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Book Reviews

‘Humans as a disease vector’: The history of malaria transmission in Zimbabwe

Kundai Manamere, *Malaria on the Move: Rural Communities and Public Health in Zimbabwe, 1890-2015*
Ohio University Press, 2025
217pp
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Despite ongoing efforts to eradicate malaria, the World Health Organisation (WHO) is currently facing challenges in maintaining progress and preventing setbacks. Kundai Manamere, in her recent book, notes that these challenges are a result of the fact that the WHO has failed to acknowledge socioeconomic factors, such as labour migration, matters that influence disease transmission (p. 2). Manamere’s book *Malaria on the Move: Rural Communities and Public Health in Zimbabwe, 1890-2015,* showcases the interconnectedness of disease prevalence and labour migration. Taking a historical approach, the author traces the history of malaria prevalence and highlights how the human factor contributed to the incidence of malaria. It also deals with the issue of how both the colonial state and post-colonial governments overlooked the role that humans played in the disease’s transmission.

Malaria on the Move: Rural Communities and Public Health in Zimbabwe, 1890-2015 is a well-researched work that provides a nuanced understanding of malaria prevalence and efforts made to mitigate the disease in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. While the book focuses especially on the southeastern Lowveld of the country, it also explores the incidence of the disease in other parts of the country and shows how both governments made strides in dealing with the scourge of malaria. Manamere argues that state efforts to mitigate the spread of malaria in both colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe were largely unsuccessful because both governments repudiated the role played by socioeconomic factors that facilitated disease transmission. This new publication contributes to the growing scholarly conversation in Africa and worldwide that explores the history of malaria. It also offers a very useful list of reference works on the topic and the research efforts to date in a detailed bibliography.

Manamere presents a historical epidemiology of malaria in Southern Rhodesia, focusing particularly on the incidence of the disease and its impact on both Africans and European settlers. She further captures state efforts in controlling the disease,

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the role of the WHO in attempting to eradicate malaria in sub-Saharan Africa and attempts at regional efforts to prevent the spread of malaria.

In six chapters, Manamere reconstructs the narrative of malaria incidence, following a chronological method. In each chapter, she illustrates the malaria control measures adopted and evaluates their efficiency or lack thereof. She showcases the role of the human factor in the transmission of malaria and how the state failed to address labour migration as a contributing factor to the continued transmission of malaria in the country and beyond.

The first chapter details the challenges European settlers faced during colonial occupation as a result of malaria, such that the disease became classified as the 'white man's disease'. Here, Manamere illustrates how European scientists propounded two theories (the miasma theory and the mosquito theory) in their attempt to explain the causes of malaria (p. 23). The chapter also provides a detailed overview of the earliest forms of malaria control, following the realisation that the Anopheles mosquito was the primary cause of the disease. It goes on to highlight how control measures, such as vector control, education and awareness, nocturnal segregation, and the use of quinine as a prophylaxis method, were employed in an attempt to control malaria.

One of the central themes explored is how malaria control measures were implemented, primarily in 'European areas', specifically in urban areas, mines, and on white farms. It makes the point that the remote rural areas, where the majority of African families lived, received significantly less attention. While Manamere acknowledges that Andrew Fleming (the Medical Director of Southern Rhodesia from 1897-1931) incorporated African methods of malaria control, she pays little attention to African indigenous methods of malaria control (pp. 30-31). An analysis of African indigenous methods would have provided agency for Africans, indicating how Africans should understand their environment and the diseases they faced.

The second chapter showcases how the development of chemical insecticides, such as Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), and how these facilitated the commencement of indoor residual spraying (IRS) in 1946. The chapter highlights how chemical insecticides became an important malaria control measure in the colony and draws comparisons between spraying experiments conducted in both the highveld and lowveld and how these experiments were successful in reducing the threat of malaria. It highlights how chemical insecticides enabled European settlers to advance and expand agriculture in regions such as the southeastern Lowveld, which white settlers could not have previously inhabited due to the high prevalence of malaria. This chapter also provides a detailed analysis of how Africans were displaced from the lowveld to make way for ex-servicemen after the Second World War to provide land for those who intended to venture into agriculture in the lowveld.

