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## ***Emotional and Ethical Challenges for Field Research in Africa: The Story behind the Findings*** edited by S. Thomson, A. Ansoms and J. Murison London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Pp. xiv, 169. £55 (hbk)

SVERKER FINNSTRÖM

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the rulers and the ruled in all three of his cases. His risks provide rich rewards for scholars and policymakers alike.

NANCY BERMEO  
*University of Oxford*

**Emotional and Ethical Challenges for Field Research in Africa: The Story behind the Findings** edited by S. THOMSON, A. ANSOMS and J. MURISON

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Pp. xiv, 169. £55 (hbk)

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This small and smart but ridiculously expensive volume fills a crucial gap in the existing literature on research methodologies in the social sciences in Africa (and beyond). It accommodates anthropology, conflict studies, development economics, history, sociology and political science; and has two chapters on Burundi, two on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, four on Rwanda and two on Uganda. From my anthropological perspective, at a first glance, the short introduction seems to claim the obvious: outside researchers need to adapt to local realities, prepare themselves with time and patience, ensure to gain the trust and respect of their informants, and also be prepared to face emotional challenges. Researchers have, in the editors' phrasing, to roll with it. But if the introduction is somehow short and brief, it leaves more room for the individual chapters, which offer intimate perspectives. The chapters, almost all of them reporting from completed PhD projects, tell important stories.

Taken together, the four chapters on post-genocide Rwanda sketch a place that seems particularly difficult to research, with an omnipresent state apparatus that follows every step of the researcher. An Ansoms addresses the profound feeling of being a voyeuristic disaster tourist in Rwanda, while Larissa Begley discusses fear and rumours as well as her own post-traumatic stress. Yolande Bouka on her side emphasises the importance of being aware of covert messages and 'the grammar' of respondents' narrative strategies. Finally, Susan Thomson addresses the extremely wearisome but for her rewarding process of applying for a formal ethical clearance, while at the same time noting that ethical quandaries must constantly be negotiated and renegotiated in the field. On Burundi, Judith Vorrath's chapter on political elites discusses intuition and common sense as research tools in situations when the researcher has to make up her mind whether or not to trust informants; while Lidewyde H. Berckmoes's contribution deals with trust, truth and fieldwork experiences of deceit and lies. From eastern Congo, Luca Jourdan compares his experience as a humanitarian with that of a researcher. If humanitarianism brought him to the Congo in the first place, academia brought him back, and he could now accept, with his Congolese informants, the existence of senselessness. To roll with it, to return to the editors' introduction, was a reason why Jourdan 'survived' in war-torn Congo. Eastern Congo is also the place of research for Julie Van Damme. In the effort to establish a constructive relationship between researcher and researched, she discusses the importance of returning to the field, and she analyses her ambition to improve the lives of her research subjects but also how all this changed her.

Christina R. Clark-Kazak writes about Congolese refugees in the Ugandan capital Kampala. When informants perform a certain role of victimhood, it is essential for the researcher to consider the wider contexts of poverty and vulnerability. Clark-Kazak also discusses problems and dilemmas when research develops into interventionist social work. Kampala and central Uganda was also the place where Lino Owor Ogora grew up. He eventually moved to the war-torn north, his fatherland, hitherto known to him only through stories. After employment with a big international organisation, he takes up a research position with a community-based initiative. With northern Uganda as a virtual research zoo, attracting countless outside researchers (me included) and graduate students, Ogora's competences seem unique. Without the all-too-common language and cultural barriers, and without equally common barriers raised by distancing tools such as questionnaires and standardised interview formats, research-fatigued informants no longer felt obliged to greet the visitor with the prescribed courtesies. 'Since the fires burnt and cooled in Atiak, I am tired of research work that has been going on here', an old man tells Ogora before walking away. 'I have lost hope in researchers ... we have not seen any results' (p. 37).

Can there a more painful illustration of 'the story behind the findings', the subtitle of the book? If initially the book's introductory remarks made me think that little is new under the sun, at the end I have to praise the editors for prioritising the case studies, and more, for bringing them out. They are inviting and encouraging. I found countless parallels with my own fieldwork experiences in war-torn northern Uganda. And for people, both senior researchers and fresh students, who plan to carry out research in Africa for the first time or in any place unfamiliar to them for that matter, this preliminary and uniquely personal volume is important reading.

SVERKER FINNSTRÖM  
*Uppsala University*

**Between Militarism and Technocratic Governance: State Formation in Contemporary Uganda** by A. SJÖGREN

Kampala: Fountain/Nordic Africa Institute, 2013. Pp. 299. \$8.00 (pbk)

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This book explores state–civil society relations in contemporary Uganda in order to illustrate and explain the scope for and capacity of different forces to democratise the state. It examines the social basis of political rule, thus raising the related question of 'how social relations block or promote political democracy' in processes of state formation. Sjögren examines state–civil society relations, state formation and democratisation by extrapolating the politics of governance reforms in Uganda's health sector (national level) and decentralisation (at the local level).

Reforms in Uganda's health sector have occurred within a liberalised and donor-dependent economy but state formation strategies only allow services that create legitimation while preserving control over civil society and depoliticising political spaces (p. 101). In order to capture the complex relationship between state–society relations, state formation and