

BOOK REVIEWS

Semahagn Gashu Abebe. 2014. *The Last Post-Cold War Socialist Federation: Ethnicity, Ideology and Democracy in Ethiopia*. London: Routledge. 298 pp.

Ethiopia's ethnic federalism is under stress more than any time since its introduction in 1995. Waves of protest movements in Oromia and Amhara Regional states, in particular, have not given ethnic federalism an easy ride since 2015. Hence, Semahagn Gashu Abebe's *The Last Post-Cold War Socialist Federation* is a significant contribution in understanding the sociology of Ethiopian federalism, the political context within which it came into being and is operating, and sheds light on why some ethnic groups are protesting. Abebe's underlying objective is to explain how the configuration of a Socialist federation in the restructuring of the Ethiopian state makes the transition to and consolidation of democratization and respect for human rights difficult.

Organizing the book in eight chapters, Abebe makes a compelling case on the disjuncture between constitutional design and practice in the operation of federalism in Ethiopia. His main hypothesis is that the ideological and political tenets of the TPLF/EPRDF, the ruling coalition since 1991, are more important than the formal constitutional rules in the operation of the federal system. Precisely because of this, he contends that there are two parallel constitutional systems in Ethiopia. In order to test this hypothesis, Abebe explores and examines in detail the scholarship on federal theory and comparative federalism in the first and second chapters. After examining the origin, essential components, basic features, and operation of democratic multi-cultural federations, Abebe could not find comparative relevance for the Ethiopian federal experiment in these systems. As a result, he turns his inquiry to former Socialist federations (Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia) to get aid in understanding and explaining the Ethiopian federalism.

Abebe eloquently argues that, as the case with former Socialist federations, the original logic and the fundamentals of federalism in Ethiopia are linked to the ideological and political underpinnings of the TPLF/EPRDF. After giving a brief historical background to the Ethiopian state and its constitutional development in chapter three, Abebe discusses how the ideological and political convictions of the TPLF/EPRDF, in particular, the right to self-determination, revolutionary democracy, developmental state ideology, by party rules on *gimemma* (party evaluation), democratic centralism, and neo-patrimonial mobilization, give impetus to the origin of ethnic federalism and permeate its experiment and operation. From chapter four to seven, not only does Abebe demonstrate how these political convictions perform constitutionalist functions by pushing the formal constitutional rules into the periphery, he also identifies the socio-political factors within which each of these political underpinnings arise and operate in the context of the party, TPLF/EPRDF, and the state. In the final chapter, he holds that the ideological framework of the ruling party not only challenges the consolidation of democratic institutions and creates a hostile atmosphere for the operation of civil society

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v17/v17i4a8.pdf>

organizations and independent media, it also leads to a serious limitation on civil liberties and a decay in multi-party democratic competition.

Although the book discusses the political fundamentals of the ruling party in detail, the shift from “revolutionary democracy” to “developmental democracy” that accompanies the developmental state model was not considered. Even if it could not affect the general arguments of the book, discussion of the idea and practice of “developmental democracy” would have contributed towards its conceptual clarity. While the political ideology of the TPLF/EPRDF and its practice of government are mainly responsible for Ethiopia’s democratic deficit or even decay since 2005, the general biosphere of political discourse and competition is not less significant for the *status quo*. Similarly, even if the Marxist-Leninist influence in the restructuring of the state looms large, the attempt to address the unitary and assimilationist structure of the *ancien régime* by the TPLF/EPRDF should not be underemphasized.

In spite of this, Abebe illuminates the complex terrain of Ethiopia’s transition from military dictatorship to revolutionary democracy and disentangles the travails of the twofold constitutional system Ethiopia has been operating since 1991. Further, his book is a cautionary tale to the study of comparative constitutional law. Beyond constitutional text and formal rules, *The Last Post-Cold War Socialist Federation* shows that the field of comparative constitutional law needs to take the context within which the constitutional texts are situated and the informal rules in which the formal ones are embedded. Therefore, Abebe’s book is an important contribution to the study of Ethiopian federalism and comparative constitutional law methodology and of interest to academic scholars and policy makers alike.

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Tolu Babatunde Afolabi. 2017. *The Politics of Peacemaking in Africa: Non-State Actors’ Role in the Liberian Civil war*. London, U.K. James Currey. 203 pp.

Non-State actors have historically played a pivotal role in the polity of African states. However, very few of these organizations have had a profound influence in the peacemaking process as highlighted by Afolabi. In light of the evolving body of literature on peacekeeping and conflict management in Africa, such as F. Olonisakin, *Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone: The Story of UNAMSIL* (2008), and G. A. Adebayo, *Managing Conflicts in Africa’s Democratic Transitions* (2012), few of these studies have taken an in-depth review of how non-state actors have advanced peacekeeping in sub-Saharan Africa.

As this study suggests, peacekeeping efforts have often been within the purview of the state. However, the role played by non-state actors in the peacekeeping process in Liberia was profound because it was a departure from the typical state-centric approach to peacekeeping. The study suggests that the shift to a non-state peacekeeping model was inspired by several factors such as the end of the cold war, which advanced the role of non-state actors in peacekeeping and the eventual decline of the state centric approach to conflict resolution.

In the case of Liberia, Afolabi suggests that civil society organizations have historically been active in the Liberian political process as far back as the arrival of the repatriated ex-slaves to Liberia by the American Colonization Society in 1822. This repatriation coincided with the advent of the various Christian religious denominations such as the Baptist Church the

Presbyterian Church and the Catholic Church in Liberia. The repatriated slaves introduced the Liberian society to western fraternal orders such as the Masonic craft, which was predated by the traditional secret organizations such as the Poro Society in Liberia.

These civil organizations are important in understanding the historical context of governance in Liberia, because they served as the outpost of the political elites. That is, the Liberian political elite by the nature of its membership and leadership roles in the church, and the masonic craft, leveraged their political control of the state through these civil organizations. It is through the historical and continuous membership of these political elites in civil organizations that one can better understand the nature of the Liberian state.

However, the invasion of Liberia on December 24, 1989 by Charles Taylor's troops from Cote d' Ivoire according to Afolabi is a watershed period because it provides the context in which one should examine the role of civil society in the post-cold war political re-engineering of Liberia. In the case of Liberia, civil society organizations had become not only preoccupied with the issue of governance, they shifted their focus to the mobilization of resources in order to address the political, social, and economic challenges of post-war Liberia. According to Afolabi, these efforts influenced the founding of region-wide civil society organizations focusing on peace and security issues in the sub-region and the Mano River area which comprised Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Cote d' Ivoire.

The emergence of these region-wide civil society organizations shaped the focus of post war Liberia. These organizations became preoccupied with the function of re-engineering the state through its collaborative efforts to seek a peace plan for Liberia. For instance, the Interfaith Mediation Committee of Liberia (IFMC), a joint initiative of Christians and Muslims, was instrumental in developing a peace plan that was later adopted by ECOWAS. The IFMC, also played an integral role in the reconciliation process with the establishment of Article 13 of the Accra Accord, which advanced the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

Given these developments, Afolabi provided a lucid analysis in regard to factors that led to the Liberian Civil War and the regional alliances between warring factions. The book discusses the different phases of ECOMOG's involvement in the Liberian Civil War and the role of intercontinental groups such as the United Nations. However, the book provided only limited analysis into the role of major powers such as the United States and the United Kingdom in the peacekeeping process.

Overall, *The Politics of Peacemaking in Africa* makes a significant contribution to the body of literature on peacekeeping in Africa. It also provides a rich literature on the role of civil society in peacekeeping that could provide valuable lesson on how civil society can play a pivotal role in the re-engineering of societies and polity as is the case of Liberia. I recommend this book to students and academics who are interested in the nature of peacemaking in developing states and to policy analysts and other practitioners who are engaged in projects that are related to the role of non-state actors in conflict resolution and peacekeeping in Africa.

Emmanuel O. Oritsejafor, *North Carolina Central University*

Kwabena Gyimah-Brempong, Michael Johnson, and Hiroyuki Takeshima. 2016. *The Nigerian Rice Economy: Policy Options for Transforming Production, Marketing, and Trade*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. xiv+300 pp.

This is an important publication on the consistent efforts of successive Nigerian governments since the emergence of civil rule in 1999 to revamp the country's rice production and wean the country off the consumption of imported rice. This quest for the transformation of rice production in Nigeria received increased impetus under the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) of President Jonathan's administration. The ongoing rice revolution, which this publication seeks to project, falls within the broader initiative of the Nigerian government to diversify the country's revenue generating sources from the extant abnormal dependence on petroleum and allied products to completely new sources. This book is an elucidation on the series of policies that had been formulated to catalyze agricultural transformation with emphasis on rice production in Nigeria. The objectives of the authors for writing this book include the assessment of the policy challenges and opportunities for transforming and expanding the Nigerian rice economy among others (p. 17).

Beginning with a Foreword by Sheggen Fan, Director General of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the book contains nine chapters and a rich collection of statistical and mathematical analyses, which are enclosed as appendices. Chapter one introduces the book giving a bird's eye view of its essence and components and providing a brief historical treatise on the country's economy and the evolution of rice policies. Chapter two presents detailed analyses of rice consumption and demand patterns in Nigeria, pointing out the urban/rural and regional preferences for different rice varieties. In chapter three, the constraints imposed on rice production systems in Nigeria by biophysical and economic environment are carefully analyzed in comparison with Asia while noting the comparative advantage that Nigeria has in rice production in West Africa. Chapter four examines empirically the policy options for inducing supply response in paddy rice production through an assessment of a number of representative farm budgets, price incentives, and other public sector interventions needed to promote output growth, drawing on lessons and experiences from other major rice-producing regions in the developing world. Chapter five examines the structure and conduct of postharvest processing, marketing channels, and competitiveness of domestic rice. Chapter six carefully interrogates the policy options for modernizing the rice milling sector. Chapter seven analyzes Nigeria's recent rice import policies in terms of their effectiveness and tradeoffs with regard to affecting the volume of import, domestic prices, and tariff revenues in the country. Chapter eight assesses the potential economy-wide effects of rice sector policies on sector output growth and competitiveness with imports, changes in the sector and overall food prices, rural income growth, and overall economic performance. Chapter nine which concludes the book summarizes the findings and discusses their broad policy implications along two key areas; how to increase rice yields through technology and market improvement, and policies to encourage domestic rice production of rice.

Throughout the book there is an emphasis on multi-stakeholders' roles in expanding the frontiers of rice revolution to encompass several non-governmental actors in rice production and every aspect of its value chain in rural and urban areas across Nigeria's regional divide was stridently emphasized. The formulation of rice policies which emplaced structures and

institutional arrangements for the encouragement of demand for locally produced rice, whose supply was also enhanced, was expected to create the right policy environment for discouraging rice importation even as the authors believe that increased tariffs and import bans have not succeeded in substantially reducing rice imports.

This book, however, is not without its shortcomings. First, there is too much of econometrics and modeling involved in the authors' attempt to empiricize their analyses through the utilization of scientific methodology for operationalizing the concepts and facts that are not amenable to quantitative analysis. It is not enough to import data from different sources and subject them to an analytical method of research without interrogating those data for relevance and accuracy. Second, there is no explanation for the high cost of local rice production, which is reflected in the high price of local rice and thus a disincentive for the consumption of locally produced rice and an incentive for rice imports. Third, our authors believe that increased public funding of the rice initiative would expand the supply base of the rice economy, but this presents its own problem of the likelihood of stultifying private sector investment in the rice initiative.

Overall, this book is an authoritative publication on the ongoing rice revolution in Nigeria. It is not just a reportorial account of developments in the rice subsector of the Nigerian Agricultural sector but a profoundly analytical and intellectual piece, which anchors its theorizing on empirical knowledge of the rice initiative in the country. Using scientific tools including econometrics and modeling, the authors demonstrate a keen interest in making valid projections on the effects and prospects of every policy initiative that the Nigerian government deploys to consolidate the palpable gains of its rice revolution. For its presentation of current and empirically verifiable facts and figures on how to transform the rice subsector of an economy, *The Nigerian Rice Economy* recommends itself to scholars, teachers, and policymakers with an interest in the development of agriculture in general and in the transformation of domestic rice production for increased competitiveness in particular

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Barbara Casciarri, Munzoul Assal, and François Ireton (eds.). 2015. *Multidimensional Change in Sudan (1989-2011): Reshaping Livelihoods, Conflicts and Identities*. Oxford: Berghahn. 374 pp.

Multidimensional Change in Sudan is a book useful to those who are just beginning to learn about Sudan as well as scholars who are more experienced and want to update their knowledge about the country's recent changes. Its geographical focus is the Republic of Sudan, also known as North Sudan since South Sudan's independence after 2011 referendum. A major contribution of the book is that it makes room for excellent scholarly contributions based on fieldwork carried out between 2006 and 2011 by both Sudanese and European researchers. The editors are aware of the importance of fieldwork and strongly reinforce the importance of conducting "deep, field-based and localized research" (p. 5) since "the rethinking of categories and of theoretical approaches [...] can be supported only by a sound underlying and contextualized set of empirical data" (p. 7).

The study concerns access to resources and their management. The interdisciplinary approach is emphasized: anthropology, political science, geography, history, and linguistics are equally useful in giving substance to the book. The historical period taken into consideration begins in 1989, the year of the seizure of power by the Islamists, and ends in 2011, the year of the secession of South Sudan from North Sudan. These two dates are recognized as important 'turning points' in recent Sudanese history because they represent a moment of change in comparison to the previous and successive political phase.

The book can also claim credit for its clear organization. The volume is divided into four parts for a total of sixteen chapters. It also includes an epilogue about "A New Sudan" by Roland Marchal. Briefly, these four parts discuss the following:

(1) *Land Issues and Livelihoods in the Capital Region and Rural Areas*: We are used to associating "land grabbing" to the vast extensions of land acquired by international investors with the aim of producing agricultural goods. However, the city of Khartoum is a type of laboratory where one can link "land grabbing" to the urban environment. This part is about the importance of "land" for "development" and stimulates rethinking of categories such as "rural" and "urban" but also the meaning of "modernization" and territorial "marginalization."

(2) *Water Resources at the Core of Local and Global Interactions*: This part starts with an analysis of Sudan's "hydro-agricultural mission" of building dams and reviving agriculture and its consequences on the geopolitical level. Further contributions are more focused on popular water management skills in urban as well as rural environments and in conditions of scarcity.