The neglect of the human factor in the transmission of malaria due to labour migration is a thread that runs throughout the book. Manamere argues that malaria control efforts failed to yield the desired results because the state overlooked the impact of circular labour migration on the transmission of the disease. In Chapter 3, the book stresses the efforts of the WHO in eradicating malaria in sub-Saharan Africa. The chapter also discusses other scholarly perspectives on the initial exclusion of sub-Saharan Africa from the global malaria eradication programme.

Manamere also engages with the views expressed by Maureen Malowany and James Webb, who argue that malaria eradication in Africa was a complex process. Manamere explains this complexity, arguing that at the 1950 malaria conference held in Kampala, two schools of thought emerged: the interventionist and the anti-interventionist. The latter argued that eradication would compromise Africans' natural immunity to malaria, posing challenges to eradication efforts (pp. 69-79). The author explains how the involvement of the WHO shifted malaria control efforts from individual efforts to regional efforts, such as setting up checkpoints to administer prophylaxis treatment along the routes used by labour migrants . While Manamere explains that Africans evaded checkpoints on the routes to Southern Rhodesia and South Africa, she does not explain their evasion or the rationale behind it, leaving readers wondering why Africans chose not to take preventive measures.

The fourth chapter focuses on the impact of the liberation war on malaria control and the introduction of privatised malaria control in the southeastern lowveld. The author presents a detailed and insightful account of how the Triangle Sugar Estates privatised malaria control in the southeast Lowveld, aiming to reduce the rate of malaria infections. She emphasises that privatised malaria control in the area was essentially a success, as transmission rates remained low until the war of liberation disrupted this success story (pp. 107-111). Her portrayal of the liberation war in this context offers an analytical understanding of the impact of politics on socioeconomic dynamics. However, the relocation of Africans to protected villages during the unrest does not receive sufficient attention. A more explicit examination of the living conditions in protected villages would have provided a clearer picture of how Africans were affected by this and how it contributed to the transmission of malaria in the southeastern Lowveld and the country as a whole.

Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the transmission of malaria in post-colonial Zimbabwe, providing a detailed description of how migration between rural and urban areas facilitated the transmission of imported malaria. It also offers evidence on how the continued migration of people led to malaria outbreaks in both rural and urban areas. These chapters highlight state efforts in malaria control, which stemmed from the continued use of DDT, media campaigns, larviciding and the promotion of mosquito net use. In Chapter 6, the author evaluates the introduction of the Roll Back Malaria Programme by the WHO in 1998 and the National Malaria Control

Programme implemented by the government in 2000 (pp. 137-140). However, the chapter argues that the economic crisis in Zimbabwe hindered the effective implementation of these malaria control programmes due to a lack of adequate resources and the incidence of corruption.

Malaria on the Move: Rural Communities and Public Health in Zimbabwe, 1890-2015, is a significant work that explains the prevalence of the disease, its impact on the socio-economic sphere, and the state's efforts to mitigate it. The book illustrates the nexus between socioeconomic factors and disease prevalence, arguing that a balance is needed between health interventions and livelihoods (p. 159). It also offers insight into state efforts regarding disease control and eradication, particularly in the southeastern Lowveld. Manamere's portrayal of labour migration as a vector for disease transmission highlights how critical it is to analyse the role of humans in the spread of diseases, an issue which both the colonial and post-colonial governments overlooked in their malaria control programmes.

The author argues that there is a need to incorporate people's perceptions regarding their understanding and perception of certain illnesses. She further notes that to curb malaria, it is essential to shift the focus from pathogens and mosquitoes to the role humans play in the transmission of the disease. The book, therefore, lays the basis for further studies on the correlation between human migration patterns and disease prevalence. While it focuses on the southeastern Lowveld area, it also illustrates malaria control efforts in other regions, such as the northwest Highveld and other countries in Africa, allowing the reader to draw comparisons on malaria control efforts across different parts of the continent.

