

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Tosha Grantham. 2009. *Darkroom: Photography and New Media in South Africa since 1950*. Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. 150 pp.**

**Erin Haney. 2010. *Photography and Africa*. London: Reaktion Books. 192 pp.**

These two works, each by independent curators, attempt a synthesis of the studies of photography – of, by, and for Africans – which have primarily emerged over the past twenty years. While quite different in their scope – *Darkroom* is an extended museum catalog; *Photography and Africa* contains several lengthy treatments of specific subthemes – they both provide essential substance for readers to understand why Enwezor and Zaya concluded, “No media has been more instrumental in creating a great deal of visual fictions of the African continent than photography” (Haney, p. 8). At the same time, both works illustrate how photographers purposefully created visual images that challenged a variety of cultural and political “fictions.”

*Darkroom* begins with several curatorial essays, each equipping the reader in differing ways for the images to follow. Tosha Grantham, the primary force behind this exhibition at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, begins with a brief examination of the various exhibit sections and the logic(s) for their selection. Grouped into eight thematic sections and chronologically ordered (although frequently overlapping), the exhibit features what could be considered three “generations” of photographers working in South Africa: those born in the 30s-40s whose work featured prominently in publications such as *Drum* magazine; those born in the 50s-60s whose work brought the political realities of high *apartheid* to international attention; and those born in the 70s who have expanded the realm of photography to include a variety of video installation art and computer/digital techniques.

Isolde Brielmaier’s essay “Africa and Photography: Then, Now, and Next” comprises a useful introduction to the central trends since 1990 in the exhibition of African photography, including significant installations in Johannesburg, Miami, New York, Paris, and Washington, DC. But she also highlights the important tension between approaches that treat photography as art, with the resultant canonical tendency, and those approaches more driven by anthropological enquiry. The first presents photography “as a contemporary technology used by Africans to create new subjectivities and contest stereotypes...,” while the second focuses on “the ways in which photography is practiced and consumed locally...” (Grantham, pp. 11-12).

Tumelo Mosaka’s “South Africa in Focus” briefly covers the roles of photography in South Africa over the past century: the ethnographic work of A.M Duggan-Cronin and documentary style of Leon Levson and Ernest Cole; the photojournalism of *Drum* magazine and the Bang Bang Club; and finally to the photographic and video art of Thando Mama and Robin Rhode. Mosaka also highlights an important aspect of the apartheid era work that dominates the first half of the catalog: namely, that the later photojournalist penchant for capturing the continual

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/pdfs/v12i3aBR.pdf>

violence of apartheid “did as much to deaden the conscience as to arouse it” (Grantham, p. 18). The shots of daily life included in *Darkroom* – e.g. by Ian Berry, David Goldblatt, Alf Kumalo, Santu Mofokeng, and Jürgen Schadeberg - remind us that resistance to oppression does not only occur through irregular protest or violence but also happens almost continuously through various forms of everyday practice.

Haney’s volume also contains a substantial section on South Africa’s activist documentary photography, which she convincingly pairs with turn of the twentieth century images illustrating Belgian atrocities in the Congo Free State. The 1904 photo by missionary Alice Harris, “Nsala of Wala with severed hand and foot of his five year old daughter murdered by ABIR militia,” quietly resonates as powerfully as any of the charged Soweto uprising images produced by Peter Magubane over seventy years later. Despite a connecting thread across many decades, Haney maintains that early images of oppression in the Congo did not produce a local mode of resistance through photography when compared to South Africa, where “photographers worked actively to subvert, document, and upend...” (Haney, p. 91).

*Photography and Africa* begins, however, by tracing the earliest inroads of photography to the coastal entrepôts that predated colonial rule. Recent evidence has challenged the long-held assumption that foreigners comprised all early photographers in these fascinatingly cosmopolitan urban centers, with locally-run studios emerging alongside their European counterparts in West Africa by the 1850s. These early studios maintained a wide range of clientele and adapted their techniques accordingly. So it should come as no surprise that the archival corpus of traveller, missionary, and colonial official photographs differ significantly in subject and composition from those more recently emerging in local family collections.

While the earliest consumers of African studio work remained urban elites – of local and foreign origin – the steady growth of portrait photography over the latter part of the nineteenth century resulted in an eventual “democratization of photography” (Haney, p. 55) of the sort evidenced in South Africa by Santu Mofokeng’s *Black Photo Album/Look at Me* (Grantham, pp. 93, 100). Such portraiture production presents a continuum of control between photographer and subject. On one side, the portraits-turned-postcards so widely circulated in the early twentieth century – e.g. the depiction by “Honest Martha and her Sister” of mission Christianity’s impact in South Africa – “suggest overt power struggles between the subjects and the photographer” (Haney, p. 70). On the other side, later photographers such as Seydou Keita and Malick Sedibé worked with clients to understand desired outcomes, arranging patrons “to their best, most distinct, and idealized effect” (Haney, p. 79).