(3) *New Actors, New Spaces and New Imagination on Conflicts*: In this part, we are offered an interesting insight into the role of China and India in the Sudanese economy and, above all, about oil investments. The territorial effects in some of the communities in South Kordofan are also presented. Other chapters concern internal displaced people living in Khartoum and the actors involved in the processes of diplomatic and media internationalization of the conflict in Darfur.

(4) *Reshaping Languages, Identities and Ideologies*: Religion has played an important role in the reconfiguration of Sudanese society. Its close connection with politics has been fundamental. The territorial strategy of the Sudanese state has long been inseparable from the Islamist project. For this reason, the state has not limited its power to the installation of its formal domain on the national territory, but it has also initiated processes of linguistic change—just think to Arabization—and of ideological sponsorship through the educational system.

In conclusion, this book is a fundamental resource for those who are interested in the study of contemporary Sudan. Nonetheless, it does have some weaknesses. It seems that agriculture was not given enough space for analysis despite the fact that it is the cornerstone of the Sudanese economy. For examples, the Gezira scheme (the world's largest irrigation project) would have been an appropriate laboratory to observe changing relationships between the farmers and the state. Moreover, the many cases of "land grabbing" operated by foreign investors in Sudan with the aim of establishing monoculture (often reported by the Sudanese press) would have also constituted an opportunity to address the highly sensitive problem of national food security. In this sense, the involvement of scholars engaged in the study of Sudanese agricultural development would have further enhanced the volume.

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Mark Dike DeLancey. 2016. *Conquest and Construction: Palace Architecture in Northern Cameroon*. Boston: Brill. 298 pp.

In *Conquest and Construction* Mike Dike DeLancey investigates the palace architecture of northern Cameroon, a region that was conquered in the early nineteenth century by primarily semi-nomadic, pastoralist, Muslim, Fulbe forces and incorporated as the largest emirate of the forces of the Sokoto Caliphate. Palace architecture is considered first and foremost as political in nature, and therefore as responding not only to the needs and expectations of the conquerors, but also to those of the largely sedentary, agricultural, non-Muslim conquered peoples who constituted the majority population. In the process of reconciling the cultures of these various constituents, new architectural forms and local identities were constructed.

The text is organized into five chapters, each representing a distinct yet complementary view of palace architecture in northern Cameroon. Chapter 1 is devoted to identifying architectural elements and technology, and their associated terminologies. Not only is this nomenclature important for discussion of the architecture itself, but it also frequently provides clues to the origins of particular elements based upon the linguistic roots for the term itself. Because so few structures of more than a century in age still stand, and because so little archaeological work has been conducted in this region, language is used here to provide a window into the history of architectural form.

Chapter 2 investigates the proliferation of a specific architectural type, the pillared hall called a *sooro*, in the palace architecture of northern Cameroon from the time that Fulbe conquerors incorporated this region within the Sokoto Caliphate in the early nineteenth century until the present. It argues that the Fulbe rulers who conquered the region were not of sufficiently high status to employ the political symbolism of the *sooro*, but that use of this building type spread quickly after German colonial borders separated northern Cameroon from the rest of the caliphate in 1901. Eventually, the form expanded beyond the boundaries of the Fulbe and spread among non-Fulbe rulers. Ironically, the *sooro* as a symbol of power spread in direct relation to the loss of real power by rulers in northern Cameroon.

Chapter 3 considers the placement of the palace within the urban fabric, as well as its orientation, through examples taken from a variety of the constituent cultures of northern Cameroon, and in particular Ngaoundéré. This chapter explicates the manner in which architectural planning references a variety of cultures simultaneously, either in their individual particularities or drawing them together into a single regional whole. In the first half of the chapter, DeLancey indicates how a model drawn from the early history of Islam was used to mediate between the planning and spatial concepts of the Fulbe, Hausa, and Kanuri throughout the Sokoto Caliphate. In the second half of the chapter, he investigates possible meanings of the positioning of the palace of Ngaoundéré specifically for the Mboum population of Ngaoundéré.

Chapter 4 delves into ritual movement within, and in relation to, the palace of Ngaoundéré. On the one hand, it draws upon the idea that architecture is a result of, and exists in part to direct, human experience and movement. On the other hand, it draws upon the work of anthropologists and sociologists such as Victor Turner and Maurice Bloch who write on ritual, both in terms more broadly of initiation and more specifically in the case of royalty. DeLancey begins by studying the palace form more generally, followed by a brief case study of the plan of the palace of Ngaoundéré. This is followed by an analysis of daily movement into and out of the

palace. He then suggests here that it is also important to consider the restriction of movement based on a variety of factors. He then directs his attention to three particular rituals: those comprising investiture; Friday prayers and the council meeting which follows; and *juulde Layhaaji*, or the Muslim commemoration of Abraham's sacrifice which occurs at the end of the Hajj, or annual pilgrimage.

Chapter 5 builds upon the four previous chapters in its probing of the manner in which secrecy becomes one of the most important characteristics and functions of the palace. DeLancey suggests that various elements of secrecy and their effects are experienced as one gradually approaches and enters the palace. It becomes clear that the particularities of the "secrets," which by their nature are often hidden from the broader knowledge, are less important than the political strategies of maintaining possession over and publicizing this secreted knowledge. The physical embodiment of this mode of social control forms the basis for the principal aesthetic of palace architecture in northern Cameroon.

In conclusion, this study furthermore emphasizes that architecture, African no less than any other, must be contextualized in order to better comprehend the history of forms and architectural decisions.

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Toyin Falola. 2016. *Nigerian Political Modernity and Postcolonial Predicaments*. Austin, Texas: Pan African University Press. 480 pp.

This investigation of underdevelopment in Nigeria begins with the premise that Nigeria was created by globalizing forces and long periods of suppression during centuries of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonization, and imperialism; and that this history has generated a corrosive culture that has led to a post-independence political system that perpetuates poverty and corruption. "Politics and the political model that governs it cannot be divorced from issues of underdevelopment." (p. 208). Falola argues with comprehensive evidence that a study of broad external powers rather than isolationist analysis is necessary to understand this history. Without over-glorifying Africa's pre-colonial political formations, he makes the point that issues of statism, sovereignty, and democracy need to be supplemented by an understanding of how foreign occupation and the dynamics of colonialism, particularly its extractive economy, politics of divide and rule, and exclusive political structure, had a fundamental impact on Nigeria.

Three interrelated factors, he notes, have become apparent: ethnic division, leadership deficit, and underdevelopment. Colonial rule located Nigeria within the world trade system as a primary producer and its political system mirrored this requirement; Independence in 1960 was not followed up by interdependence among the constituent ethnic groups. Nigerian nationalism did not forge national unity. Ethnicity and power contestation divided the political class, leading to a gruesome thirty-month civil war. Military rule not only ended civil rule in the First (1966), Second (1983), and Third (1993) Republics; it also disrupted federalism as well as the evolving democratic processes. It led to a centralized system that used coercion and force as instruments of oppression. Sadly the violence that characterized colonial rule was extended to post-independent Nigeria by the military.

The return to multiparty elections in 1999 as well as efforts to modernize Nigeria is yet to yield satisfactory outcomes in the form of safety, security, employment, good life, and good governance. Instead, corruption, over-centralization, politics of division, and domination by one or two main ethnic groups and/or political parties have endured. States have become weak appendages of the center. Dependence on crude oil has resulted in environmental degradation, neglect of agriculture, and an ineffective political and civil service class that formulates poor policies with weak implementation processes. Protest has become endemic—“ethnic and religious nationalism has become powerful in the light of the failure of the Nigerian state to meet the expectation of its people” (p. 128).

Falola offers two central solutions: democracy and social movement. Although he questions the suitability of Western-style democracy to Africa and admits that the presidential style of government was copied from the US without proper consideration for Nigeria’s history and society; he also argues that for democracy to deliver dividends there must be continuous public awareness and engagement, rule of law, protection of civil rights, ideologically based political parties, clear-sighted and honest politicians and, most importantly, dialogue, decentralization of power and an acceptance of the principle of free speech. The author also explores resistance to oppression and change through social movements—the coming together of a people for a common cause developed in the context of existing struggles. He concedes that social movements may have short term unexpected consequences, but in the long-run “for a society to move forward, it must be able to accommodate and learn from social movements and all assortments of agitation by interest groups” (p. 438). What drives them may be short-lived or enduring; political, social, economic, or environmental; peaceful or violent; fluid or static; social movements are ways through which societies transform and reinvent themselves.

Falola offers strategies for answering three leading questions about post colonial Nigeria: to what extent did colonialism shape the politics of Nigeria towards or away from modernization?; how did the inheritors of state power in post-independence Nigeria negotiate the delicate contours of ethnicity, power and politics?; and what is required to restructure and modernize Nigeria? In twelve packed chapters he negotiates the issues raised by these questions and presents a thesis that is of great value to historians, sociologists, and political scientists concerned with the complex history of Nigeria. Falola’s hope is that a viable democracy and energetic social movements will strengthen and renew the much abused country—Nigeria.

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Debra Faszler-McMahon and Victoria L. Ketz (eds.). 2015. *African Immigrants in Contemporary Spanish Texts: Crossing the Strait*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. 282 pp.

African Immigrants in Contemporary Spanish Texts is a collection of thirteen essays interwoven around the experiences of African immigrants and other minorities in modern Spanish texts. Shanna Lino’s analysis of Marta Sanz’s *Black, black, black* explores the irreconcilable contradictions between Spain’s posture regarding its domestic issues involving immigrants and minority rights vis-à-vis its global outlook. Gema Perez-Sanchez raises almost the same issues

in *Los principes nubios*, unveiling Spain's inability to transcend its old self and morph into the realities of its new neoliberal status and membership of the European Union. But Lino's excellent reading leaves unexplored the text's arguably most inviting metaphor that connects Spain's declining economy and the troubled social relations among its various inhabitants: Luz's infrequent menstruation. Ana Corbalan suggests that the solution to Spain's challenges, as seen in Chus Gutierrez's *Return to Hansalla*, lies in dismantling the artificial construction of a homogenous Spain through productive engagement with other cultures and in bringing justice to the victims of the passage who have become the spectres haunting Spain's "national imaginary" (p. 100). Debra Faszter-McMahon sees this optimism in Iselmu's and Awah's poetry. Both poets, she argues, negotiate immigrants' agency through a gradual suspension of distrust to intimate interactions, a movement either from monologue through observatory silence to "a reciprocal gaze" (p. 229) (Iselmu) or from "uncomfortable interrogation" to exchange (p. 233) (Awah). In relation to Africa, Abderrahman El Fathi's poetry takes this interaction beyond individual spaces to a wider continental project. Cristian H. Ricci opines that El Fathi's poetry negotiates the ways Africa can attain relevance in today's world through a "poetics of inclusion" (p. 243). In Antonia Bueno's dramas, according to Victoria Ketz, attaining agency is by reverting to "North African oral tradition" (p. 91) through which the marginalized "shock viewers out of complacency" (p. 79), something that Javier Bardem achieves in reverse by championing the course of the oppressed Saharawi people at a global stage. Jill Robbins unveils Bardem's celebrity activism by exploring his social and erotic capitals as instruments of both sympathy and liberation in *Sons of the Clouds: The Last Colony*. Raquel Vega-Duran's contribution explores this bonding historically by using logotypes, book covers and movie posters to trace nostalgically the friendly relations—once enabled by the Strait—between North Africa and Spain before the Reconquest. The "texts" she investigates recreate this sense of unity in their design, textual arrangement, language and the pictorial images they embed. As the Strait facilitated multicultural interactions in the past, so does the virtual space currently. Using an online community, the Parejas Mixtas, Kathleen Honora Connolly highlights the anxieties shrouding mixed marriages in a multicultural Spain. Her focus on inter-cultural marriages is significant for it forms a core issue in the immigrant settlement debate.

Brian Bobbit's reading of Daoudi's *The Devil of Yudis* engages burial and cemeteries as symbolic sites for economic emancipation through local and transnational journeys. But Bobbitt blurs the positioning of the characters by swapping Marbuh's buried friends with Moroccans, thereby misreading their complaints as Moroccans' "active dissidence" and strivings to attain agency (p. 215). Focusing on Maria Nsue's *Ekomo*, Benita Samedro Vizcaya raises the question of how interventions—textual and non-textual—manipulate, batter, displace and disorient texts and people (immigrants) while contemplating how to bridge divides in her upcoming translation of *Ekomo* into English, the challenges notwithstanding. Abbeele and Levinas interact in Mahan Ellison's search for home, an unfixed category determined by circumstances and desires, in Donato Ndongo's *El metro*. Here hierarchical markings of West and Africa are supplanted by instituting those "of ideal over real" (p. 168) and stereotypes displaced by concrete experience with the Other. David N Coury and Cristina Ortiz Ceberio argue that Larbi El-Harti's and Lalami's works establish a new ethics based on storytelling by disrupting stereotypes and contesting "neatly divided cultural constructs" between East and West (p. 194).

While El-Harti negotiates “a point of coincidence” (p. 197) showing female oppression on both sides of the Strait, Lalami concentrates on Murad’s experience in Morocco. What sort of text Lalami’s is, however, is uncertain: an anthology of short stories (p. 193), a novel (p. 194), or a novella (p. 199)?

Together the essays weave a structure of narration with the arc resting perhaps on Corbalan’s expression: “a ghost never dies; it always returns to haunt us” (p. 100). How this haunting unveils itself and confronts us definitely differs. But justice demands a continuous and vibrant critical engagement that unfolds the bleak side of our humanity and offers insights towards the solutions to our pain. *African Immigrants in Contemporary Spanish Texts* gives many thought-provoking perspectives in this regard.

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Pamela Felman-Savelsberg. 2016. *Mothers on the Move: Reproducing Belonging between Africa and Europe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 243 pp.

At some point in their lives, many middle-class Africans make the decision to migrate or not. Usually, for different reasons, the choice to migrate is favored. Africa is a continent perpetually on the move. Contemporarily speaking, migration to the Global North by the continent's young population is at an unprecedented rate. While scholarship on the demography and drivers of out-of-Africa migration abound, little attention has been given to how young African migrants scattered across Europe negotiate familial and personal expectations of migration. In *Mothers on the Move* Pamela Feldman-Savelsberg ethnographically fills this gap. She examines how Cameroonian migrant mothers, through childbearing and -rearing, “manage to overcome the burdens of exclusion [from families] and forge new layers of belonging” in Germany (p. 1).