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The art of making a market

Ian Phimister, *Bulls, Bears, Boers and Brits: Finance and the Coming of War in Southern Africa, 1894-1899*
Brill Publishers, 2025
149 pp
ISBN 9789004690783

We have been told that at the centre of the economic system is production – purchasing the means of production, land, labour and capital, at the minimum price and selling finished products at the maximum. We have also been told, that the platform upon which the activities of production take place, must be left untouched - the market is 'self-equilibrating', they say. Yet the subprime mortgage crisis in the

USA that triggered what has become known as the 2008 global financial crisis, demonstrates the questionability of these principles. Profits were generated outside of a production-based market by actors who created a spiderweb of speculation through the excessive issuance of subprime mortgages. Scholars have long questioned these economic principles. Using the US as a case study, Hyman Minsky investigated the nexus between capitalists' incessant profit-making motives and financial instability arguing that speculative operations where the market value of a business does not tally with its production and capital value, triggers financial instability and an eventual rupture – the proverbial 'Minsky Moment'.

In *Bulls, Bears, Boers, and Brits*, Phimister provides a practical narrative of these circumstances, historicising how the supposedly central economic activity was dwarfed by market-making, triggering not just a Minsky Moment, but the 1890s wars in South Africa. Phimister thus contributes to enduring debates on economic thought by using the 1890s to interrogate the supposed beliefs that production is the central economic activity and the markets are incorruptible.

Through his numerous works on capital accumulation, state-capital relations, and worker-capital relations in Southern Africa, Phimister argues that the market is seldom self-regulating. He shows that it is engineered by those with proximity to political power, access to the means of production and access to publicity: almost always the capitalists. In *Bulls, Bears, Boers, and Brits,* written in five chronologically arranged chapters, he proves, empirically, that speculation caused by the insatiable thirst for profits 'dominated enterprise', caused 'financial instability' and the eventual Anglo-Boer and South African wars of the 1890s. He uses an extensive selection of archival material and newspapers (pp.3-4), to make a compelling transnational account detailing complex stock market-making, profiteering and speculation on the Rand, Bechuanaland and Southern Rhodesia. He also draws in players and markets in London, Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Vienna and Constantinople. The book argues that the 'primary objective of many of those controlling the earlier Rhodesian mining and exploration companies was not so much the production of gold at a profit, but the manipulation and off-loading of as large a quantity of scrip as possible on the public' (p. 28; pp.1-5; 135-137). Phimister thus seeks to demonstrate that 'a market is literally created and manipulated by players who can do so' (p. 41).

In substantive chapters, *Bulls* details market manipulation beginning with the 1894-95 'Kaffir Boom' (Chapter 3 – pp. 17-92), and then the 1896–1899 burst of the stock markets bubble (Chapter 4 – pp. 92-135). According to Phimister, market-making occurred in both periods as the market was manipulated by a spiderweb of profiteering speculators including investors, brokers and vendors, collectively known as the Randlords. In the period of the 'Kaffir Boom', the 'Kaffir' as the SA mining shares were known, Randlords profiteered through creating mining companies, borrowing cheap money to buy stock, inflating the value of the new mining

companies, then selling their stock on various stock markets for exorbitant profits. Randlords included Cecil John Rhodes, Alfreid Beit, Barney Barnato, J.B. Robinson and George Farrar. So rampant were these methods that in 1886, there were 90 mining companies which 'increased to 270 in 1887; and to almost 500 by the end of 1889' (pp. 17-18; 33-38) mainly created for speculative purposes. Messrs. Wernher, Beit, & Co, and Eckstein, the largest parent company, for example, owned at least 35 subsidiaries, (pp. 170-174), each with market prices at least four times their issued capital prices (pp. 33-38 and 156-158). The shares of each of these companies were marketed through a 'Rhodes-controlled' media which manipulated the flow of mining market news, including by paying journalists across continents to spread only great news about the Rand (pp. 40-44; 61, 121). Even President Paul Kruger acknowledged the power of the 'mining magnates' who 'had everything in their hands and caused prices to rise or fall as they pleased' (p. 121).

Chapter 4 details the gloomy post-boom drop in share prices of the 'Kaffir' engineered by the Randlords to force policy changes in the Kruger government (p. 97). Although other reasons for the bust were given, including maladministration of mines, the skirmishes between Kruger and the mining magnates were prominent (pp. 119-125). Rumours of war and subsequent war caused price volatilities, and an eventual slump in the price of the 'Kaffir' (pp.123-131).