Both Haney and Grantham conclude their works with sections that introduce and interrogate recent developments of photography in Africa, from changing subject matter to manipulations of new technologies/techniques. For Haney, the trajectory of this process begins quite early, with the influence of photography on drawing, painting, and printmaking in the colonial period. The most durable and widely dispersed evidence of this process surely stems from a single 1913 photo of Sheikh Amadou Bamba which “has spawned a pervasive visual culture of devotion” (Haney, p. 139). Photography also played an influential role in the transformation of commemorative arts in Ghana, Nigeria, and elsewhere. The definitions of

documentary and activist photography have also been challenged by recent works, to the extent that today “there are few relevant distinctions between photographs as art and as socially useful intervention” (Haney, p. 173).

Readers seeking comprehensive treatments of photography in South Africa or the continent more broadly will still need to look beyond these volumes. *Darkroom* is necessarily limited by its essential purpose as an exhibition-specific catalog aimed at a mixture of specialist and general audiences, while the selected key themes of *Photography and Africa* leave some important topics on the margins. Scholars who already possess a richer expertise in the visual anthropology of Africa might find these volumes somewhat lacking in theoretical depth, yet may wish to see them in their collections for the high quality production and numerous beautiful plates. However, those with a serious interest in photography as a global medium who wish to extend their knowledge to Africa will not be disappointed.

Todd Leedy, *University of Florida*

**Sefi Atta. *News from Home*. Northampton, Massachusetts: Interlink Publishing Group, Incorporation, 2010. 293 pp.**

Sefi Atta is a master storyteller and griot. The short story collection *News from Home* is the commencement of a new genre of storytelling which does not adhere to the traditional British canon. There is the distinct genre of the African novel, and now there is the distinct genre of the African short story. Sefi Atta abides in two worlds. The stories of the women in her works relate the conflicting experiences and roles of African women at home and in America. This may result from the fact that the author, Atta, is Bi-Continental in the truest sense of the term. She has a physical residence in Mississippi, but she retains her psychological residency in Nigeria.

*News from Home* beckons you to become immersed in the worlds of different Nigerian women. Some characters are dependent. Other characters are self-reliant. All of the women face challenges which are universally indigenous to women. In the selection “Hailstones on Zamfara,” an abused and battered wife is charged with adultery. The punishment for such a crime is stoning. The wife is physically and spiritually deaf. She has become numbed to silence, unable to respond to the many atrocities that she has suffered over the years. Symbolic is her malady too. She is ‘deaf’ to feeling the pain. Impregnated by an ‘invisible’ lover, this is her single act of defiance. It is an act that may lead to her death, but she is invigorated by her act of rebellion. This selection resonates Atta’s ability to illuminate the plight of the many women, African women included, muffled by chauvinistic traditions. However, the defining difference in the manner of Atta’s characterization is to be found in her ability to assume the full persona of her characters. Thus, she is able to communicate from “within” to the audience “without.” The reader, in return, is thoroughly enthralled and involved in the perils of her female protagonists.

Atta shifts to a male persona in “The Miracle Worker” selection. Makinde, a panel beater is married to a deeply religious Bisi. She tithes faithfully. And she has a prayer request for her husband to attend church service with her. He is adamant; he does not wish to attend church.

Suddenly, a miracle vision is declared. It is cited on Makinde's property. He sees this as an opportunity to make money from the pilgrims that flock to his grounds. With few illusions about faith, religion, or God, he seizes this time as a chance to make money. He extracts money from those who possess blind faith coming to his plot. Fate, however, renders Makinde a lesson regarding his greed. As a result, he must concede and grant his wife's desire that he attend church service. The prayerful, faithful wife comes to the rescue and maintains the balance of the family. In developing this resolution, Atta provides a balanced illustration here of the role of the dutiful wife. She is not always a weak victim that is abused and maligned. She can be savvy and orchestrate positive change in an unwilling subject. Such is the nature of the dutiful, traditional African wife.

The tragic heroines of the stories "The Miracle Worker" and "Hailstones on Zamfara" haunt the reader long after you progress to another selection. Are these women too vulnerable? Are we contributors to their vulnerability because we are idle and seek only to preoccupy ourselves with the trivialities of our safe, Western existence? "Madness in the Family" is a story which prompts you to question the nature your own aspirations. Unbridled ambition can be a dangerous thing. And the simple, short expressions in the selection "Green" illuminates the dual nature that the African permanent resident assumes (involuntarily or voluntarily) to survive in the culture "American." The full cost of such an association (through the eyes of a young girl) is well chronicled within nine pages. Atta resides in America and may know too well the cost of her residency. The selection sheds light upon the crisis and conflict that the African immigrant must face.