The book has six related chapters. Chapter One, situates the book in a theoretical framework. Here, Feldman-Savelsberg explains how “belonging is produced, reproduced, and challenged in social relationships,” with the metaphor of affective circuits (p. 11). She argues that the ties that bind cosmopolitan Cameroonian migrant mothers in Berlin to their homelands are not always continuous. They “can be slowed, dropped, blocked and picked up again” based on what migrants encounter in Berlin (p. 11). Chapter Two explores both the historical and socio-political drivers of migration among young Bamilékés and their English-speaking Grassfield compatriots. According to Feldman-Savelsberg, “their multiple histories of movement have created the current-day predicaments of belonging” (p. 51). Hence, migration often becomes an escape from “Cameroon's discriminatory” state policies, and a strategic step towards upward social mobility.

The third chapter explains how Cameroonian mothers start families, and how they cope with the challenges of childbearing through “kin-based social networks.” In this chapter, Feldman-Savelsberg presents five love stories of Cameroonian migrants “at the earlier stages of family formation” (p. 58). She argues that Cameroonian migrants' choice of a marriage partner is almost always strategic. It involves a lot of planning and “emotional and material exchange with kin” both in Berlin and their homelands. Perhaps, the most compelling of the love stories is Maria and Paul’s. They had their marriage by proxy due to their immigration status as students and “the visa complications involved in moving across border” (p. 63). As a result of the familial

involvement in their marriage, a "long-standing affective circuits [of indebtedness] between and among ... their kin" was created (p. 63). Taken together, this chapter underscores the crucial role of familial ties in the lives of Cameroonian migrant mothers in Berlin. Chapter Four opens with the musings of Ariane—who doubles as a young mother and an international student. To Ariane, belonging is largely familial, and the task of navigating its many layers in "an unfamiliar social and bureaucratic environment" is daunting. Mothers like Ariane consider childrearing to be a "socially reproductive labor" that enables the development of affective circuits (p. 92). The social networks that memorializes childrearing is seen as an avenue to "work to ensure their children have legal rights" in Germany, and create ties with "wider circles of kin" in Cameroon (p. 92).

The fifth chapter examines civic engagement. It explores how Cameroonian migrant mothers in Berlin engender civic engagement through associational life. Feldman-Savelsberg notes that through "formal membership in association, [participation] in monthly meetings," and the use of "association resources in times of need," Cameroonian migrant mothers create and reproduce belonging (p. 130). They consider these associations to be particularly important because they serve as platforms for their children to get connected to their roots and to cherish things as simple as hearing someone speak their own dialects. In the final chapter, Feldman-Savelsberg foregrounds the interaction between migrant mothers and the law. The chapter casts a broader light on the idea of legal consciousness in Chapter One. Here, she notes that the multiplicity of legal rules and the burdens of foreignness strongly "affect[s] the connections that Cameroonian migrant mothers maintain with their relatives in Cameroon" (p. 164).

Overall, this is a beautiful contribution to scholarship on migration and belonging, although some points in the book seem repetitive. The argument that migrants' "reproductive practices" are paths to citizenship and logical steps to strengthening affinal ties is also compelling. And the evident trust and camaraderie between Feldman-Savelsberg and her respondents is remarkable. However, the "Europe" in the book title is somehow unnecessary, since the book focuses solely on stories from migrant lives in Berlin. Besides, what works in Germany might not work in, say, Turkey or Israel.

Olagbenro (Ola) Oladipo, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*

Linda Heywood. 2017. *Njinga of Angola: Africa's Warrior Queen*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 320 pp.

Njinga of Angola: Africa's Warrior Queen, the first comprehensive biography of Queen Njinga of Ndongo and Matamba published in the English-speaking world, is essential reading for scholars of Central and Lusophone Africa. In her lifetime, Njinga drove the narrative of seventeenth century Angola. Born to a royal Mbundu family in 1582, Njinga oversaw her kingdom's transition from continuous war with the Portuguese to a peaceful, autonomous, Christian state at the time of her death in 1663. The book covers the entirety of Njinga's incredible life as the leader of two kingdoms, describing her expert skills as a military and political leader, her initiation as an Imbangala warrior, conversion to Christianity, and transformation into an icon of resistance to colonialism by the leaders of Angola's independence movement in the twentieth century.

The narrative begins in the decades before Njinga's birth, providing a brief history of the neighboring Kingdom of Kongo, the founding of the Kingdom of Ndongo, and a description of Njinga's royal lineage, providing context to the world into which Njinga was born. Further chapters chronicle the rise to power of her father, Mbande a Ngola, her brother, Ngola Mbande, and Njinga's own ascension as queen and the perpetual oscillation between warfare and negotiation with the Portuguese. In 1626, the Portuguese colonial government selected her distant relative, Ngola Hari, as their preferred ruler of Ndongo. While Ngola Hari persisted as a rival to the queen throughout her reign, he was forced to pay humiliating tribute to the Portuguese and was never accepted as the legitimate king by the majority of Ndongo. His life as a shadow king serves as a symbol of what Njinga's royal position would have been reduced to, had she acquiesced to vassalage. Resistance and defiance are the root of her enduring hero status in Angola. In her later years, Njinga's political life turned from warfare to religious diplomacy as she leveraged her renewed interest in Christianity to broker a peace treaty with the Portuguese, while weighing the extent to which she and her court would continue to practice the Mbundu rituals expected of her by the people.

The author, historian Linda Heywood, spent years researching the letters and diaries of Njinga's contemporaries in archives across Angola, Italy, and Portugal. These primary sources bring to life a charismatic woman who dominated every room into which she set foot. She was as adept at using ritual and pageantry to make political impressions as she was at wielding a battle ax in war.

Heywood is committed to lifting Njinga's historical status to that of other famous women in history, and for this reason the focus on her subject is justifiably unwavering. It would have been natural to fill pages with descriptions of the various Portuguese governors who passed through Luanda in Njinga's lifetime. Instead, their numerous names and short terms serve to highlight the duration and constancy of the queen's royal authority across time. From the moment the narrative shifts from Ngola Mbande's demise to Njinga's rule, few words are devoted to anyone else. Action and actors outside of Angola are not described in great detail. In this regard, Heywood is a demanding author; she expects the reader to come to the table prepared with a basic understanding of the seventeenth century world. It is mentioned that the 1641 Dutch invasion of Portuguese Luanda was a piece of the Thirty Years War, but the events are told entirely from Njinga's perspective, elaborating the potential benefit she saw in making an alliance with the enemies of her enemy, rather than the motivations of the Dutch.

In a similar vein, little explanation is provided regarding the fate that awaited the thousands of slaves traded with the Portuguese under Njinga's watch. These are details that can be found in other publications. In many ways, *Njinga of Angola* serves as a complement to Heywood's past research on the Atlantic World, providing a view of the slave trade from the perspective of African leadership.

In a 2011 interview with *Bostonia* magazine, Heywood stated that, through her research, she aimed to "sort myth from fact." The most illustrative myth about Njinga, that she used an attendant as a chair in order to assert her power, rather than sit on the floor before a Portuguese governor in 1622, turns out to be true. Instead, perhaps the most important myth unwound by this book could very well be of the image of Njinga as an unquestioned hero of resistance to oppression. The narrative does not shy away from Njinga's involvement in the slave trade and

there is no evidence presented that she questioned the morality of the trading of humans, only that she insisted on her right, as queen, to control it. The most cynical interpretation of her life is that her famed resistance was only to the assault on her absolute authority over her own people. Heywood makes no such interpretations, presenting her subject's well-documented complexity in full view, without hagiography or judgement.

Heather Jordan, *Independent Researcher*

Vincent Hiribarren. 2017. *A History of Borno: Trans-Saharan African Empire to Failing Nigerian State*. New York: Oxford University Press. 311 pp.

For nearly a millennium, Borno and its eastern extension called Kanem was the economic and political center of an empire built on the control of the trans-Saharan commercial networks that linked the Sahel to the Mediterranean. Conquered in the 19th century, Borno has since then become a remote periphery, most famously known for hosting one of the bloodiest insurgencies of the world. *A History of Borno* draws out this paradox to trace the evolution of this pre-colonial state, from the Fulani jihad in 1804 until the year 2010.

The chapter that covers the 19th century is by far the most stimulating of the book but also the most problematic. The author challenges Jeffrey Herbst's thesis according to which African pre-colonial states adopted a non-territorial model of power because the cost of expanding power from the capital combined with military weakness and the absence of a decentralized political apparatus made the control over territory impossible. For the author of *A History of Borno*, by contrast, the case of Borno shows that some pre-colonial states exercised territorial control over their hinterland and maintained well-defined boundaries, in a similar way to Westphalian states. "Borno was a bounded territory with a codified relationship with its vassal states," the author argues (p. 14).

Hiribarren provides a number of historical arguments that makes this thesis difficult to defend, recognizing himself that "we still do not know what extent [19th century Borno leader] El-Kanemi actually dominated the whole territory of Borno after the Fulani jihad" (p. 24). Far from mastering its borders, Borno maintained ill-defined peripheries where the empire could episodically raid slaves if the population was pagan, as in many other peripheral regions in Western Africa, such as the Bandiagara Cliff and Hombori Mountains in today's Mali. Far from ensuring territorial control over its hinterland, Borno also relied on a person-based system to control its population, a property that Muhammad El-Kanemi did not call into question when he supplanted the Sufaywa dynasty that had ruled over Borno since 1380. Similar strategies were developed by pre-colonial states in other parts of Western Africa, where so small a population was scattered over so vast an area. Finally, unlike the European nation-states Borno did not define itself as an ethnic nation but as a Muslim community, which caused many embarrassments to the Jihadist Fulani of Sokoto when they attacked Borno at the beginning of the 19th century. This can be said of many political entities for which the European-inspired concept of nation was not relevant until the 20th century. In sum, Borno may be understudied but no different from many pre-colonial states that, from the Senegal River valley to Kanem, have flourished in the Sahel-Sahara.

The intention of the following chapters is to propose a detailed analysis of the historical circumstances that led to the delineation of the borders between the colonies of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany around Lake Chad. As in the Hausa country, Borno reminds us that West African borders of colonial origin were not always arbitrarily drawn from London, Paris, or Berlin. *A History of Borno* provides a very interesting account of the manner in which the colonial powers seized Borno and shows in detail how the European treaties had to confront the reality of an immense region and negotiated borderlines locally. The book also provides a detailed analysis of how Borno progressively became a provincial state within colonial Nigeria. The author highlights the durability of the historical boundaries of Borno, as well as the steps leading to the division between Nigeria and Cameroon during the late 1950s.

The book deals only very marginally with Boko Haram, a perfectly justified choice insofar as Boko Haram has been the subject of many other specialized works in recent years. More surprising, however, is the fact that the trans-Saharan dimension of Borno is largely absent from the book, despite its subtitle *Trans-Saharan African Empire*. The author argues that Borno's wealth came from taxes levied on its territory, without explaining that Borno owed its longevity to its unique control of the central road that connected both shores of the Sahara through the Fezzan. In the one hundred pages of notes and bibliography, the reader will find several references to the work of historians of African pre-colonial space, such as Paul Nugent and Allen Howard, but no reference to the geographers inspired by Jean Gallais, whose "mobile" approach of the Sahelian space originated from a region very close to Borno, the Nigerien Koutous.

In conclusion, the book is a valuable addition to the understudied Borno that will appeal to historians, geographers and political scientists working on the territorial nature of power in Africa. Those studying relational forms of power as well as social and trade networks across the region will be left wanting.

Olivier J. Walther, *University of Florida*

Ousmane Oumar Kane. 2016. *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 282 pp.

Much ink has been spilled on Timbuktu's collections of rare Arabic manuscripts. The celebration of the historic Malian city in the popular imagination might have led to sheer fascination about the materiality of its so-called "magic scrolls." In *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa*, Ousmane Kane takes the symbolism of the historic city as his point of departure as he charts the transformations of the Arabic-Islamic tradition of learning in the region and its enduring, multifaceted role today. Timbuktu's libraries have often been seen as the unique hard evidence of a long ignored pre-colonial African literary past. In fact, Kane argues, it was but one of a network of centers of Islamic learning that flourished in pre-colonial Africa before and indeed well after the old city's intellectual decline in the second half of the seventeenth century.

Beyond Timbuktu is as much a careful overview of the contribution of African Muslims to the Islamic library as it is an exploration of the role of Islam in African societies, past and present. Drawing on a dense bibliography, it synthesizes rather creatively decades of

interdisciplinary scholarship centered on the study of Islam in Africa in order to explore the relationship between Islamic knowledge and power over time. In contending that Islamic intellectual influence in the continent both preceded and survived the European one, Kane's ambition is to "turn the discussion of the African Library on its head" (p. 10). In so doing, he seeks to illuminate the role of Islamic scholars in "the production and transmission of knowledge and in shaping state and society relations" (p. 18). In a nod to Timbuktu's old mosque/university, Kane claims that such an approach is in line with what he calls a "Sankoré epistemology."

The book has two dominant themes clearly outlined in the "prologue": first, the origin, content, and impact of the Islamic culture and knowledge in Africa; and second, the fate of the Islamic education system and the effects of its transformation on the postcolonial and contemporary public sphere in Islamic Africa. *Beyond Timbuktu's* nine chapters cover two main threads. The first five chapters explore the Islamization of Africa and the development of Islamic knowledge on the continent. Kane surveys the journey of the Islamic literature produced over time by African Muslim communities. Arabic literacy and the jurisprudence of Muslim legal scholars, theological debates, and Sufis practices and beliefs shaped for centuries African Muslim societies in ways often ignored by scholars of Islam working on other areas. The continent went largely under the academic radar at least until the recent emergence of "Timbuktu studies", as Kane calls the academic study of Islamic intellectual life in Africa which reached its "zenith" only in the late twentieth century (Chapter 1). Kane shows how the conversion to Islam of large parts of West Africa gave way to a growing emphasis on pilgrimage to Mecca, comprehensive knowledge of the Qur'an, and advanced knowledge of Arabic. Such developments stimulated the spread of Islamic education, piety, and communal engagement on the continent (Chapter 2), especially at the hands of the "clerical lineages" which emerged in almost all the region's Muslim societies (Chapters 3). The core curriculum of Islamic knowledge taught in African centers of learning covered the entire spectrum of classical Islamic knowledge (Chapter 4). But close reading of the African Islamic archive leads Kane to argue that historians failed to identify a number of writings concerned with Takfir (excommunication) slavery, jihad, Sharia, community building, etc. as "political" in nature (Chapter 5).