In making its arguments, *Bulls* simultaneously reveals shocking levels of extraction that occurred in Southern Africa in 1894-1899. Phimister has for decades detailed the extent of 'capital accumulation'/ 'financial imperialism' in Africa by 'mining magnates' and chartered companies. Phimister reveals that 'by 1893, the gold mines of the Witwatersrand were already responsible for one-fifth of the world's production' (p. 18) and by the time of the 'Kaffir Boom', gold output increased from £6,963,100 to £7,840,779 (pp. 18, 136). Upon further examination, the revelations are graver, for instance, gold extraction increased from a total of 208,122 ounces (approx. 5,900kgs) in 1888 to a total of 1,478,473 ounces (approx. 41,914kgs) in 1893 (p. 155), an eight-fold increase over five years. Despite gold production being a peripheral activity, dwarfed in its profit making by stock-market speculation, it remained a relevant stream for the insatiable appetites of the 'mining magnates'.

When reading this book, one needs to possess prior knowledge of especially three things; financial lingo; politics of empire and that of the Southern African region and the events of the Jameson Raid and SA wars of the 1890s; otherwise, the reader risks missing the full extent of the 'shady' dealings of Randlords delineated in the text. The Randlords were described by Joseph Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary as 'cowardly selfish blatant speculators who would sell their souls to have the power of rigging the market' (p. 77) while Henry Labouchere called one of the main chartered companies, the BSAC, 'one of the most disgraceful and scandalous companies that ever existed' (p. 70). When one is abreast with these issues, however,

this book is unputdownable because its vivid imageries teleport one back to the 1890s. The picture of Rhodes and his 'magnates' at elaborate dinners or Parliament or on Throgmorton Street partitioning African minerals and conniving stock market heists of enormous proportions, is enjoyably painted.

Bulls sufficiently provides alternative explanations of the causes of the Anglo-Boer War and wars of the 1890s as rooted in market-making and speculation of the Randlords. It raises 'a question mark over the many accounts of the 1890s which foreground mining company hostility towards Boer policies' within the Southern African literature as intended by the author who demonstrates the historiographical gap in Chapter 2. While the book's contribution to the understanding of Southern African history of the 1890s is evident, its salient influence rests in its ability to trigger one to think more deeply about the intertwined economic principles of production, speculation, and market-making. Through its examination of the stock market, *Bulls* provides a deeper understanding of the untameable elements of the market – which, contrary to accepted beliefs, can be engineered, often in the fruitless attempt to satisfy the capitalists' monstrous pockets.

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'Conceived in sin': Tracing the ghosts of journalism in South Africa

Gawie Botma, *Reconsidering the History of South African Journalism: The Ghost of the Slave Press*
Routledge, 2025
308 pp
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South Africans are no strangers to the idea that the press has often walked hand in hand with power. From the colonial era through apartheid, most mainstream newspapers towed the line, serving the interests of those in control rather than the wider public. There were exceptions, of course. The tradition of the alternative press, including parts of the early black press, offered resistance, dissent and a glimpse of journalism's liberatory potential. But these were the outliers in a media landscape largely complicit in legitimising oppression.

It is against this backdrop that Gawie Botma, *Reconsidering the History of South African Journalism: The Ghost of the Slave Press* delivers a provocative re-reading of journalism's origins in South Africa, arguing that even before formal apartheid (1948-1994), the roots of this journalism were entwined with slavery. The book interrogates the celebratory narrative that frames the press as a liberating force

in South Africa's democratic development. Instead, Botma uncovers the entanglement of journalism with slavery, colonial exploitation and capital accumulation at the Cape between 1800 and 1838.

It is worth considering Botma's central argument, the methodology and sources used, and, where necessary, critically engaging some of the observations the book makes in the context of its scholarly contribution and limitations. Reconfiguring dominant historiographies, Botma posits the straightforward yet unsettling thesis that the South African press, often heralded as the 'guardian of democracy', was founded on slavery and colonial oppression. By revisiting the early 19th century, Botma demonstrates that leading colonial newspapers such as the *Cape Town Gazette* and *African Adventure* (later *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*) functioned as what contemporaries derisively called the 'slave press'. These publications, far from embodying press freedom, legitimised slavery through official notices, runaway slave advertisements and estate auctions. This complicity undermines the triumphalist narrative of journalism as an emancipatory institution. The book contends that South African journalism was 'conceived in sin'. The 'ghost' of this past, argues Botma, continues to haunt contemporary debates about media freedom, democracy and inequality.