Sefi Atta's *News from Home* displays the writer's constant growth and ability to advance to the next perimeter of storytelling. This text will serve as a body or the stories can be communicated within singular units to audiences for pedagogical purposes. One knows that all of the works of this writer (thus far) have all been thoroughly engaging. And if the past is an indicator of the future....the best of Sefi Atta is yet to come.

Rosetta Codling, *Independent Scholar*

**Ivan Bargna. *Africa*. Translated by Rosanna M. Giammanco. Book series "Dictionaries of Civilization Series." N° 6. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008. 385 pp.**

Not really a dictionary in the common A-Z sense, this impressive cultural guide is the English translation of a book initially published in Italy in 2007 (under the title *Africa Nera*). Professor Ivan Bargna aptly presents an overview of the sub-Saharan heritage, arts, and material cultures. This excludes North African countries like Egypt, which is dedicated a whole volume in the same book series ("Dictionaries of Civilization Series").

Unlike most dictionaries, the author avoided the usual alphabetical, chronological, or "country-by-country" approaches; he adopted a thematic presentation of six core sections: (1) some of the peoples or nations from Africa (from the Volta populations to Madagascar); (2) power and society in various African kingdoms and chiefless societies; (3) the divinities and

various examples of African religions; (4) ancestor worship; (5) everyday life; and finally (6) the human habitats. The first section presenting individually the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa is the most detailed, with a thematic presentation, a brief chronology, some examples of their traditions and heritage, and the geographical locations for each ethnic group (pp. 11-111). For instance, a schematic figure presents the worldview and cosmology of the Kongo people (in Central Africa), with a description of "this world" which comprises "God," "Noon," "North," and "Maleness," while "the other world" includes "The Dead," "Midnight," "South," and "Femaleness" (p. 44).

The number of sub-themes and angles in this book are impressive (more than one hundred) and their descriptions are vivid, focusing on ethnic groups, traditions, and mainly the artefacts' social meanings rather than dates, conflicts, aesthetics, or artistic value. Therefore, symbols and emblems are the essential dimensions discussed here in various African manifestations and ceremonies, from body art to the selection of colours in craftworks (p. 77). In fact, the term "Symbol" itself reappears in countless places (pp. 21, 53, 57, 77, 105, 106, 110, 192, 206, 210, 227, 256, 287, 341). Among many examples, the author mentions the case of the Maasai people in Kenya and Eastern Africa, who consider the red color as being "associated with youth and the blood's vital force," but also "the color with which the bodies of the brides and the young initiated are painted" (p. 77). All these accounts and remarks related to symbols and their meanings in specific contexts are the most interesting dimensions of this book. For example, in Nigeria, "Palm-tree nuts symbolize the tie that binds human beings to the god Ifa" (p. 211). Elsewhere, explaining the social significance of food, the author argues that according to the Ivory Coast tradition, "while the mask is the symbol of male power, the spoon is a female insignia" (p. 266).

Texts are concise and clear; images abound, with detailed captions. Color photographs are generally recent; art works are mostly taken from various museum collections (from the Musée du Quai Branly to the British Museum). Among many topics discussed here, one can find "Slavery" (pp. 162-66), signs of "colonialism" (pp. 167-70), "post-colonialism" (pp. 171-74), "images of power" (pp. 175-77), but also griots (bards), clothes, dance, literature, and big cities. This book, however, is not just a testimony of the past and a mourning about some lost traditions: many images and texts related to contemporary visual arts, filmmaking, body art, traditional music, and contemporary music in Africa are to be found here. There are neither a conclusion nor endnotes.

I have three minor quibbles about the publisher's work, even though I consider the University of California Press as the most dynamic academic press in the USA. First, the small size of this pocket book can be frustrating because the images are so fascinating and well selected, but also so small. Perhaps one should understand this reduced format is the condition in order to obtain such a reasonable price for a very rich book. Secondly, the book's title is much too short and does not indicate much about its contents. A subtitle (something like "peoples, arts, and civilizations") would have brought more precision to potential readers and to librarians who try to search for this specific title in an ocean of publications with similar titles. Lastly, the one-page index does not include enough terms, dimensions, names, and entries for such a reference book; in its actual form, this index does not allow the reader to search for a

given country and find all the occurrences in the book. As a consequence, many important themes and keywords are missing in the index. However, the chronology, the bibliography and the list of museums are informative; these addendums bring an international perspective (including sources in various languages). The translation from Italian made by Dr. Rosanna Giammanco is excellent and fluid.