The remaining four chapters discuss how, in spite of the repeated shocks to which they were subjected, especially under colonial rule, Islamic institutions of learning survived their increasing marginalization in postcolonial Africa and continued to attract scores of students (Chapter 6). Beginning from the 1980's, the liberalization of the African education system as well as the efforts of oil-rich Arab and Muslim countries (Saudi Arabia, Iran, Libya) led to the creation of many Islamic universities. Kane offers here (Chapter 7) a fieldwork-based survey of the modern Islamic institutions of higher learning that mushroomed on the continent. Kane describes what one might call "the revenge" of the traditional Arabic-speaking elite in the wake of the so-called "democratization" of the African public sphere in the last decades of the twentieth century. Despite the fact that the Western-trained elite (termed here "Europhone elite") inherited state apparatus and power in postcolonial Africa, Islamic intellectuals and graduates from Islamic education (termed here "Arabophones") ultimately managed to make their voices heard in the postcolonial public sphere (Chapter 8). Kane shows then how various

Islamic players including Sufis, reformists and jihadist groups challenged both the western “space of meaning” and the postcolonial state. Kane has the humility to concede that political scientists studying Islam in Africa, himself included, failed to predict the radicalization of important sections of African Islamists (Chapter 9).

The “epilogue” of the book is an account of how most African Muslims today try to articulate modernity and tradition, science and religion, faith and reason, western, Arabic and indigenous epistemology etc. Therefore, Kane argues, Ali Mazrui’s notion of “Africa’s triple heritage” (indigenous, Arab, and western) is more relevant than ever. Yet, Kane laments the fragmentation of knowledge and education between European languages and Arabic and contends that this is a genuine challenge to the development of a solid education system in Africa. However, Kane does not give any suggestion as of how to overcome this central issue.

With *Beyond Timbuktu*, Ousmane Kane provides a fresh look at the history of Africa as a major site of Islamic knowledge and Arabic literacy. A particular strength of this book is his close readings of a number of African Islamic writings and his first hand data and analysis on Islamic universities in today Africa. His effort is praiseworthy, especially as he attempts throughout the book to ascribe intellectual and spiritual meanings to religious life without disconnecting it from its social and political functions. Last but not least, Kane enlivens his book with insights from his own biography as the grandson of Shaykh Ibrahim Niassé, arguably the most influential Sufi leader in twentieth-century Africa. This author is clearly moving on very familiar ground, beyond his own position as a leading scholar of Islam in Africa.

Zekeria Ould Ahmed Salem, *Northwestern University*

Gaim Kibreab. 2017. *The Eritrean National Service: Servitude for ‘the Common Good’ and the Youth Exodus*. Rochester: James Currey Press. 207 pp.

Gaim Kibreab provides a thorough examination of the Eritrean National Service (ENS) project with a close look at the structure, effectiveness, goals, and objectives and analyzes the overall impact of this major national project on the participants, the Eritrean state, and the current refugee crisis in Europe and Israel. He offers an empirical analysis about ENS through the examination of primary collected data from key informants, surveys, peer reviewed literature, reports, and national and international media interviews with Eritrean government officials.

The book begins by looking at the rationale, main objectives, and extent of ENS. It provides a detailed analysis about the early days of its inception with proclamation N0.11/1991 of the Provisional Government of Eritrea. The next two chapters present broader theoretical and historical perspectives of national services from around the world with special focus on the philosophical perspective on the role of national service as being both the highest good to society and being an anti-freedom that erodes all forms of social liberty. The author provides an extensive scrutiny of the Eritrean national service in this philosophical debate and how the Eritrean national service might be unique in that it defeats its own initial national building, national unity, and the building of professional army goals. In fact, the author made a compelling argument with painstaking evidence as to why ENS evolved into a form of forced slavery which led to the exodus of thousands of national service recruits.

In the subsequent chapters, the book covers a wide range of issues in the ENS project that includes government officials' motives and assessment of ENS, the relationship between the old guard (*Yikalo's*) and the national service recruits (*Warsai*), national unity, equality, gender violence, and the impact of this national project on the Eritrean social fabric. Kibreab presents a comprehensive examination of the Eritrean government officials' interviews, particularly the presidents and his former defense minister, who are the architects of the ENS. The interviews provide philosophical underpinning to both the inception and assessment of the ENS. At times these views are contradictory and fail to assess the actual outcome of the project. The book shows that the Eritrean leadership failed to understand the constraints of ENS on the establishment of effective military capability in the country and fulfil the intended missions. Furthermore, ENS, as a national project, has failed to cement the cohesion between the *Yikalo* and *Warsai* in order to transmit the core values developed during the liberation struggle. The author argues the unequal and hierarchical relationship between the two became an impediment to those core values transmission. He further asserts that the whole project became an institution of exploitation whereby their *Yikalo* commanders used national service recruits as laborers and sexual slaves. The book also provides an important piece of evidence that shows while ENS has generally provided national unity and understanding between the different ethnicities, its long term and open-ended nature weakened those benefits. This compulsory military service brought unequal treatment within the military and corruption that led people with money, connection, and privilege to avoid lengthy military service.

The book reveals the significant impact of ENS on the militarization of Eritrean society and the destruction of social values and norms. This militarization of the entire society weakened the traditional social order, the family unit, and the human resource of communities. More importantly, Kibreab examines how the current flow of Eritrean refugees to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea is directly linked to the open-ended and oppressive nature of ENS. The author made a detailed documentation, through key informants, of the sacrifices and suffering of refugees at the hands of ruthless traffickers on their way to Israel and Europe.

This book makes a vital contribution to an important and pressing political and social issue that is impacting millions of people in today's Eritrea. Aside from a few media reports and nongovernmental agencies' reports, this is the only work that is based on a systematic empirical and methodological rigorous study on ENS. Thus it makes a substantial contribution to understand the prevailing nature of ENS as a major source of human rights abuse in Eritrea. More importantly, the author makes a convincing case to the Eritrean and international governments as to why ENS is not a sustainable and reliable national project that failed to contribute to the betterment of society and the individual participants. I applaud the author for making this timely and important contribution to the current literature on Eritrea migration, refugees, national service, and human rights studies.

Dawit Woldu, *University of Houston Clear Lake*

Mickie Mwanzia Koster, Michael Mwenda Kithinji, and Jerono P. Rotich (eds.). 2016. *Kenya After 50: Reconfiguring Education, Gender and Policy*. Palgrave Macmillan. 265 pp.

Kenya After 50 is a collection of contemplative essays that examine the accomplishments Kenya continues to make and the challenges it faces five decades after achievement of independence in 1963. The book is a second volume produced from reflections shared at the sixth annual Kenyan Scholars and Studies Association (KESSA) in 2013. The introductory section notes that “the project identifies key milestones that Kenya has achieved since independence, the challenges of this experience, and future prospects” (p. 2). Many of the issues and topics addressed in this book remain relevant to Kenyan development discourse.

In the opening chapter, Kithinji examines the state of education in Kenya casting a lens on major curricula reforms starting from the post-independence British influenced 7-4-2-3 system and later the 8-4-4 system with Canadian underpinnings. He presents a historical narrative noting that the system “served to internationalize the British colonial education model that ensures continuation of policies and practices that encouraged narrow curricula specialization and limited access to higher education in the post-independence period” (p. 29). At the university level he proposes a system where students are not compartmentalized into strict, narrow academic disciplines but are instead exposed to a liberal education system that breeds the critical thinking and creativity that is much needed in Kenya. These arguments provide a good foundation to analyze the newest curriculum in town—2-6-3-3-3.

In the subsequent chapter, Ojiambo makes an assessment of the previous successful contribution of the Kenya National Youth Service (NYS) in addressing educational and development challenges in post-colonial Kenya. He postulates its role as a double-edged sword that contributed to both national development and at the same time ensured that the youth were offered “a holistic education that provides academic technical, vocational and affective skills.” (p. 58). In Chapter Three, Njeru calls for the incorporation of the mother tongue as an instructional language in school to boost students’ learning development as well as to foster national and cultural unity. Ndanyi in Chapter Four discusses the crackdown on Theatre as a Tool for Development (TfD) by the first president Kenyatta and how this process muted constructive criticism of government in the post interdependence period. He calls for tolerance among political elites toward dissenting opinions especially within the space of theatre.

The next two chapters deviate from the education component, with the first discussing Mpesa, Kenya’s renown global mobile transfer platform and the second examining the challenge of high road carnage. In the case of technology, Jacob describes Mpesa as a tool of nationalism given the fact that it has succeeded in connecting rural and urban areas of the country and facilitating an exchange of social communication. On road carnage, Manyara analyses trends in car accident rates in Kenya and their main contributors. Road deaths and related injuries continue to present an enormous challenge in Kenya today. Manyara recommends a move from punitive and ineffective efforts targeting driver behavior and instead calls for policies aimed at engaging relevant stakeholders and addressing structural antecedents to the problem.

The book’s second section focuses on issues of gender equality. Njorarai in Chapters Seven and Eight delve into an often forgotten subject on the role of women in sports both as participants and as leaders. He provides a historical account on the involvement of women in

local, national, and international sports, their often downplayed achievements, and their underrepresentation. He borrows from patriarchal theories as well as Ali Mazrui's demilitarization of women in sports, where male hegemony and women exclusion is dominant. Njorarai calls for government support for female athletes, noting that the gap in women leadership in sports within Kenyan universities highlights the need for women to ascend into leadership positions both in administrative and technical capacities.

Muhonja in Chapter Nine calls for gender-equitable ways of street naming in Nairobi, where she points out that street names carry political clout by representing key figures who were central to liberation movements. The absence of women in this naming process is an erasure of Kenya's unsung heroes and therefore needs to be reconsidered. Rotich and Kipchumba in Chapter Ten offer a summarized description of women's various milestones within political, entrepreneurial, leadership, educational, and sporting positions. The writers call for a celebration and acknowledgement of these achievements at the same time calling for "innovative monitoring and accountability strategies that will help alleviate the impending constraints" (p. 223).

The final chapter by Sanya and Lutomia examines feminism, justice, and women's rights in Kenya. Here they look at women's rights movement groups including progress made by Kenyan feminists since Nairobi's Forum 85 that is considered to have ushered in transnational feminism. They further highlight the need to situate men as feminist allies and to move away from the categorization of gender as binary as it excludes LGBTQIA persons who "remain subject to policies and policing driven by heteronormativity" (p. 240). They conclude by noting that although Kenyan feminists and women's groups have reached many milestones, the work remains unfinished. Academia must keep tabs on consequences and politics of such feminisms.

In conclusion, this book provides a broad perspective on select yet relevant topics covering Kenya's journey since independence. It serves as an important reference point for anyone interested not just in the negatives or non-accomplishments but also in often undocumented milestones that can inform future action pathways.

Sheila N. Maingi, *University of Florida*

Bea Lundt and Christopher Marx (Eds.). 2016. *Kwame Nkrumah, 1909-1972: A Controversial Visionary*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag. 208 pp.

In 1960 Kwame Nkrumah proclaimed at the Positive Action Conference for Peace and Security in Africa held in Accra that "We face neither East nor West: we face forward." Ever since, scholars have said much about the *Osagyefo's* quests to free Ghana from colonial rule and implement his United States of Africa. Bea Lundt and Christopher Marx in their roles as editors have organized an important instalment. After their fine introduction, they divide the eleven contributions into three parts: "Visions and Politics," "Opposition and Coup," and "Evaluation and Memory. Each contribution has an abstract, introduction, conclusion, and footnotes. "About the Authors" concludes the volume. The book does not contain bibliographies, indexes, maps, or a list of the twenty-seven black and white illustrations.

Kwame Nkrumah's noble goals were significant. Imagine that his quest to bring about an end to the Vietnam War in 1966 had succeeded, that he had persuaded emerging African

leaders to stand up to West by creating the Pan-African United States of Africa, or that he effected the ban of atomic weapons. Instead, his Ghanaian opposition with CIA knowledge overthrew Nkrumah during his peace mission to Vietnam; African leaders replaced his Pan-African goals with a demand for national and regional unity first; and thousands of atomic weapons remain a present danger to our world. Whether due to the Cold War, neo-colonialism, or lack of African vision, powerful leaders did not seize Nkrumah's pregnant moment.

Nkrumah attended Ghanaian mission schools and American universities in the 1930s and 1940s. As he grew into an intellectual revolutionary, Nkrumah was influenced by another US-educated student, the Pan-Africanist George Padmore. Arno Sonderegger assesses their time together between 1945 and 1959. Kofi Darkwah explains how some of their ideas to overthrow colonial regimes and unify Africa were brought to fruition in the creation of the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute at Winneba.

Women supported Nkrumah. Cyrelene Amoah-Boampong argues that the *Osagyefo* was a feminist—at least in comparison to Victorian colonial regimes that diminished women. She notes that Nkrumah's policies of gender equity and equality were revoked after his overthrow and were not reinstated until the 1990s. In the central part of the book Kwame Osei Kwarteng and Mary Owusu consider the rise of Nkrumah over other anti-colonial Ghanaians. Nna Yaw B. Spong analyzes Nkrumah's political life between 1948-1951. Samuel Aniegye Ntewusu assesses Nkrumah's failed agricultural policies in northern Ghana.

From an imperial perspective, a major question is the degree of US involvement in the *coup d'état* that ousted Nkrumah. Any involvement would have been ironic, given Nkrumah earned three US university degrees between 1935-1943, admired the unity of the US, and successfully negotiated with Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy to initiate the Volta River Dam Project. Jonathan Otto Pohl argues that the Nkrumah-US relationship increasingly frayed due to the US defense of European imperialism, particularly involving the murder of Patrice Lumumba and Togolese sheltering of Nkrumah's violent foes. After two years of discussions with the CIA and the US Embassy, Nkrumah's opponents overthrew the *Osagyefo*. In return, the US rewarded Ghana with economic and agricultural aid. Pohl notes that the precise nature of the CIA's role in the coup remains a mystery.

