, deaths and marriages occurred under ordained Dutch ministers. In other words, the Boers clung to their own identity and religion. The British did not succeed in effectively challenging their religion and traditional beliefs.

In the final part of the book, van Heyningen discusses the outcome of the war after the surrender was signed on 31 May 1902. The camp's inmates received the news about the end of the war with shock. Men who were on commando came into the camps to find their families. Most importantly, the Boers wanted to return to their farms and many were restless and frustrated that they could not leave immediately. On the other hand, black people did not want to leave the camps because they did not want to return to their old masters (p. 302). Most inmates experienced trauma and physical health problems after their imprisonment. Hobhouse's accounts of women's experiences in the war show that, while most women told their stories about the trauma associated with the camps, some women buried their traumatic experiences and refused to speak. "Many Boer women were silent, for their silence was a culture in which emotions were not openly displayed" (p. 315).

Van Heyningen has made a significant contribution to the historiography of the Anglo-Boer War that is conventionally focused on the political and Afrikaner nationalism aspects. In her study, she offers a broader view of the war by giving voice to the otherwise silenced women and children. This study attempts to balance the accounts of both black and white victims of the camps although information about black camps is somewhat limited.

Ethnicity and empire in Kenya: Loyalty and martial race among the Kamba, c 1800 to the present

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The publication of *Ethnicity and empire in Kenya: Loyalty and martial race among the Kamba, c 1800 to the present* is a huge bonus for students of early twentieth century history, especially as it provides a complementary text to Michelle R Moyd's *Violent intermediaries: African soldiers, conquest and everyday colonialism in German East Africa* (New African Studies Series, Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio, 2014). Together, these two books provide an unrivalled insight into the formation of the black soldier who was to serve through the two World Wars. Individually, they stand as testimony to the development of peoples who, until the publication of these two books, had their identity explained in terms of their white colonial overlords.

Having spent eight years interviewing 150 Kikamba, Myles Osborne introduces us to the history of the Kamba from their perspective. His sensitivity in interpreting the language, archival documents and interviews conducted by others before him, shows how British and European ideas came to be imposed on the territory and accepted by a people thereby creating a tribal system which played out through the years of Kenya's time as a colony. Although a map showing how the area occupied by the Kamba changed slightly over the period would have been helpful, it is not essential as Myles provides appropriate and relevant descriptions.

The Kamba are regarded as a "martial" race. What this means, how the Kamba came to be seen as martial and how this perception morphed is the focus of this book. The subtleties of language and behaviour are explored throughout the book: for example, how a people could be regarded as "good" policemen but not effective as soldiers. As well as providing a history of the Kamba people, the book gives insight into how dominant ideologies changed and how this impacted the Kamba especially in connection with the World Wars and Kenya's struggle for independence. In contrast to the Kamba possibly being the best-known Kenyan tribe of the First World War, today, the Kikuyu and Luo are the most well-known tribal groupings in the area; notwithstanding the Masai. The rapid decline of the Kamba from a starring role to one of virtual obscurity is, as Myles sets out, the result of changing values and the interplay between politics and the military.

In a subtle way, Myles confirms the role of the military as subject to the whims of politicians who generally control the budget and determine the priorities for development. The challenges of the Kamba in finding work during and after wars confirm this. However the importance of the military to politicians, whether local or metropole, is demonstrated through the attempts by Britain

to appease the Kamba men by restricting their women from leaving the area to obtain employment in Nairobi and elsewhere. The solidarity portrayed by the Kamba played out in the struggle to protect their land, cattle and their values while, at the same time, it allowed them to redefine their values and form a tribal identity. The imposition, by the British, of chiefs into the hierarchy gave a focus for determining what was valued as a community. Prior to World War Two, the chiefs who had made their wealth through the control of cattle were not respected as leaders. They had not been appointed by the people and as such were not awarded the respect given to returning soldiers.

The relationship between the chiefs and the people is a point which could have been further interrogated but perhaps the material from the interviews did not allow for this deeper insight. As Myles noted, shortly before Independence nobody left the Kamba tribe to move to another, despite there not having been a tribal distinction in early 1800 and the fluidity of movement between areas being emphasised in earlier interviews. A point which is well covered and perhaps offers some reason for the apparent docile acceptance of the role of chief is that of the missionaries and their attempts to introduce education to the Kamba. The early rejection of education in favour of military service contrasts with the change after World War Two where education began to be embraced because of the shortage of work and the Kikuyu being favoured over the Kamba, as well as the chiefs being able to survive and increase their wealth and standing amongst the British. The clash between traditions over pierced ears and circumcision is another area which could have been further explored but, in fairness, would have detracted from the object of the book. What one does get, when looking at the chiefs and missionaries, is a sense of the tensions being played out and the trade-offs made to preserve what is regarded as important and valuable. It is through the changing practices, such as the introduction of monogamy and western dress, that one can trace the changing values of the Kamba people and wider society in general.

The role of women is another thread that features throughout the book. Women were instrumental in defining the values of what was acceptable and tended to be regarded as equal to men although, on occasion, attempts were made to control them and restrict their movements in order to provide men with work and a sense of well-being. Significantly, of the 52 interviews Myles conducted with women, little is said about bringing up children or family life. Rather there is a focus on the role of women in contributing to the welfare of the household and supporting their husbands – it was acceptable to move

to the city to be with their husband rather than purely to earn money. What focus there is on children comes from the clash with missionary views around education and expected behaviours of the two genders.

No book on the history of Kenya as a colonial power would be complete without mention and coverage of Mau Mau and *Ethnicity and empire in Kenya* is no different. What is different is that there is very little said of the horror and fear generally associated with Mau Mau. Rather the Kamba seemed to have benefited from these few years of turmoil as the British government channelled funding and other developments in their favour as a reward for their continued loyalty. This does not mean that the Kamba were not affected by Mau Mau but instead had a very different experience; one which was to affect their position when the main tribe behind Mau Mau, the Kikuyu, came into power.

Myles ends the book with an Epilogue commenting on the current political position in Kenya and how it relates to the Kamba. The missed opportunity of drawing together common themes and contrasts over nearly two centuries of memory is somewhat ameliorated by the overview provided in the Bibliography of how he approached the interviews and is more than compensated for by the rich content of the chapters. I was left wanting more – but recognise that this is only because Myles has done an outstanding job of bringing to light the Kamba's account of who and what they are.