These quibbles apart, Ivan Bargna's *Africa* is clearly a valuable resource for a general audience with an interest for African heritage and cultures. It depicts the richness, pride, diversity, and deepness of the art and material culture in various African regions, avoiding to embrace this whole continent as a monolith or as "an exotic place" with peculiar individuals. Allusions to poverty and diseases are minimal. Undergraduates in search of a possible theme for a dissertation may find here a variety of ideas and topics in a lavish presentation. But its readership should not be limited only to future anthropologists and students in "Primitive Art"; college students and casual readers will find here an excellent introduction to African Studies and ethnology. Public libraries will benefit from it.

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**Ama Biney and Adebayo Olukoshi. *Speaking Truth to Power: Selected Pan-African Postcards*. Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, 2010. ix, 248 pp.**

*Speaking Truth to Power: Selected Pan-African Postcards* pays homage to the work and life of Dr. Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem. The book is a collection of Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem's writings. He wrote regularly for Pambazuka news, a progressive Pan-African publisher. The editors have selected articles or "postcards" that reflect Tajudeen's politics and message about the progress of Africa. Tajudeen's source of inspiration and his experience to write about contemporary African issues comes from many sources, among them his commitment to and involvement in a number of international non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations. The book is divided into ten themes, among them "Taking a stand for gender and equality and justice"; "Transforming cultural thought and values"; "Building democratic institutions in Africa"; "Speaking truth to power"; and "Africa and the World". The editors have taken care to organize Tajudeen's writings to represent his legacy and to create a cohesive message on a variety of broad themes including gender issues, leadership, Pan-Africanism, and the appreciation of African culture and language, all with an eye toward advancing the continent today. The preface is written by Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, the former prime minister of Tanzania. He contextualizes Tajudeen's legacy and recounts how Tajudeen's life, through many important positions, made him an important contribution to Africa as a whole and, more specifically, to the Pan-African movement.

This book is not an academic study; rather, it is a compilation of essays and commentary written by an international leader, activist, and scholar. The book has been compiled in such a way as to create a theme, capture the essence of critical issues, and maintain the salience and integrity of each issue discussed. He engages the reader to think about current challenges and conundrums. Each postcard speaks to larger political, social, and economic issues, and

challenges are front and center on the continent. Tajudeen's ideas are democratic and progressive and reflect the present moment of post-colonial Africa during the first decade of the millennium. Tajudeen's body of work is inspiring and motivational, yet critical of Africa's challenges. He is not afraid to challenge traditional social ideas or critique poor leadership. Thus, Tajudeen's work touches sensitive areas of society including language and dressing customs, gender violence, and patriarchal leaders, and his writing and opinions are hard hitting. Contemporary and persistent issues such as the enforcement of laws; the relationship of women and the peasantry to big men; corruption; and the effectiveness of the International Criminal Court are a few examples where Tajudeen is both thoughtful and critical.

As a Pan-Africanist, Tajudeen is comparative in his approach to recognizing issues, similarities, and modeling solutions from other countries. He writes on leadership in Venezuela, the approach to curbing corruption in Asia, and about hurricane Katrina in the United States as a Pan-African issue. Tajudeen's writing engages topics such as democracy both theoretically and practically. Although he is supportive of democracy and human rights, he is observant of the issues and social phenomena that make the practice of democracy and function poorly. Writing on political parties, he asks quite simply "how do political parties contribute to deepening or hindering democracy? ...How do they hinder or enhance the full participation of marginalized groups, be they women, youth, ethnic/religious, or other political minorities? Is democracy better served by national parties or could a case be made for decentralized party organization that may address the political interests of marginalized groups?" (p. 149) As a writer and an activist, Tajudeen stimulates the reader to think critically about Africa's contemporary issues.

The editors who compiled *Speaking Truth to Power* held true to the goal of honoring the legacy of Tajudeen by highlighting his writing, his causes, and his tireless work for unity and progress within Africa. This book is recommended for those seeking snapshots of contemporary African issues. The first decade of the millennium is nicely captured as a critical and political log from an active leader. Several decades from now, this book will still serve as a diary of Africa's birth into the millennium and the tireless work of leaders like Tajudeen. The Millennium Development Goals are discussed in the volume, and whether taking a contemporary look, or a look back several years from now, Tajudeen's evaluation and critique of the development landscape is a useful assessment and marker. The book might also be used as one of several supplements for instructors teaching about some of the major issues covered. The book is readable and accessible, yet stimulating and does not sell the intellectual abilities of the reader short.