Charismatic leaders like Kwame Nkrumah are often controversial. Interpreting their significance can change over time. Felix Müller's chapter describes how Ghanaian intellectuals initially condemned Nkrumah, rehabilitated him, and more recently revere him. Carola Lentz evaluates that contested memory within the *Osagyefo's* statue in Accra's Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park. Sometimes decapitated, sometimes replaced, and sometimes absent, much like the present discussion of Confederate statues in the US or Cecil Rhodes in South Africa, the Nkrumah statue in Accra has been admired and vilified. The degree of appreciation of them all reflects those controlling history in any given present.

Harcourt Fuller's chapter concludes the book by examining Nkrumah's efforts to accelerate Ghana's industrial and technological development. Fuller illustrates his points by reproducing in black and white ten stamps originally in color. Although likely the publisher's decision, the black and white images prohibit readers from fully experiencing Nkrumah's intended semiotics of Ghanaian and African culture. Fuller's claim that the Volta River Project was a "white elephant" recalls Ali Mazrui's assertions in "Tools of Exploitation" (Part 4 of his documentary

“The Africans: A Triple Heritage). A careful look at a report in 1966 from the Economic Advisory Mission to Ghana (Sept.-Nov. 1965) for the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development reached no such conclusion. Dam projects of this size will incur problems, including financial arrangements and forced removals—all reached through compromise. The lack of competence in pursuing science and technology by subsequent regimes or nature’s vagaries cannot be blamed on Nkrumah. The Volta River Project remains a point of pride for many Ghanaians today.

This volume is impressive and helpful in bringing the *Osagyefo* to the world in 2018. Two topics in need of further exploration are Nkrumah’s relationships with W.E.B. Du Bois, who is buried in Accra, and Nelson Mandela, who clandestinely visited Ghana in 1962 before he was imprisoned for life on Robben Island. Advanced college students and Africanists will benefit from this update, for the problems Nkrumah addressed persist. The maldistribution of the world’s wealth and neocolonialism remain prevalent today partly because the wisdom inherent in Kwame Nkrumah’s Pan-African and anti-imperial agendas has largely been ignored.

Kenneth Wilburn, *East Carolina University*

Chérie Rivers Ndaliko. 2016. *Necessary Noise: Music, Film, and Charitable Imperialism in the East of Congo*. New York: Oxford University Press. Xiv + 285 pp.

From the initial colonization in the 19th century of what became the Democratic Republic of Congo, proponents of Western interventions have turned to humanitarian concerns to justify their actions. US and European foreign aid propped up Mobutu Sese Seko’s dictatorship from 1965 until the early 1990s. Particularly in eastern DRC, international development organizations have gained tremendous influence since the civil wars of the 1990s. *Necessary Noise* is a vital work that celebrates how Congolese artists and musicians have voiced their concerns about their society, even as development and humanitarian organizations have sought to harness and control Congolese performers. Rivers Ndaliko points out the political value of utopian visions within Congolese contemporary art and music.

This study concentrates on Yole!Africa, an artistic collective that formed as part of a growing movement of young artists in the eastern Congolese city of Goma in the late 1990s, just as the DRC was becoming embroiled in civil war. Petna Ndaliko, a youth leader and aspiring filmmaker from Goma, formed Yole!Africa while living in Uganda as a refugee. Though Petna himself was not at first able to return to Goma, he helped to organize a chapter of Yole!Africa in his city of origin. Two of the major goals of this association are to combat negative stereotypes about Congolese people and to highlight Congolese agency via music and film. Artists within the organization often debated each other over whether or not to seek larger audiences via works that were more commercially viable or attractive to potential international NGO sponsorship.

The author provides skillful analysis of individual works made by Yole!Africa as well as the broader political and economic context of artistic production in the DRC. *Tuko Tayari*, an early film by the collective made in 2007, rejected focusing on war and natural disaster that so predominated Western media coverage of Goma in favor of daily life. Another film, *Ndoto Yangu* (2008), offered a more pointed critique of Congolese president Joseph Kabila’s regime via

hip hop. Rivers Ndaliko notes how this more outspoken message risked being co-opted by international NGOs seeking “authentic” voices to promote their own ideas. This tension between foreign NGOs and Congolese artists is a major theme of the entire book. One of the more fascinating examples of this uneasy relationship is reviewed in Chapter Three. UNICEF and the international NGO Solidarités Internationales organized in 2013 a concert of Congolese musicians as a way of educating people in North Kivu about the dangers of cholera. Yole!Africa’s contribution to this effort was to hold a meeting in which concerns about Western mining and political manipulations were raised, alongside the assertion that international NGOs helped to perpetuate the misery of Congolese by providing assistance without working to radically change the political status quo. Songs inspired by these critiques unsurprisingly did not go over well with NGOs, who preferred lyrics about washing hands and clean water over more revolutionary themes. The financial inequalities of well-endowed NGOs dealing with struggling artists meant that more anodyne and pliable messages tended to win out. Similar conflicts play out among international organizations themselves. Even popularity for Congolese artists and NGOs poses problems, since other Congolese often assume artists favor particular ethnic groups or have been co-opted by international organizations.

Despite these challenges, Yole!Africa’s film and artistic productions provide remarkable reworkings of Congolese society. Several Yole!Africa film and musical projects articulate the suffering of Congolese women without treating them as passive and silent figures to only be redeemed by international intervention. “Twaomba Amani,” a song and video, featured footage of Congolese women protesting sexual assault and the lack of justice for its victims. The documentary *Jazz Mama* features the resilience as well as the adversity of female survivors of assault. Female artists and musicians working within and alongside Yole!Africa have voiced their own political and social critiques.

This book is a necessary read for anyone interested in current politics and art in the DRC. It also is valuable in its analyses of the relationship between African NGOs and international organizations. *Necessary Noise* draws from a range of critical theoretical insights and skillfully presents them in forthright, clear prose—no mean feat. Upper division undergraduates, graduate students, and general readers alike will learn a great deal from Rivers Ndaliko’s methods and her presentation. Two minor issues do emerge that readers should be aware of. How the Congolese government might be seeking to control artists and musicians for its own benefit is not discussed in detail here. Rivers Ndaliko’s faith in Patrice Lumumba’s vision for the Congo cruelly cut short by Belgian and Congolese enemies (p. 14) may be overly utopian. However, this book’s critical but still confident take on the potential for Congolese artists and musicians for social justice deserves a wide reading.

Jeremy Rich, *Marywood University*

Holly Porter. 2017. *After Rape: Violence, Justice, and Social Harmony in Uganda*. London: International African Institute and Cambridge University Press. 255 pp.

Over the last decade or so post-war Acholiland in northern Uganda—from where the Lord's Resistance Army rebels originated—has been subjected to a massive research intervention. The development leaves me partly puzzled: despite a virtual avalanche of books, articles and human rights reports, I have a nagging doubt that little is said that is not already known. For how long is it ethically sound to continue to produce and reprise research on more or less the same matters? When is the so-called field, including its informants (who, by the way, are real persons), exhausted? This question of research ethics in the field also has epistemological repercussions: what if yet another round of surveys end up only confirming or refuting the presuppositions established prior to coming to the field?

Such developments in mind, Holly Porter's *After Rape* stands out as different: thoughtful and important; a mandatory read. "Rape... is not just violence. It is also sex, in all of its complex variations" (p. 55). By way of this claim, Porter links rape during times of war with rape that takes place regardless of any war, and she finds support from fellow anthropologist Carolyn Nordstrom who argues that what people accept in peace will shape what they will tolerate in war. "Rape as sexual violence needs theories of both violence and sex" (p. 56).

Porter's work made me think of anthropologist Margaret Mead. When the discipline's ethnographic methods are in beautiful sync with the creativity and sensitivity of a particular fieldworker, anthropology can produce unique and groundbreaking stuff. Mead, when a young female fieldworker, produced exceptional and pioneer research on young Samoan women's agency and sexuality. Porter's study is a remarkable parallel. Two dimensions stand out. First, she anchors her arguments in the existing literature, both past and present, and still she advances previous analyses (mine included) in new, critical, and innovative ways. Second, Porter presents excellent (even if painful) ethnographic material that genuinely contributes to the body of research on Acholiland in particular and on the theme of rape in general. "Living here, really being here," Porter notes as she describes her approach as a fieldworker in postwar Acholiland, "has given this work its shape. The stories of rape and what happens afterwards occur within an Acholi rhythm of life, in which I engage" (pp. 22-23). Indeed, her ethnography has the true anthropological potential of comparison and cultural critique, to recall again the legacy of Mead's classic study. Porter quotes not Mead but Clifford Geertz: "It may be in the cultural particularities of people—in their oddities—that some of the most instructive revelations of what it is to be generically human are to be found" (p. 227).

Dwelling extensively on the concept of social harmony, which includes an assessment of Acholi views on male and female sexuality in relation to marriage, parenting, bridewealth and kinship ideologies, Porter shows the way women experience rape and its consequences are social and cosmological. Any redress, as Porter's informants are painfully aware of, must address the wider context. The ultimate goal will be to restore social harmony, and this will not necessarily acknowledge the agency and wishes of the raped women nor the agendas of outside intervening agencies such as the Ugandan state or the International Criminal Court. Integral to Porter's argument is a penetrating discussion on wartime and post-war justice, and the lack thereof. The argument is best summarised by Porter herself: "The book illustrates the centrality

of two integral aspects of lived Acholi reality: *There is a profound value of social harmony, and a deep distrust of higher authorities to dispense justice*" (p. 12, italics in original, repeated on p. 133).

Again, *After Rape* is an important read. And even if the read is harrowing the stories are superbly contextualised. A young woman summarizes a widespread idea of "love fight" among the Acholi that also informs Porter's analysis. "If you don't resist," the woman says with reference to men's sexual advances, "they will say that you are an easy girl. So, according to me boys should force girls so that they will know that we are good girls" (p. 121). To return one more time to the legacy of Mead's Samoa study, my only wish is for Porter to carry out some further research: are there possibly other sides to Acholi sexualities than those focused upon in this book? Are there ways in which young women and men explore their sexualities and desires outside the (heterosexual) norm of women as passive, unwilling and resisting; and of men, with biological "needs" that must be satisfied, as active and enforcing? Porter hints that there are...

Sverker Finnström, *Uppsala University*

Steven Press. 2017. *Rogue Empires: Contracts and Conmen in Europe's Scramble for Africa*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 371 pp.

Rogue empires is an old-new European phenomenon, which emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly in the 1880s and 1890s, and witnessed a fierce race among European powers not to grab land and colonize overseas territories, but to obtain treaties to indirectly govern them.

This trend started as an idea in the 1840s, when James Brooke, a common British subject, managed to sign a treaty with the Sultan of Brunei, which "overnight" made him king of the northwestern part of the island of Borneo, known as Sarawak, a dangerous place and a hunting ground for pirates, but not without significant advantages: it was still free of the sway of Dutch colonists present in the southern part of Borneo and enjoyed a strategic location in view of the expansion of trade with China via the First Opium War. More significantly, Brooke, like those who preceded him and those who would follow his scheme, cherished British colonization in Singapore, which started earlier and believed in the benefits of British civilization and free trade. His plan, he claimed, would profit other areas farther afield.

What is mostly striking about this apparently banal operation was that Brooke's scheme had serious implications for Brooke as the scheme initiator, for Sarawak, Brooke's would-be kingdom, for Britain, as a great imperial state and its attitude and relation with Brooke and his private property, and more generally, for western imperial and non-imperial powers, their perceptions of Brooke's scheme and of international law and the way it should operate in the late nineteenth century and after. Brooke negotiated a so-called "treaty" with a state as an individual and set up a pattern whereby individuals could treat with states. More importantly, Brooke generated a worldwide craze among individuals and later states for obtaining treaties and governing other peoples in the name of a superior civilization. This excitement would result in a competition between individuals and between states for the transfer of power and would make governance a commodity and a business transaction, which anyone could buy and sell, not least, brigands and adventurers and under duress and the use of trickery, force and extortion. This is because that is what actually happened.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, and in the course of the partition of Africa, and to a lesser extent, Asia, international law received a blow with the emergence of a system of protectorates, treaties, split sovereignty rights, “rogue empires,” which brought about a legal chaos and questioned the capacity of powerful European states like Britain, France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands to possess real influence over Africans and other peoples. Britain, the largest empire then, celebrated Brooke’s “rogue” kingdom, a private and virtual state, and many in Britain and over Europe, perceived Brooke as a hero and a liberal agent of civilization, but had doubts about the legal value of the treaty he signed and the legitimacy of his rule over Sarawak. Britain’s real position over the whole process was made more difficult, when Brooke’s scheme obtained an almost universal approval and many rushed to copycat the concept and obtain treaties, this new form of obtaining sovereignty or what remained of it in a context where the latter could be arranged, negotiated, transferred with the full endorsement of states. This was partly because these very states, in spite of the vagueness and the legal doubts about the validity of those “treaties”, the conditions in which they were made and the legitimacy of those who made them, were eager to mimic Brooke, the “white Rajah,” and have a share of the colonial remnants, and partly because Brooke’s initiative was not a novel one. Its origins go back to the East India Company, the company-state, which governed parts of the British Empire and acted as a sovereign state for long. The anomaly in jurisprudence started then, in the very early 17th century and continued. The controversy about it was enormous. How could a company act like a state? On what legal basis and how? The Brooke case in a sense is only one more case. The Berlin Conference, by approving Brooke’s scheme and many others, like the Belgian King Leopold II’s Independent State of the Congo made a gift for the many, no matter who it was, a filibuster, a chartered company, a state, a joint scheme: that of having a freelance state, a piece of territory to govern, regardless of the manner and the consequences.

Adel Manai, *Qatar University*

Richard Reid. 2017. *A History of Modern Uganda*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 403 pp.

In this thought-provoking monograph, Richard Reid has produced an important work on Uganda’s modern history. The book, broadly conceived, explores the extent to which the nation state is a useful starting point for writing cultural and political history (pp. 3–9). In the *longue durée*, Reid contends, the geography and unifying function of the state is not as artificial as it appears at first. By utilizing the nation as a rubric for evaluating regional politics, the book shows “how history has been used to mobilise and marginalise, how the past is continually evoked and reinterpreted, in the forging of political and cultural communities” (p. xxvi). The book welcomingly avoids using chronology to orient its larger arguments. By contrast, it focuses on key themes and moments, from pastoral immigration during the first millennium CE to the very recent athleticism of Stephen Kiprotich.

