political, social, and cultural changes will be of interest to scholars of a number of disciplines.

The authors make no pretense that their study offers any prescriptions for the future. Their agenda is purely historical—to illuminate the past. But they do express the hope that their study of one middleman group can illuminate the every(middle)man roles of modern African elites, whether economic, cultural, or political. In this goal, they succeed admirably.

David Northrup
Boston College


This is an important book, examining in depth a neglected dimension of Nigeria’s institutional and political existence—religious conflict, played out against a political backdrop—which has become critical with the escalation of interreligion tension, intolerance, and violence since the mid-1980s (previously the violence was intrareligious, principally among Muslims). As Falola makes clear, such feelings, once aroused and increasingly embedded in politics, are far less easily calmed than inflamed; Nigeria, like many other countries these days, will have to deal with them for years to come.

Historians of Africa, both Africans and outsiders, realized years ago (and earlier than many others) that only an interdisciplinary approach could illuminate their subject. To the then-narrow Western historical methodology, they added others from such disciplines as anthropology, linguistics, geology, and geography; doing so became well established in the 1960s. Falola’s study continues and expands this tradition. He sets forth his aims concisely in his preface: “to pull together divergent but mutually reinforcing approaches and paradigms drawn from history, sociology, religious studies, political science, literature, and economics, and also to draw on examples not only from modern Nigeria, but also from other times and places” (xvii). He achieves his methodological goals, integrating diverse material obtained through this range of techniques. He also presents the results of his research clearly, with ample documentation, and, admirably, with a minimum of jargon from any discipline.

Falola begins with two chapters of Nigerian context. One deals historically with Islam, Christianity, and relations between the two; the second, with the development of the Nigerian state, from 1860 to 1997. He introduces several themes, among them that in Nigeria, “[r]eligion reinforces ethnicity and shapes identities by creating sturdy group differences” (45); and that, whereas during “most of the twentieth century,
many Muslims have accepted the presence of the Christian population and recognized the need to coexist with them,” “[t]he post-1975 Islamic tendency toward radicalism and fundamentalism have [sic] been evident among Christians as well, partly because of the Nigerian state’s failure to meet the expectations of its citizens, and partly because of the increased challenge posed by Islam” (47). Even if the tensions between the religions did not become widespread until the mid 1980s, the points are vital to understanding the complexities and challenges that Nigeria faces.

Falola then examines in detail these and other issues from several perspectives. In “Religion and the State: A Theocracy in a Muslim World?” he explores “how the [Muslim] desire to shape and define Nigeria as a religious state has created overwhelming pressure and crisis” (69). When, in 1986, Ibrahim Babangida, the military ruler, took Nigeria into full membership in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (oic), tension escalated (223). Nigeria’s relationship with the oic had been delicately, and successfully, handled by previous governments; ironically, its membership came about less to fulfill a religious agenda than to gain an advantage in an intricate game of political chess. Falola links it with several other controversies to create “an atmosphere conducive to violence” (102).

A detailed and illuminating discussion follows of the role of religious leaders and the deep ties to politics that the most prominent among them have developed. “The problems of Nigerian politics buttress the cynicism of religious leaders and radicalize their religious practices” (136). Falola presents a detailed, disturbing account of Islamic violence directed against the state, erupting in northern cities from 1980 to 1985, as well as of Muslim–Christian relations in the 1980s, which introduced new violence between them (especially after 1986). Later chapters, “The Age of Warfare: Violence and Conflicts in the 1990s” and “Islam against Islam” (which, focusing primarily on an earlier period, might better have been placed earlier), show extensive research, often carried out in difficult circumstances. They provide material hitherto unavailable either in one place or at all, along with valuable analysis.

In “Hate Literature and Verbal Violence,” Falola addresses the “dangers of stereotyping and negative images” that permeate Nigerian attitudes (260). As he acknowledges in another section, these attitudes rest on long-held assumptions of educational superiority/inferiority between “South” and “North,” only indirectly tied to religious differences.

After briefly mentioning some strategies, actual and possible, for managing violence, Falola concludes by tying together his main themes, in the process making two particularly important points about religious violence: (1) “Solutions tend to be complicated and . . . democracy and the nation-state do not necessarily mean that violence will disappear altogether,” and (2) a viable democratic nation-state may not be a cure-all . . . but in the Nigerian case, it represents the most promising starting point” (279). It is clear that “under worsening economic con-
ditions and intense political competition, religious violence becomes an avenue for grievances and challenges to the . . . politics of resource distribution” (283). It is Falola’s hope and prescription to change this context.

Falola makes another contribution, too rare for Nigerians. Through his effort to understand Nigerians not from his part of the country, he presents the thoughts, actions, and fears that he encounters with both scholarly detachment and empathy. He has his own political views and an understandable cynicism about recent political history, but they intrude only occasionally. Falola’s main omissions involve the international context: the heightening of religious tension between the West (and thus Christianity) and Islam after the Iranian takeover of the United States embassy in 1979, and the post–Cold War growth of a neo-Wilsonian outlook that encourages self-determination on ethnic and religious grounds and tolerates the fragmentation of states. But the missing issues scarcely detract from the richness of this significant study.

Jean Herskovits
State University of New York, Purchase

The Divided Economy of Mandatory Palestine. By Jacob Metzer (New York Cambridge University Press, 1998) 275 pp. $59.95

This meticulous study of the dual economy of Palestine during the highly formative British mandatory period (1920–1948) represents the fruition of Metzer’s research spanning two decades. Ambitious in its scope, the analysis offers a thematically designed account of the ethnonationally divided economy, using econometric methodology applied to historical data. Using this approach, the author seeks to confirm previous, largely impressionistic, accounts of the complex dynamics of the country’s emerging economic separatism.

Underpinned by reconstruction of national income accounts, statistical analysis, and other quantitative documentation, Metzer traces the increasing division of economic life under British tutelage between the Jewish community and the Palestinian Arabs. The study begins with the contrasting demographic factors, those of a Western immigrant movement versus the largely agrarian features of the indigenous population. The two groups’ differing access to, and use of, land, capital, and labor are explored, as is their divergence in trade patterns, both foreign and domestic. The role of the public sector in the development of the bifurcating economy is considered. Comparisons are also made on an international basis to define further the dualism of the Arabs’ “traditional” economy, as opposed to the emerging “modern” Zionist economy.

Metzer’s methodology is impressive. The only fundamental weakness in his approach lies with the necessity of contending with often scanty information, mainly about the Arab community, and sometimes