Kelli N. Moore, *James Madison University*

**Barbara Bompani and Maria Frahm-Arp. *Development and Politics from Below: Exploring Religious Spaces in the African State*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. xiii, 257pp.**

Religion in Africa plays a central role in every aspect of people's lives. Using Western benchmarks to study African religious experiences has often produced results that do not do

justice to the African experience. The book's contributors seek to answer how different the African religious experience is and how it interplays with politics and development to impact various societies. The focus is on ordinary people who through religion have become agents of positive transformations, which recognized political structures seem to have failed. Professors from diverse disciplines in Europe, United States of America, and Africa shared their thoughts and research on religion, politics, and developmental issues in a 2008 conference with a title similar to that of the book.

The ten chapters are divided into three sections. In Part I, "Challenging the Secular: Religion and Public Spaces," Stephen Ellis is convinced that African states do not share Western concepts of separation between religion and state. Spiritual thoughts supersede the physical. Thus in a real sense, when African religious beliefs are placed beside the West's, the modernity principles that leave out religious roles do not work for Africa. Gerrie ter Haar uses Emmanuel Milingo, the Catholic Archbishop of Lusaka, as a case study to show how religion (Christianity) extract self-help programs to generate change in food production through the Mubliuli Economic Principle. Ter Haars seeks human dignity through self-improvement. Abdulkader Tayob also looks at dignity in religious traditions, spaces, and identities in South Africa by examining the *kramat* burial sites for Muslim saints. Dorothea Schulz accesses Muslim women of Bamako, Mali, and how foreign donors have helped to transformed them over the years. The underlining argument in this chapter is that change through religious activism emanates from self-recognition and mutual group support that does not require an 'other' to dictate the principles and pace.

Part II, "Religion between State and Society," reflects on the carved space of religion that exists between the state and the society and the relationship that accrues from this. Skinner surveys this religious space in Gambia, Ghana, and Sierra Leone in looking at the tremendous growth Islam has attained in exerting its influence into the social (education and health), political and economic public spaces, locally and internationally, thereby becoming more open to secular developments. Ernest Mallya continues with a study of the relationship between faith-based organizations (FBOs), NGOs, and the government in Tanzania and concludes that religious groups are at the mercy of the government, which is appropriating the resources of the FBOs and NGOs. Linda van de Kamp evaluates the Universal Church of Christ in Mozambique to expose the negativity in some religious activities. This church encourages its members to give money to the church, reminiscent of the early Catholic Church selling indulgences. The result is the continual poverty of the congregation while the "men of God" become rich. The emphasis of these chapters is on the religious groups filling the vacuum created by political institutions and helping to foster a new process of advancement for the people. In addition, they espouse that religious activism does sometimes have negative implications even though the intention may be noble.

In Part III, "Health Care Provision: Reflections on Religion," James Cochrane offers a theoretical framework for the study of religions to arrive at a public acceptance of the relationship between religion and politics. Elizabeth Graveling uses the village of Ndwumizili to elaborate on how people alternate between different religions to achieve life's satisfaction,

while Ezra Chitando assesses how the World Council of Churches is dealing with the HIV epidemic in Africa.

The selection of papers in this book all speak to the relationship between religion and development that most Western countries downplay. The contributors have all shown that religion can help bring about development and societal cohesion in instances where politics fail. Using salient information gleaned from books, journal articles, radio broadcasts, interviews, and internet sources, the authors in one voice reiterate the ordinary people's effort at effecting change in their society. The synthesis of all the papers have successfully interrogated and reflected on "the significance of the kinds of public action that manifest themselves in non-Western societies" (p. 3). This is an important contribution for policy makers, development agencies, and religious groups to acquaint themselves with formulating policies that will be beneficial to the people they are serving.

Lady Jane Acquah, *University of Texas at Austin*

**Babacar Camara. *Reason in History: Hegel and Social Changes in Africa*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011. 135 pp.**

"Hegel is dead! Long live Hegel! The ghost of Hegel dominates the hallways, institutions, syllabi, instructional practices, and journals of Euro-American philosophy." So said Nigerian philosopher Olufemi Taiwo in a scathing critique of Hegel's ageless *Geist*, which continues to pervade the American ethos. The above philosopher—who is not alone in his criticism of Hegel and other European philosophers' thoughts on the African historical and ontological condition—represents the standard critical argument leveled against western philosophical practices in general and G.W.F. Hegel specifically. Indeed, Hegel's blatant omission of Africa from world history in his *The Philosophy of History* has appeared so lucid to countless Africana philosophers that mentioning anything to the contrary would seem almost blasphemous and obstinate to the mission of the academy's "much vaunted commitment to liberal education" (p. 32).