The first chapter uses literary and artistic production, such as the poetic novels of Okot p’Bitek, to expand the regional repositories from which we might recast Uganda’s national historiography. In Chapter Two, “Pensive Nation,” the book explores the immediate contexts

out of which the National Resistance Movement (NRM) secured power in 1986. For Reid, modern Uganda is a pensive nation, “a nation whose fragility had been established by the enclosure and claustrophobia of the late twentieth century, in which the capacity for violent ethnic conflict had been horrifically exposed [...] and in which the lack of real political leadership had been revealed” (p. 98). Reid argues in Chapter Three, “Rukidi’s Children,” that the Uganda inherited by the NRM during the 1980s was the product of a long history of migration and pronounced military political culture (pp. 117, 125, 180, 184). This same chapter underscores spiritual and religious change in southern Uganda during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (pp. 166–84), a theme developed further in Chapters Four (pp. 244–67) and Five (pp. 329–37). The following chapter, “The Adventures of Zigeve and Atuk,” though, shows that the advent of world religions was part of an older history of trade relation with the Indian Ocean world of the CE fourteenth century (p. 188). Central to Reid’s argument is that communities have pursued spiritual, physical and psychological wellbeing across the long history of Uganda (p. 283). The final chapter, “Kings and Others,” focuses mostly on the kingdom of Buganda to highlight the spiritual and political costs of late colonial politics, which resulted in the dissolution and recreation of the region’s precolonial kingdoms. The volume’s epilogue reinforces the intersection of migration, the militarization of political culture and the remaking of historical knowledge (p. 350).

Since the late nineteenth-century, Uganda’s precolonial kingdoms have attracted an extensive amount of scholarship. Surrounding and following Independence, historians such as Kenneth Ingham (1958), Samwiri Karugire (1980) Jan Jørgensen (1981), and Phares Mutibwa (1992) continued to use the region’s precolonial kingdoms to orient national history writing. What makes Reid’s book so compelling is that he uses an extensive body of source material to push us beyond the southern-bent of Uganda’s national historiography. Be that as it may, the book at times also struggles to look beyond the perspectives of its kingdoms’ writers. Indeed, the final substantial chapter argues that non-central “regions which had been the historic founts of culture and ideology had now become [during the colonial period] borderlands and peripheries” (p. 298). As the volume maintains earlier, “the Nyoro-Ganda connection arguably remained the defining axis along which modern Uganda was being forged in this period” (p. 149). But communities in colonial Tesoland continued to view their economic, cultural and political contributions as central to the development of modern Uganda. The region maintained a relatively high standard of living throughout the colonial period. By 1953, for example, as J.C.D. Lawrance once showed, Teso District was the largest cigarette-consuming area in eastern Africa. And as Teso interlocutors have often reminded me, it was not without historic reason that a Teso activist, John Kanuti Akorimo, lowered the Union Jack and hoisted the national flag on 9 October 1962. In turn, one worries that the book at times places too much emphasis on the region’s military history. The book suggests that “[p]ostcolonial Uganda is a deeply secretive place, a space of shadows and dark recesses” (p. 352). If this is the case, however, surely communities have different ways of talking about the sources of these shadows. Again, communities in Tesoland have a dissimilar way of talking about the Obote government during the 1980s than royalist writers, the latter of which viewed the early 1980s as brutal and murderous—as does Reid (p. 75). Pro-UPC writers and republicans have argued that Obote was

trying to quell, following the Amin insurrection, a second military uprising in the likes of Museveni. This explained why the state needed to be more authoritarian during this period.

Be that as it may, Richard Reid's ambitious and thrilling new book is to be applauded. It is the best national history on modern Uganda published to date, and it is ideal for upper-level undergraduate and graduate students, and scholars in eastern African studies.

Jonathon L. Earle, *Centre College*

Ksenia Robbe. 2015. *Conversations of Motherhood: South African Women's Writing Across Traditions*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press. 317 pp.

In *Conversations of Motherhood*, Ksenia Robbe undertakes the ambitious task of comparing various representations of motherhood in South African women's writing from 1978-2006. Her analysis reaches "across traditions" to analyze novels by Elsa Joubert, Norma Stockenström, Sindiwe Magona, Marlene van Niekerk, Zoë Wicomb, Pamphilia Hlapa, Ellen Kuzwayo and Antjie Krog. Robbe's act of reaching across necessitates a cross-racial, cross-cultural, cross-temporal, and often cross-linguistic approach that interrogates the divisiveness of South African literary traditions, governed as they are by, at times, essentialised notions of difference.

Such "historically-informed" comparative approaches are severely lacking in South African women's writing. Robbe's study demonstrates the value of such work in exhuming how "transgressions" — that is, "how women imagine and cross the domestic and public spaces circumscribed by the boundaries of race, language and class" — may "translocate" boundaries (pp. 4-5). Translocation is a major focus of *Conversations of Motherhood*, a process Robbe defines as "attempting to trace and shift sociocultural boundaries, rather than imaging an all-encompassing framework for diverse texts." In so doing, she questions the "virtual borders between literary traditions that determine our habits of reading South African literature(s)" (p. 5).

Though Robbe's focus is on the affinities present in the various texts' treatments of motherhood, her comparisons remain attuned to the fault lines between them that "ward off any unifying approaches" (p. 9). Herein lies the strength of Robbe's study: it remains keenly aware of the differential power structures that govern each of the texts and their authors, while remaining aware of similarities and/or overlap. For example, her comparison of motherhood in Marlene van Niekerk's *Agaat* (2004) and Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother* (1998) demonstrates how "master discourses of patriarchy, [...] nationalism and racism" affect the respective novels differently, even though certain aspects of their novels may point to "collective experiences of apartheid" (p. 166). Further, Robbe does not only explore 'motherhood' as a category in South African literature — she also critiques it, highlighting the sometimes inhibiting, sometimes empowering emblem of the mother and the nation, and the variety of forms that mothering can take.

The book is divided into five chapters (excluding the Introduction and Conclusion). The first chapter foregrounds motherhood as it has been represented and received as a "(post)colonial imaginari[y]." Chapter Two considers Joubert's *Die Swerfjare van Poppie Nongena* and Stockenström's *Die Kremetartekspedisie* with regard to their "relations of outsidersness;" both of these novels are by white authors writing about black mothers. Chapter Three moves onto

Magona's *Mother to Mother* and van Niekerk's *Agaat*, exploring "co-authoring" (in the Bakhtinian sense) and the complicated nature of "Mother/Child-Making" as it is biologically, socially, and politically construed. Chapter Four then deals with Wicomb's *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* and Hlapa's *A Daughter's Legacy*, exploring the novels' subversions of time in their relation to motherhood/daughterhood. Lastly, Chapter Five compares Kuzwayo's *Call Me Woman* and Krog's *A Change of Tongue*.

Methodologically, Robbe draws from the fields of transnational feminism, postcolonial studies, subaltern studies, and gender studies to produce insightful and multifaceted readings of the respective texts. The main theoretical thrust of the book is, however, grounded in Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogics, in a more pervasive way than the introduction suggests. At times, the study seems to lapse into lengthy explications about "speaking subjects" and dialogicity, but Robbe manages to offset the potentially burdensome complex literary theory with close readings of the texts. One of the main "blind spots" of her study is noted by Robbe herself in the Introduction—the fact that her selected texts only represent novels written in English or Afrikaans, and do not give credence to a wider variety of South African literatures (for example, "Indian or black Afrikaans") (p. 20).

Nevertheless, a single study cannot be expected to include all possible texts or angles. *Conversations of Motherhood* is an essential contribution to South African and comparative literature. The groundwork Robbe has laid in this study opens up an encouraging critical space for further comparative analysis of South African literatures and the "translocation of traditions."

Heidi Barends, *University of Cape Town*

Robert I. Rotberg. 2017. *The Corruption Cure: How Citizens and Leaders Can Combat Graft*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press. 384 pp.

Robert Rotberg set out very early in his book, and in an unambiguous language, to make explicit the purpose of his research on corruption. Corruption is an ancient phenomenon and concept; it is universal; it has no class, race, gender, ethnicity, no one is immune from it; it has deleterious consequences; it is combatted right from time immemorial but there is a heightened global consciousness and commitment against it; the fight against corruption is winnable, though it is always a difficult one; individual and corporate efforts are critical in anticorruption crusade but not sufficient; technological equipment and media and social media chips are important but not absolute in themselves; legal and institutional rearmament is key but not adequate; political will with unreserved commitment is the elixir needed to attain a nirvana at both local and global spaces, which must be predicated on ethical universalism.

Rotberg's dissection of the nature of corruption is an exposé that hinges on human depravity, an inner inordinate quest to get what legitimately belongs to others in order to enrich oneself. Thus, anywhere there is corruption, there is necessarily the lack of integrity. "Indeed, corruption is the symptom, the absence of integrity is the disease" (p. 20). He argued that since integrity encapsulates transparency, impartiality, trust, fairness, and openness in public and private dealing, corruption exists if and when these are compromised. Corruption is

consequently not a value-free act; it has rippling effects, which straggle toward abuse of human rights, especially of the masses, terrorism, economic sabotage, injustice, etc.

Although there are problems inherent in statistically measuring corruption partly because grand corruption, for instance, is hardly overt, available studies and organizations' perceptions are useful in understanding and determining the extent and pervasiveness of corruption in contemporary society. Utilizing some of these tools, Rotberg critically and dispassionately assessed how many countries across the globe have reacted to corruption, particularly their leadership, and how the people have also begun to be radically involved in the crusade against it. Because leadership is key, Rotberg did not mince words in squarely interrogating leaders' reactions to corruption, many times naming and shaming the hypocritical ones and praising the efforts of honest ones. The examples of Hong Kong, Singapore, and Botswana keep resonating with forceful penetrative emphasis, a paradigm worthy of emulation. Tanzania and Nigeria's new leaderships are to be watched using a political will paradigm that worked elsewhere as a basis.

Rotberg also examined the anticorruption commissions set up across the globe to either frontally or ostensibly fight corruption. As a result of international bodies' intervention in anticorruption efforts, aid and other forms of interaction being predicated on determined efforts by national governments to deal with corruption, some countries set up such commissions and ombudsmen, but use propaganda as a means of securing their goal rather than fight corruption. Elsewhere, such commissions, being empowered and given considerable independence through strong legislation, have done creditably well. Anticorruption commissions, he argued, can only succeed if the president or prime minister as the case may be, demonstrates political will, showing example and allowing her or his family and friends to be investigated and prosecuted. Thus, once there are "sacred cows" that cannot be touched, the whole process is undermined. Of course, it is also imperative that the commissions themselves are above board, determine, and dispassionate. Rotberg added that unambiguous legislation is necessary for the commissions to achieve their goal. While these have worked elsewhere, the case of many African countries is disheartening. He writes: "The legal codes were just as strong, without a commitment to anticorruption efforts on the part of rulers and ruling classes, most of the African commissions were unable to change the prevailing political cultures of corruption that disfigured their countries" (p. 174). Here, Rotberg subtly argues that where there are leaders, corruption is fought as in Hong Kong or Singapore, but where there are rulers as in most parts of Africa, corruption is difficult to fight, though not impossible.

The argument that corruption cannot be fought and won from bottom up but from the top to the bottom is suffusing. It is demonstrated that in both government and business worlds, petty corruption, though cumulatively large and disastrous cannot be equated in magnitude and effect with grand corruption. Thus, if grand corruption mostly engaged in at the top is pummeled, petty ones can be dealt with more easily. Unfortunately, many commissions have succeeded more in handling the latter than the former. In fact, most laws and anticorruption commissions are deliberately crafted and created to deal with grand corruption. The international legislations and bodies are critically concerned about grand corruption, an understandable reason why Rotberg has joined the advocacy for the establishment of a global court to prosecute grand corruption that national courts and institutions are unable to handle.

Of course, once corruption, especially the grand type is criminalized globally, such an international court in the similitude of the International Criminal Court would be able to intervene to the advantage of the masses of the countries affected who are naturally the collateral for corruption.

Finally, Rotberg suggested critical fourteen ways that can be used to fight corruption globally. Though not exhaustive, he argued that as new ways are invented to corrupt the system so would new strategies be thought of to deal with them, just as the social media and civil societies have become not only megaphones and mobilizing voices, but sometimes now an active political force intervening pragmatically in anticorruption.

However, Rotberg, in his Research Note, has demonstrated the ethics of this research, there is a critical vault that his book has not really peeped into, namely the traditional and religious institutions in Africa and their relationships, roles and influence on political offices. It is being held widely that many of the traditional rulers and religious leaders who enjoy some form of immunity are used to launder money for political rulers. These sacred vaults require incisive investigation in dealing with corruption in Africa. Although Rotberg has demonstrated so much optimism in President Buhari's efforts to significantly fight corruption in Nigeria, an intellectualist perception would show that such optimism is being frustrated. For, according to Rotberg, personal integrity is sine qua non, but when it is a political smokescreen, it loses its salt.

Benson Ohihon Igboin, *Adekunle Ajasin University*

Lamin Sanneh. 2016. *Beyond Jihad: The Pacifist Tradition in West African Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press. 376 pp.

Lamin Sanneh provided an interesting analysis of the expansion of Islam in West Africa beyond other scholarly analysis, which he called the pacific tradition. The author gives an account of the expansion of Islam in West Africa; through North Africa, which was mainly transmitted by means of trans-Saharan trade routes without *jihad*. The Muslim pacifist tradition is promoted by religious masters (clerics) who dissociate themselves from jihadists (warriors) and the political class, choosing a peaceful means for promoting Islam. Unlike the argument of other scholars, Sanneh emphasized that this method was more successful in the spread of West African Islam than *jihad*. The religious clerics were successful through advocating education and scholarship, which gives them an important position in the society as promoters of peace, morality, and spirituality.

The author examines transmission by way of external influence, for example trade, travel, and pilgrimage. Islam's character has always emphasized good manners to both converts and those outside its fold regardless of gender, rank, race, culture or nationality. This can be seen beyond the scriptural context and from historical and cultural attitudes of Muslims today especially among the West African Muslims. In fact, these attitudes have been the bedrock for the expansion of Islam in Africa, what the author called "local accommodation." The expansion in the West African region through local social mediation therefore goes beyond external influence. As Islam expanded and shaped the lives of people locally, it is also being shaped by the African setting and culture leading to scholarly discourse on "folk" or "corrupt" Islam in

Africa. Sanneh cautioned that any attempt to disregard this understanding of the peaceful disposition of Islam in Africa for a more radical means of its expansion will distort the understanding of Islam in the region. For example, he disagrees with the theory that says the Berbers imposed Islam in Ghana alongside trade, arguing that trade can flourish only through peaceful adaptation.