The book is organised into three interrelated parts that together chart the entanglement of slavery and journalism in South Africa. The first section, 'History' (Chapters 1-4), traces the relationship between slavery and the press, beginning with the establishment of the so-called 'slave press' in 1800 and following its development through the abolition of slavery in 1838. The second section, 'Content' (Chapters 5-6), examines how newspapers represented slavery in their news reports, commentary and especially in advertisements, demonstrating the press's active role in legitimising and profiting from human bondage. Finally, the third section, 'Aftermath' (Chapters 7-8), reflects on the enduring legacy of the slave press within South African journalism historiography, showing how these origins continue to haunt contemporary understanding of media freedom and responsibility.

Botma employs a qualitative narrative analysis that reconstructs the press's role through archival sources and secondary historiography. He draws on primary sources such as the *Cape Town Gazette*, the *South African Commercial Advertiser* and *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, supplemented by records of the colonial printing office. Importantly, Botma refuses the veneer of objectivity, acknowledging the subjectivity of his historical reconstruction. He positions his approach reflexively, informed by Conboy's (2019) call for journalism histories that examine not only individuals and institutions but also the 'new system' (p. 3) within wider social structures.

Such reflexivity helps us contextualise media within structures of power, ownership and class relations. Botma's insistence on analysing advertisements, often

ignored in traditional press histories, is significant. By foregrounding how newspapers profited directly from slave sales, he situates journalism firmly within circuits of capitalist accumulation.

There are several dimensions through which to understand Botma's work. The first pertains to media ownership and class power. For example, publications such as the *Cape Town Gazette* were established by private British slave traders with close ties to colonial authorities. The press's entanglement with state power exemplifies Herman and Chomsky's notion of a media system serving elite interests through ownership and patronage. The second dimension is advertising and commodification. Newspapers commodified enslaved people both as property and as advertising revenue, thus blurring the separation between editorial and commercial interests. The third dimension pertains to labour, slavery and media production. Enslaved people and 'prize negro apprentices' (p. 16) worked directly in the colonial printing office. Thus, enslaved labour not only appeared in advertisements but also enabled newspaper production. The fourth is ideology and hegemony, as Botma demonstrates that the slave press functioned as an ideological state apparatus that legitimised slavery while presenting it as a rational means of governance. While liberal papers offered some critiques, they remained constrained by colonial capitalism. The final dimension is the global political economy. Botma locates Cape journalism as embedded in transnational circuits of capital and empire, thus linking metropolitan centres, colonies and plantations.

The book reframes South African journalism's origins by integrating advertising and labour into press history and connecting these findings to contemporary debates about inequality and digital capitalism. It challenges the celebratory narrative of the press as emancipatory and insists on recognising its complicity in racial capitalism.

Despite its strengths, the book could have engaged more explicitly with critical theories of political economy, particularly concepts such as the audience commodity, where audiences are sold as products to advertisers and their attention becomes a commodity exchanged for profit. This would have assisted in situating this journalism within its historical context. For a book written in the digital era, gender and intersectionality are underexplored, and digital platform capitalism could have been traced more extensively to draw out the contemporary resonance of slavery and patriarchy to digital labour practices. The racial and gender disparities, labour commodification, and surveillance control over unpaid and underpaid workers involved in data generation for multinational companies reflect the coercive labour practices historically linked to slavery.

Reconsidering the History of South African Journalism: The Ghost of the Slave Press is certainly a landmark contribution. Botma unsettles the narrative of the press

as a democratic institution by exposing its roots in slavery and exploitation. Through analysing advertising, labour, and ideology, the book demonstrates that the South African press was founded within the logics of racial capitalism. Indeed, this work highlights how media systems are shaped by ownership, class power, labour and commodification. While limitations remain, Botma's intervention is significant, forcing us to confront the uncomfortable truth that the 'free press' was haunted from inception by the ghost of slavery.

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