Babaca Camara is quick to separate his scholarship from this trend, which he notes, "meant a lot at the time but now feels like grocery store labor" (p. xi). Camara's rhetoric is instead much more apologetic in nature, which gives the piece an air of vindication. Apologetic in the sense that Hegel represents the most appropriate theoretical background for analyzing change in Africa from a contemporary point of view. The vindication is noted in the author wishes for his readers to regard the aforementioned philosopher not as a racist but instead as a scholar whose work is best suited for an historical and political analysis of the African tradition. For the reader (this reader included) familiar with the anti-Hegelian Africanist literature, Camara's project offers a nuanced, if not radical new idea: what if we take, as a presupposition, the fact that Hegel was not racist and, moreover, agreed that his scholarship illuminates the inherent internal dialectic and dynamic reality of African societies? *Reason and History* attempts to tackle this bold thesis through Hegelian dialectical and Marxist historical materialist theory. In the end, however, the reader is left with the sentiment that his lofty goals far surpassed the

conceptual and empirical justifications presented in the text. This reader found this to be the case, ironically, through the authors own dialectical method.

Through a careful and thorough analysis of both Hegelian and Marxian political and historical philosophies, Camara exposes the weaknesses in Hegel's theses on Africa, namely Hegel's position that the historical and economic condition in (pre) colonial African was extremely static in nature. Appealing to both Hegel's methodological imperative and Africa's complex internal dialectical institutions and relationships, Camara concludes that when discussing the evolution of the modes of production, labor, exchange, and other social relations in Africa, they are all best understood as operating in a constant dialectical relationship with each other at both an internal (nation-state/Kingdom) level, but also on an external (European and Arab) level.

Camara's project reads like a text whose aim is to synthesize and explicate, in great detail, the history of scholarship from both European and African, as well as pioneer and contemporary scholars, on a wide range of issues that have spearheaded debates on the African social condition for the last sixty years. A monstrous task indeed, yet one that is handled in this project with both discretion and philosophical fervor. The author's belief in dialectical thinking, both as a methodology and interpretive tool was clearly demonstrated throughout the text. It is, however, this very concept—dialectical reasoning—that ultimately blinded him.

Hegel was a racist, and his universal philosophical system is a detriment to the African situation. This text proffers the contrary and instead relishes Hegel's universality with his desire for the "unity and originality" found in generality. Camara focuses this dialectical tool specifically in his chapters on African labor and cultural phenomena. I found these chapters full of value and importance. I could not, however, part with the idea that Camara was hypocritically static in his analysis of hitherto debates on Hegel and Africa. Would not a dialectical thinker posit that one could potentially be both critical of Hegel's purported racist tendencies while simultaneously embracing aspects of his philosophical system? Could not the Africanist philosopher acknowledge and interrogate the former while recognizing and perhaps adopting, in specific situations, the latter? It seemed that Camara was operating under the pretense that those scholars who base their critique of Hegel on racialist grounds have failed to properly see the necessity of the philosopher in many instances.

Marketing Hegel as anti-racist to Africana philosophers—whom I believe to be Camara's target audience—would indeed be a tough ticket to sell. Proclaiming that his philosophical system exposed the very internal dynamism of the African continent would seem near impossible! The purpose of dialectical thinking embraces the expression of movement, change, and development as well as locating unity in difference. Hegel's omission and justification of Africa in world history is, indeed, a racist overture. This I acknowledge from Taiwo's and others' arguments. I will also acknowledge that Hegel's philosophical system has had success in African and African American philosophical discourse. Hegel's system did not do Africa any favors, yet, as Camara informs us, his political philosophy can aid in our reinterpretation of economic and cultural changes in Africa. This I acknowledge to be Camara's finest contribution. Contrary to his earlier position, we must not be reluctant to remain on guard against the blatant

racism of Hegel; indeed such an investigation has been effectively justified. At the same time we must also remember that the aforementioned need not be a forgotten mode of analysis of Hegel's philosophical system on contemporary the African social and political environment. Robert Scholes once said of critique, "Plato's work can better be kept alive in our time by such irreverent critiques as that of Jacques Derrida, who takes Plato seriously as an opponent, which is to say, takes him dialectically." Indeed, "we must start with our most beloved icons" especially "those that really have the power to move and shake us." We ought to maintain this framework with Hegel, his racism, and his system.

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Robert Munro, *Michigan State University*

**Peter Cunliffe-Jones. *My Nigeria: Five Decades of Independence*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan Publishers, 2010. 238 pp.**

Nigeria has been getting its share of analysis from various writers who incessantly have asked over the years what precisely the trouble is that has kept this often acclaimed "Giant of Africa" from the desired development since independence. *My Nigeria*, by veteran journalist Peter Cunliffe-Jones, who is privileged to have seen Nigeria's recent tumultuous years, is a timely book that provides a valuable insight about this complex country with myriad issues. It comes at a time when Nigeria celebrated fifty years of independence.