The author highlighted that Islam expanded and dominates many places in West Africa through a gradual process of its accommodation, tolerance, and the culture of exchange in social relationships. This initiative has inscribed the religion into the hearts and minds of Africans. Ghana and Mali are clear examples. Rather than Islam conquering them, Muslim accommodation and tolerance attracted the people into its fold.

Throughout Muslim communities in West Africa, clerics took the responsibility of guiding people and making sure that Islam is recognized in both an individual's private life as well as in the public within the community. In taking this responsibility, the clerics have maintained considerable distance from the political class for several reasons. Avoid being corrupted, which will pollute their effort to guide by example and maintain their position as exemplary within the community. Their role is to teach and guide, which has produced a major impact within West African Muslim societies. The clerics have rejected the use of political offices for the propagation of Islam, fearing that it will do more harm than good. Therefore, they have maintained their role of teaching the young and old, leading prayers, presiding over marriage and birth ceremonies, Ramadan, and pilgrimage and directing burial customs. By doing so, they have design and run the affairs of the Muslim communities in West Africa. Presiding over Muslim practices indicates that the clerics have defined the Muslim religious and social life in the various communities, which gives them a privileged position of authority within the communities. This authority provided them with power, and so political leaders also need them in controlling the affairs of the Muslim societies, which gave them additional importance. The author states that "This authority allowed the clerics to affirm the *ummah* (the faith community) as the repository of Scripture and Sunnah and to place their moral example before and within the *ummah* in public teaching and witness." But as advocates of what Sanneh called "soft" Islam, the clerics still maintained their distance from the political leaders. They feel that peaceful obligation of faith and accommodation is more powerful than *jihad*.

Despite the emphasis Lamin Sanneh placed on the pacific tradition in West African Islam, we must also recognize the role played by jihadists in West African Islam as was emphasized by other scholars such as Roman Loimeier, Holger Weiss, and others. There were incidents of widespread *jihad* in the nineteenth century West Africa; examples are that of Usman Dan Fodio and Umar Tal that lead to prevalent presence of Islam in many parts of the region giving way to the pacific tradition. However, Sanneh indicated that the pacifists' approach has produced a stronger West African Muslim identity with robust affiliations to practice. Through this method, the Islamic spirit continues to be expressed through education, worship, and morality despite the subsequent presence of colonialism, modernization, and globalization. Islam has not been weakened in West Africa especially in regard to its role in Muslim communities, and clerics have maintain their position as a religious class and guardians of the community.

Dauda Abubakar, *University of Jos, Nigeria*

John Saul and Patrick Bond. 2014. *South Africa: The Present as History from Mrs Ples to Mandela and Marikana*. Johannesburg: Jacana Media. 312 pp.

The Present as History traverses a number of significant shifts in South Africa's social and political history. Using the Marikana Massacre of 2012 (the event where thirty-four miners were gunned down by the South African police as they were on strike for a wage increase) as a vantage point; the authors highlight the complexities of power and ownership in South Africa leading from pre-colonialism (pp. 13-142), to the period of transition (1989-1994) and the two decades since.

The book recapitulates the "pre-history" of South Africa's democracy that left "fingerprints" (p. 2) on the current dispensation. It provides a concise, yet pointed account of the history of conquest at the Cape in 1652; where, taking a materialist lens, the authors convey how the goals of class exploitation and racial subjugation have intersected in South Africa over time (p. 44).

In Chapter Two, the authors claim that the struggle for racial equality in South Africa has been more realized than those for class, gender, and environmental justice, and this has had a decisive impact on securing a democratic voice for all citizens (p. 63). It is elucidated how in the 1960s there was a "culmination of the white population's locking into place a closed, all-embracing system of racist colonialism and 'racial capitalism', [which]... emerged in South Africa out of the preceding several centuries of white and capitalist domination" (p. 64). It is shown how decades of mass struggle culminated in the overturn of the apartheid regime and its concomitant "Racial Capitalism." But the transitional negotiations had additional effects, where the principal victors of the struggle for freedom were "global capitalism" on the one hand and the "relatively thin layer of ANC-linked black elites" on the other (p. 63).

The analysis is useful in explicating the somewhat lesser-known history of South Africa's trade union movement and its effect on mass politics. It depicts the working class action that burgeoned in Durban in the 1970s and traces influence on the anti-apartheid movement by the "Ovambo strikes" that occurred between 1971 and 1973 in Namibia (then called South West Africa), which was at the time illegally occupied by South Africa (p. 74). The authors reveal the multiple and contesting paradigms within the trade union movement itself, such as the national-democratic focused trade unions, versus populist, "shop-floor" or "workerist" ones like the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU); as well as the confluence of the "workerists" and "populists" into the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

An historically-based explanation of the current ANC government's economic ideology and its relationship to capital is provided through the account of the ANC's relationship with the trade union movement during the struggle years. An example is where at Cosatu's 1987 Congress there had been a widespread call to "assert working class demands" and where Cosatu's office bearers had "endorsed the ANC's leadership of the liberation struggle" (p. 75). Significantly, the authors reveal how the ANC was already, at that point "rejecting the countenancing of any counter-hegemonic perspectives towards capitalism" (p. 76). In a description echoed strongly by the the current ANC leadership and policy trend, it states that the ANC subordinated others to "self-aggrandizement and global neo-liberalism" (p. 77). This is significant to understanding the contemporary allegiances and socio-economic policy of the ruling party, especially in its switch from the socially-oriented Reconstruction and

Development Programme (RDP) to the more neoliberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) in 1998. The evidence supplied by Bond and Saul suggests that the ANC, at its core, never aspired to fully realize national socialist revolution.

The ensuing chapters reveal the impact of the ANC's embrace of neoliberalism on the fledgling economy reliant on economic windfalls, (brought on by the discovery of minerals such as gold, diamonds, and platinum) asset bubbles, and vulnerable to capital flight. The book does well at tracing the delicate links between historically-entrenched discord in the trade union movement and the "unfortunate compromises" made by the "systemic corruption," "extreme inequality, unemployment and low pay" and how these trends are revealed in the Marikana Massacre (p. 176). This they show to culminate in the "moment at Marikana," where the ANC ruling party allowed the police force to "serve *white-dominated multinational capital* by killing dozens of black workers so as to end a brief strike" (p. 215). The latter quote's inclusion of the term "white-dominated multinational capital" highlights a problematic feature of the text.

Whilst remaining over reliant on racialized language, despite the caveat in the introduction, Saul and Bond do are able to distil dominant paradigms regarding the transition and the post-apartheid condition tactfully, as well as provide clarity on the complex cross-currents of the contemporary South African moment.

Claire-Anne Lester, *University of Stellenbosch*

Luke Sinwell and Sphiwe Mbatha. 2016. *The Spirit of Marikana. The Rise of Insurgent Trade Unionism in South Africa*. London: Pluto Press. 208 pp.

Sinwell and Mbatha offer an incisive yet empathetic account of miners' strikes that stained the South African platinum mining belt between 2012 and 2014. Strikes are a key manifestation of the class struggle over the distribution of national income and seek to reform of the labor relations system in any country. Strikes usually generate an extraordinary amount of pressure on the social system, which often leads to structural changes such as the reconfiguring of the industrial relations system, the economy, or the political system. The series of strikes leading to the Marikana massacre marked a turning point in South Africa's labor and mining sector.

Without much pretention the book provides details of how the locker room conversations between most hard working rock drill operators, RDOs, culminated into a strike action. RDOs are the least paid yet do most dangerous work of inserting explosives and drilling the rock to release platinum ore. Here the workers conceptualized first that were paid unsatisfactory wages and settled on R12,500 per month as a satisfactory wage increase for their labor. The strike was led by an independent strike committee, and the recognized union at the time, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), actively opposed the strike, siding with Lonmin management. The new politics created an open space to engage in what workers thought they needed to live decently. So, instead of being based on what management would consider rational, mine workers based their demands on the amount of money which they considered a living wage. By bypassing bargaining structures of trade unions, and instead by choosing to channel their demand directly to mine management structures they acquired an insurgent identity. "They opened their eyes. Now they could see they were being oppressed" (p. 19).

Chapter One provides background, a conceptual stance, and the authors' motivations for undertaking the task of producing the book. Chapter Two describes in detail how the two RDOs conversations at Lonmin led to the initial living wage demand of R12,500, galvanizing other mining workers across the entire platinum belt. Chapter Three sets out to describe the dynamic of the unprotected strike at Lonmin 2012 that led to the Marikana massacre and the eventual resolve that bound the workers to keep on demanding their rights. Chapter Four describes the strike at Amplats, which though less famous, took longer and had a larger mass of miners. This is where and how the wage demand rose to a R16,070 per month increase. Chapter Five focuses on the rise of AMCU and clearly demonstrates its less than stellar qualities under the undemocratic but charismatic Joseph Mathunjoa. Chapter Six focuses on the great 2014 strike at Impala, Amplats, and Lonmin, in which workers were protected.

The book contributes to politics of work in terms of providing a thick description of the days that culminated into the Marikana massacre and its aftermath. Moreover, it provides a broad commentary that is useful to any scholar of Southern African politics of the intersectionality of work done by the hard men of the platinum belt in South Africa, the actions and reactions of the ANC-led government and, most importantly, the rise of AMCU as a trade union of choice. It is insurgent trade unionism which the authors employ to explain the relationship between two periods of time: 2012, when workers went on unprotected strikes with their independent committee at the helm; and 2014, when workers went on protected strikes under the AMCU banner. Their insurgency gained them considerable amount of power. The notion of insurgent trade unionism highlights the diversity of existing union practices, and how they change over time according to shifting circumstances. Most importantly, it reveals the ways in which trade unions may be driven from below by the rank and file's collective and, in this case, insurgent agency. However, it also points to new struggles within the union as well as with management. Many perspectives fail to comprehend the complexity of strike dynamics and the historical process of class struggle that is being unleashed because they focus on the formalism of industrial relations and on economic views. The consequences of this strike have been to reconfigure the political landscape and moral compass by which key protagonists are judged. The book demonstrates that beyond Marikana, workers subverted the dominant discourse and succeeded in changing the status quo, even if it is by small extent!

Seroala Tsoeu-Ntokoane, *National University of Lesotho*

Z. S. Strother. 2016. *Humor and Violence: Seeing Europeans in Central African Art*. Bloomington and Indianapolis. Indiana University Press. 344 pp.

Central Africa has been central to collecting, museums, scholarship, connoisseurship, and the art market, and it continues to be so today. In addition, recent studies of the African-European encounter have called into question the idea of an "authentic" African art. Clearly, this cross-cultural encounter ushered in new realities, preoccupations, ideas, and imaginations. Still, for the most part, scholarly, museological, and popular discourse on African artists' depictions of Europeans remains overly general. A critical analysis requires a contextualized approach firmly rooted in specific historical, political, economic, and socio-cultural circumstances and material contingencies.

Zoe Strother's *Humor and Violence* does exactly that. Her focus on Central West African art dating to the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods draws upon her extensive specialist knowledge, including her research amongst the Pende, in today's southwest Congo. The author's approach is highly effective since the select corpus of objects she examines are dated and contextualized alongside historical accounts by early explorers, travelers, ethnographers, and collectors, as well as contemporary theorists. Strother carefully weaves a fascinating, sophisticated illumination of the dialectic of humor and violence as a concept that provides insight into the psychology of power and resistance amongst oppressor and oppressed, whereby art mediates the mechanics and ethics of power.

Since I cannot do justice to the many instances Strother employs to illustrate this claim, I will provide just two. Strother's examination of portrayals of Europeans in Central African art stresses this was not based solely upon skin color or Western dress, but rather the performance of European identity. She sheds light on the ways in which Central African artists demonstrated an acute understanding of how Europeans dressed, but also the manner in which they ate, drank, worked, relaxed, and even guarded their valuables. She expands upon this argument referencing European body language such as walking, sitting, lounging, and greeting, as well as highlighting other accoutrements such as shoes, cigars, liquor bottles, tablecloths, eating utensils, and pets (usually yappy little dogs) as popular portrayals. Another illustration is Strother's insightful enquiry into Vili artists' depictions of slavery and the slave trade on ivory tusks dating to the 1880s. She provides a detailed analysis of an ivory tusk elucidating the enslaveds' capture and transportation in coffles, in addition to the negotiations between African chiefs and European merchants. Alternating images of Africans and Europeans divided into horizontal sections on the tusk allow for fruitful juxtapositions: Two women are represented witnessing capture—one wrings her hands while the other raises her arms in grief, portraying the violence of separation juxtaposed against a textile sale, unfolded for display; the brutality of a slave coffle holding six men chained together is viewed next to a European in civilian dress astride a horse bearing a Portuguese-style saddle. But, Strother cautions us the reader against overly simplistic readings. Her historical perspective is highly valuable. For, she notes, although significant numbers of export tusks were carved between the 1840s and 1910s, the earliest documented images of captives date to the late 1850s, in other words, exactly when European trafficking on the African west coast was ending. Yet, despite abolition in the Americas, slavery did not truly disappear on the Loango Coast for the reason many European trading posts continued to employ slave labor though the late 1880s, and the African practice of chattel labor continued and according to the author, may well have grown in importance. She also contends, by the 1850s (with the exception of Boma), caravans avoided ports, captives moved in small groups to avoid British patrols, individuals were less likely to be bound, and women were prized above all others. Thusly, Strother asks us to reflect upon the reasons Europeans were interested in collecting images of the enslaveds' capture and transport when no longer actively engaged in the slave trade.

Humor and Violence is a commendable contribution to the study of African art and of significance to those grappling with the ways Central Africans in the past understood, experienced, and conceived the world around them, by way of a detailed, sustained study of objects and aesthetics. Strother's expertise, notably, the "reading" of objects as texts is both

highly compelling and thought-provoking, and ultimately, herein lies the book's strength. It is well written in accessible narrative style lavishly accompanied by color and black-and-white photographs, together with hand-drawn sketches. This book will no doubt find itself on the bookshelves of those interested in African art.

Rachel Ama Asaa Engmann, *Hampshire College*

Ann Swidler and Susan Cotts Watkins. 2017. *A Fraught Embrace: The Romance and Reality of AIDS Altruism in Africa*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 280 pp.

In *A Fraught Embrace*, sociologists Ann Swidler and Susan Cotts Watkins elucidate the relationship between altruists, aid beneficiaries, and the brokers who connect them using the concept of romance. They note that altruists, brokers, and villagers "[e]ach arous[e] fantasies in the others that cannot be fulfilled," but they develop "working misunderstandings" to get by (p. 123). This compelling metaphor highlights the "clash between noble dreams and everyday reality" in AIDS altruism in Africa (p. xi).

A Fraught Embrace focuses in particular on brokers, who are too often neglected when the literature focuses on donors, projects, and beneficiaries without fully examining the crucial people in between. They describe four different types of brokers at varying levels of the aid chain: cosmopolitan brokers, national brokers, district brokers, and interstitial brokers. Swidler and Watkins also discuss a wide range of altruists, from "behemoths" like the World Bank and UNAIDS to "butterflies," individual altruists or small altruistic organizations that only briefly alight in countries to provide assistance. They use the term villager to describe beneficiaries, as this is the imagined reality for many altruists. Thus, in differentiating between types of brokers and donors, the authors effectively discuss a wide range of circumstances.

The authors draw on about twenty years of fieldwork in Malawi, as well as a wide range of materials that they and others had collected: longitudinal survey data, gray literature, NGO websites, local newspapers, formal interviews, and villager diaries. While using Malawi as a case study, they generalize their findings to all of sub-Saharan Africa. In doing so, however, they specifically note the possibility of variation by country, such as in their description of brokers: "We describe Malawian brokers here. The specifics are likely to vary across African countries, depending on factors such as the country's size, colonial past, and economic status" (p. 79).

Swidler and Watkins' greatest achievement in *A Fraught Embrace* is to effectively humanize and explain altruists, brokers, and villagers. For example, they cogently explain why donors focus on "sustainable" projects with short timelines, how this creates uncertainty for brokers who must constantly be searching for the next funding stream, and how such short projects may appear to villagers as chaotic and impossible to predict. In short, the authors go beyond describing what altruists and brokers *do* to deciphering *why* they do it.

Readers looking for a prescriptive account of what works in AIDS interventions should look elsewhere, as *A Fraught Embrace* is primarily descriptive and its few specific prescriptions are reserved for the final few pages of the conclusion. They do, however, offer useful critiques throughout, while taking special care to distinguish between altruists' intentions and effects. For example, they write, "Many of these development professionals are immensely dedicated,

generous, respectful of their African employees and co-workers, and devoted to the goal of assisting Africans. But we have come to see many of the donor projects they dedicate their work to as wrongheaded, pointless, or even perverse in their effects" (p. xiv). While recognizing that altruism has contributed to much good, the authors are similarly unafraid to critique donor practices that are not evidence-based. They call for modest help and real commitment rather than transformation, because "[u]tterly unrealistic goals, such as transforming communities, are a sure recipe for being fooled by those you want to help, having to fool your funders by 'creating success,' and in the end, having to fool yourself" (p. 213).

While the book's specific topic is AIDS altruism, the critiques and lessons are applicable to development more generally and would benefit a variety of audiences. Students of development and others new to the field would benefit from the authors' approachable style, especially Chapter Three's discussion of the structure of global altruism and Chapter Ten's critique of success being measured through testimonials, monitoring and evaluation, and reports. It could also serve experienced donors and development professionals well by drawing attention to brokers' desires, incentives, and circumstances, such the reciprocal social connections that exert pressure on finances, the uncertainty caused by short project timelines, and the pressure to report projects as successful to satisfy altruists' fantasies and secure future funding. In short, *A Fraught Embrace* is a concise, insightful work, and its contribution extends well beyond its immediate context of AIDS altruism in Malawi.

Brad Crofford, *Independent Scholar*

Theodore Trefon. 2016. *Congo's Environmental Paradox: Potential and Predation in a Land of Plenty*. London: Zed Books. 194 pp.

Theodore Trefon examines and then provides an excellent overview of the major ecological resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with concise socio-political analysis. The book is about the "political economy of natural resources in the DRC" (p. 1). It reveals the various land, forest, minerals, and environmental resources in the DRC. Reading this book is essential for understanding the many environmental paradoxes that exist in the DRC.

Why is the Congo Basin (most of it in the DRC) "home to the world's second-largest contiguous tropical rainforest after the Amazon" (p. 14), yet, these forest resources have not been harnessed to benefit the livelihood of Congolese? Why are there more than a thousand minerals (including 46 percent of the global supply of cobalt), yet it has not helped in alleviating "the dire poverty of Congo's 70 million people" (p. 16)? Why does the DRC have "abundant arable land and an ideal balance of rainfall and sunshine" —in fact, experts claim that the DRC can feed the whole of Africa—yet, the majority of its people are poor (p. 41)? Why does the DRC have "more than half of all Africa's lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands," yet "only a small percentage of Congolese have access to clean drinking water (p. 69)? "How can so many people living in a country with so much water be thirsty?" (p. 85). What is the destiny of the DRC within the context of the global development agenda? These are only a few of the many questions answered by the book with reliable data and in-depth analyses.

The book is organized into seven chapters. It contains informative text boxes, tables, figures, and maps. The first chapter explores why the DRC is "a land of plenty," and concludes

that the nation is “a rich country of poor people” (p. 2). The second chapter dwells on the mystery behind how the exploitation of DRC’s “forests of wealth” (p. 13) impoverishes the people and their environment. The chapter provides an insightful argument on how “forest governance is more of a political challenge than a set of technical issues that need fixing” in the DRC (p. 13). The third chapter focuses on the issue of food and agriculture. It presents the factors required for linking agriculture to other sectors and development priorities in the DRC. It also explores crucial matters relating to land tenure, farming, food imports, agricultural policies, urbanization, land grabbing, mining and social issues in the DRC. The fourth chapter reveals important issues concerning the water resources of the DRC. It uses figures to illustrate the potentials of water resources in the country. It analyzed the potentials of DRC’s water resources in the hydroelectricity, transportation, drinking, sanitation, and the energy and fishery sectors. The fifth chapter describes how oil resources in the DRC provide “plenty for some” and “nothing for many” (p. 97). It particularly dwelt on the “Virunga oil saga” (p. 112), which is known to be a very significant issue in the DRC’s environmental history. The sixth chapter describes the “rise, decline and renaissance” of mining (p. 119). Using tables, it provides the rank of DRC’s minerals in the currently known world reserve, as well as the DRC’s mineral deposits by province. The seventh chapter wraps up the entire content of the book, and finally, speculates the destiny of the DRC in a global context. Perhaps it could have dealt broadly on the destinies of DRC and Africa first and foremost before delving into speculations about the DRC and the rest of the world. This perspective of DRC’s environmental paradox is, unfortunately, loosely explored in the book.

Readers will find this book useful in different ways. It will be a valuable scholarly resource for students of all backgrounds and levels who are interested in natural/land/environment resource economics, planning/policy, politics, sociology, anthropology, development, and management (to mention a few). To those seeking a general introduction to natural resource politics in Africa, a good place to begin from is the Chapter One. Such readers will benefit from reading the book cover-to-cover. To those who are already versed in the subject, and who may be seeking for answers DRC questions, Chapters Two through Six provide information on relevant aspects of DRC’s environmental concerns.

Uchendu Eugene Chigbu, *Technical University of Munich*

Harry Villegas. 2017. *Cuba and Angola: The War for Freedom*. Edited by Martín Koppel and Mary-Alice Waters. New York: Pathfinder Press. 121 pp.

Representing a nationalist narrative, *Cuba and Angola* assesses Cuba’s contribution to the freedom not only of Angola but other African countries from imperialistic attacks. It is a first-hand account of Cuba’s military mission in Angola targeting “the political education of new generations of revolutionary combatants” (p. 22). This was one of Cuba’s largest and longest internationalist missions which spanned from 1975 to 1991. The mission witnessed over 425,000 Cuban volunteers serving in Angola culminating in both the freedom of Angola and the strengthening of the Cuban revolution. The internationalist mission was named Operation Carlota reflecting Cuba’s ties with Africa which dates back to the era of the slave trade. The

book reflects a history of a small third world country that heeded the call for help from other third world countries in spite of limited resources.

Written in a novel style, the book has seven themes (chapters) and an introduction by editor Mary-Alice Waters. The introduction provides a brief background of what the book is all about including the methodology used. The first two themes outline Cuba's presence and intervention in Angola, in terms of Cuba's internationalism which dates back to the 1960s. Third, Cuba's intervention in 1975, which witnessed the defeat of South Africa's first invasion, is discussed. The book's fourth theme centers on the battle of Cangamba, which was the first major battle between Cuba and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) on the one hand, and the National Union for the Total Independence of (UNITA) backed by South Africa and the United States on the other. The experiences of Cangamba are explained in a way that would teach new revolutionaries steadfastness. The fifth theme discusses the battle of Cuito Cuanavale. It reflects that the victory of Cuba-MPLA was not only a victory against capitalism and imperialism but also represents the victory of the Cuban revolution. The defeat of South Africa during this battle also culminated in the independence of Namibia. Other international missions in Mozambique and Ethiopia which were an extension of Cuban internationalism and solidarity with Africa are discussed in the sixth theme. The final theme focuses on Fidel Castro and praises his leadership skills, which were very critical for the success of Cuba's international mission and Cuban revolution. It was out of these themes that the author and the editors of the book weave a story that resonates well with the title of the book. Situated within the nationalist historiography, Villegas' book persuasively rejects and demystifies the popular perception that Cuba acted as a pawn of Soviet Union in Angola and elsewhere in Africa.

Cuba and Angola is a product of a combination of secondary sources (books and memoirs) and several interviews carried out between 2009 and 2016 by the editors of the book with Harry Villegas "Pombo", the author who was a participant in the Angolan mission. While these sources form one of the key strengths of the book because they "proved indispensable for understanding political and military events and verifying names, dates, and other facts" (p. 22), they are also part of its weaknesses. This is because the book "does not contain powerful eyewitness accounts of moments of combat and decisive battles in Cangamba and Cuito Cuanavale among others" (p. 21). In the end, the book represents the official nationalist narrative. The voice and perceptions of the Angolans and even ordinary Cubans about Cuba's involvement in Angola are not represented. Consequently, Fidel Castro and what Cuba had done to Angola and other African countries is uncritically praised while the United States, South Africa, and UNITA are denigrated. At some points, Villegas exaggerates his facts, as for instance when he argues that people willingly joined the MPLA because they treated civilians with respect and some enemy soldiers would even surrender to them willingly since other forces committed atrocities (p. 46). This reviewer feels that it might not be logical to argue that it was only UNITA forces and their allies which were responsible for all the atrocities.

Overall, *Cuba and Angola* is a very fascinating book for those who are interested in studying Cuba's internationalist missions in Angola in particular and Africa in general. The book is indeed a welcome addition to the growing corpus of work on Cuba's internationalism and contribution to the freedom of Angola and other African countries fighting against imperialism and capitalism.

Perseverence Muguti, *University of Zimbabwe*

Tom Young (ed.). 2015. *Readings in the International Relations of Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 370 pp.

Africa is considered as the continent of the future. Young demographics, rising economies, rich minerals and resources base, and relatively stable polities have generated ever greater interest in African affairs. In the last two decades, efforts have been made by great powers like the United States and Russia and emerging powers like China and India to engage with Africa in a more purposeful and practical manner. In addition to the interest of major powers, multinational firms, non-governmental organizations, and inter-governmental entities have had a sizeable presence on the continent. Engagement of such a diverse set of actors, increased international interest, and emerging African scenarios in response require a more nuanced appreciation of the international relations of Africa. *Readings in the International Relations of Africa* provides an entry point for fostering such an understanding.

This volume by Tom Young as editor introduces readers to the complexity of the politics of the continent. The book is a collection of previously published writings spanning over a period of the last four decades. The oldest piece in the book was published in 1974 (about the genocide in Burundi), and the latest piece in 2014 (about the terror attacks in Algeria). Overall the book contains twenty-seven scholarly articles divided in eight sections. The book opens up with a discussion on "Sovereignty and Statehood" followed by the sections on the "Africa and the International Order," "New States and the Continental Order," "Africa and the Great Powers," and "Conflict, War, and Intervention". There is a separate section dealing with key development issues surrounding New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and also a section on the geopolitical engagement with Africa in the post Cold War era.

Even though colonial domination cast a long shadow over the African engagement with the post colonial world, the writings in the volume do not dwell too much on the colonial period of late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is more contemporary in nature. Africa experienced the Cold War competition between the superpowers. Major focal points of the cold war years like the crisis of Congo in the 1960's, civil war in Angola in the mid 1970's, communist revolution in Ethiopia and the overall politics in the horn of Africa in the 1980's, apartheid regime (since 1948) in South Africa and international response to the policies of the regime, and interventions in Chad and regional politics surrounding the civil war (in the early 1980's) are covered in the volume. In terms of the post Cold War crises, Somalia and Congo find sufficient space in the book but Rwanda and Darfur do not.

Developmental issues of the continent have always been severe and needed concerted efforts by international agencies. Questions regarding Africa's development provide an opening to the various issues of the political economy of the continent and the world. Issues like the

nature and extent of international aid, policies of African regimes to utilize available aid, the relationship between donor and recipient states, role of international agencies like World Bank in facilitating developmental efforts, the nature of African state, and conditions imposed by donors for democratization and governance spring up in the debate about Africa's development. They find adequate representation in the volume.

Problems of Africa's development are not limited to the aid efforts of international agencies. It rather offers us a window to look upon the international relations of Africa using aid as a tool of engagement. Involvement of colonial powers like Britain and France, emerging powers like India and China, and the role of regional powers like Nigeria and South Africa assume importance in this context. The volume covers in detail British aid policies, overall French policies towards the continent, and also the emerging Chinese approach towards engaging with Africa. Chinese engagement with Africa opens up space for the discussion on the validity and utility of existing theoretical approaches of International Relations (IR) to explain the relationship.

The volume includes writings that discuss the emergence of the African Union and how foreign policies of regional actors like Nigeria and South Africa played a part in it. It touches upon the evolution of NEPAD as a development strategy in the new millennium and debates about the development problems of Africa in the new millennium. In terms of shortfalls of the volume, omission of any discussion on the processes of regionalization and the role of regional organizations like ECOWAS and EAC in the emerging African political milieu could be noted. To sum up, even taking limitations into account, it could be argued that the book provides an excellent introduction to understand the international relations of Africa.

Sankalp Gurjar, *South Asian University*