The book directs us to the writer's family connection with Nigeria. His great-grandmother's cousin, Edward Burns, arrived in the country in search of a living, and subsequently the author's grandfather, Sir Hugo Marshall who came in when the British took control of the country. The author's sojourn many years later as part of his journalism career in Nigeria provides readers with many personal experiences he had while covering the news and events as they extend to what could be referred to the author's "Nigerian attachment." It is definitely reliable evidence and is why Cunliffe-Jones calls his book *My Nigeria*.

Not surprisingly, Cunliffe-Jones in the beginning describes the potentials of Nigeria and the ironic poverty, both of which could be seen even in Lagos—the modern buildings and the life of survival of the fittest in many parts of the city vividly occurring in the "slums," being the other side of Lagos where people troop daily to get their share of, in local parlance, the "national cake." Lagos, with its many ugly stories of crime, was where the author lived to gather his real understanding of Nigeria.

The author delves into Nigeria's years after colonial rule when the army played a substantial role and the effects of regional rivalry of the 1960s that ushered in the civil war, followed by later coups and counter coups, the murder of prominent politicians, and the cumulative years of neglect and lack of vision by successive governments. The return to civilian

rule in 1999 did not have much positive impact, as Cunliffe-Jones argues that it wasted the aspirations of Nigerians after more than twenty years of military misadventures. The insight the author provides is that “neither voters nor candidates had spelled out what else they meant by change” (p. 19). The results have been disastrous, for after more than a decade of democracy there is still no light at the end of the tunnel. What else do you expect when the very ingredients of promising democracy—intelligent voters and patriotic candidates—are absent or voters and candidates not knowing or “spelling out” what they mean or expect in the polity?

Cunliffe-Jones offers another crucial element in understanding Nigeria when he explores the “slave trade” and the period of colonization that amalgamated the southern and northern protectorates, which was when the colonialists set up “new borders of Africa.” The author provides honest criticism about the reality now Nigeria lives with, that of having different people with multiple backgrounds. But, this is not as bad an omen as Cunliffe-Jones wants readers to believe. It should be well understood in my opinion that the present “divisions” among Nigerians into reactionary groups is a new occurrence. The fact that Nigeria has multiple ethnic groups would have provided a way for the country to be prosperous through tapping the wisdom from millions of her resourceful and resilient citizens. But, alas, that has not been the case at least for now. Readers will agree with the authors view that underdevelopment in Nigeria is largely the creation of the colonialists (p. 73). Cunliffe-Jones, however, contends that Nigeria’s indigenous leaders also share the blame do to their their policy summersaults and the “failure” over the years “to do enough” (p. 112).

From a different perspective, Cunliffe-Jones compares Nigeria with Singapore. Here the author recounts his departure from Nigeria in 2002. He attempts to answer the question of why development seems to have eluded Nigeria. To the author, unlike Singapore there is too much “docility” in Nigeria despite the two countries having a similar colonial history and background. Cunliffe-Jones also takes the readers to the “politics of oil,” which is interwoven with the corruption that he sees as endemic. Other dimensions of the economy have been starved of proper attention, and the effect has been a “mono-economic policy,” a policy that unfortunately sees the politicization and control of the revenues from oil “institutionalized.”

In my assessment, this is an important book about Nigeria and how best it can move forward from horrible history toward greatness. Cunliffe-Jones presents sound options to get Nigeria out of the woods. One significant option is the need for Nigerians to be serious to see that they get the best Nigeria they have been dreaming of. To him it requires a change of “habit.” The business of changing the nation should be that of the people, which the author hopes will happen though not as soon as he might have hoped or envisioned. A revealing and insightful analysis, *My Nigeria* is useful as an added contribution to the discourse on the “Nigerian Question.” With its distinctive tone from a veteran journalist with “inside” experience it should be read by all those who sincerely are concerned with Nigeria’s problems, I should add, however, that Cunliffe-Jones is not yet done—he should get the book translated in various Nigerian languages so that it is read widely by the people at the grass roots.

Kawu Bala, *Attorney Generals Ministry, Belize*

**Irit Eguavoen.** *The Political Ecology of Household Water in Northern Ghana.* Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008. xi, 309 pp.

*The Political Ecology of Household Water in Northern Ghana* is volume 10 in a University of Bonn Center for Development Research (ZEF) series that seeks to find solutions to global development issues. Volume 10 is part of a larger German project (GLOWA) that uses an interdisciplinary approach to understand six river basins in Europe, North and West Africa, and Southwest Asia. Typically volume 10 is quite similar to another title in the series, *Demand-oriented Community Water Supply in Ghana* (2006).

Although the book's title already suggests a relatively narrow focus, Eguavoen gives little sense of household water use across Northern Ghana, but mostly how it works in a handful of tiny villages in the far north, near the border with Burkina Faso. The author does not clearly explain the rationale behind her main study site of Sirigu at which she conducts surveys, interviews, and engages in participant observation; the villagers of Sirigu are mostly Nankane-speaking Catholics in a predominantly Muslim region, whereas the author has Hausa language skills and admits difficulties finding people literate in English and Nankane who could translate her lengthy questionnaires, partially because "Nankane is not taught at schools" (p. 39).

Concepts that are rather basic to experts on African development are often explained at length, especially in the introductory chapters, although it is unlikely that general readers would be attracted to the book. The author claims that a key value of the book is that it "argues for a rethinking of the current policy paradigm by applying a wider historical timeframe" (p. 1), but other than in a portion of chapter three, focuses much of her study on recent decades. The first map provided is a close up of the study area with no insert map to help the reader better understand where within northern Ghana Sirigu is located. Partial "big picture" information is provided in a somewhat blurry Map 3 on page 30 that depicts the entire river basin, and the best orientation to the area is provided in a crisp and well-labeled Map 5 on page 34. Although based on her doctoral dissertation work, at times the book lacks an academic tone; the author refers to herself in the first person and describes which of her findings she personally found "very interesting" (p. 35) or "most interesting" (p. 39).

Methodologically, the author uses a rather narrow definition of development as "local change, which is intentionally initiated by external actors" (p. 6), thereby excluding from "development" local self-help initiatives that are intentional and lead to positive change, unless they are tied to an externally-initiated project. Although Eguavoen notes that "Seasonal variation of water availability is a central issue for local livelihood" (p. 2), her ten months of field research were restricted to three periods of "dry seasons from 2004 to 2006" (p. 33); her work thus suffers from seasonal bias, one of six key development project biases described by Robert Chambers in his 1983 classic, *Rural Development: Putting the Last First*. The author indicates that political ecology, environmental history, and legal anthropology frame her study, but the use of these approaches is not clearly evident until well into chapter four. Furthermore, much of chapter four (on Nankane social organization), like the three introductory chapters, has surprisingly little mention of or direct connection to household water management.

The book's strength is in its latter chapters that focus on life in Sirigu and contain a wealth of site-specific ethnographic information on water management and use. Chapter five examines local knowledge and discourses on water as well as changes in water availability since the introduction of drilling and lifting technologies and describes some of the shortcomings of development projects that provide initial funds and infrastructure, but do not follow up to determine whether wells and boreholes they supported are operational years later. A key finding was that the improved availability of water during the dry season due to technology has meant that local people no longer perceive the dry season to be a water-short period.

Nonetheless, some local practices, including the maintenance of sacred groves, continue to have a water conservation effect, albeit a minor one, given that such groves can be quite small or even "a single standing tree" (p. 118). Chapter six examines typical water requirements and uses as they relate to rural livelihoods; chapters seven and eight focus on decision-making with regard to water allocation as well as changing household water rights in Sirigu. Chapter nine revisits the shortcomings of development projects aimed at improved water access and is followed by a very brief concluding chapter. Key findings in the final chapters include that governments often have water regulations that do not vary by region that differ substantially from one another, leaving local people unable or unwilling to fulfill them. In addition, an overall increase in the number of water pumps does not mean an increase in decision-making ability about water because users might be required to join pump groups or other entities that reduce their ability to choose water sources.

The book has a considerable number of tables, photographs, maps, and inserts. Geographers, anthropologists, environmental historians, development specialists, and others with advanced-level study and a combined interest in Africa, culture, and the environment, will appreciate Eguavoen's book.

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**Linda K. Fuller. *African Women's Unique Vulnerabilities to HIV/Aids: Communication Perspectives and Promises*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. iv, 309 pp.**

Although it is a highly publicized fact that the disheartening levels of new HIV/Aids infections as well as deaths in Africa are incomparable, a lesser-promulgated reality is that women are the ones disproportionately affected. Linda K. Fuller presents the factors that have created this reality using a holistic approach to demonstrate the biomedical, social, economic, political, and educational vulnerabilities that African women experience. As clearly outlined in her introduction, Fuller's main impetus is to motivate her readers, women in the developed world in particular, enough to take action upon learning of the plight of their "African sisters." Her main argument is that communication is the answer to creating the attitude, behavioral, and developmental changes that are necessary to eliminate the existence of these vulnerabilities. Fuller makes use of an abundant number of sources from varied disciplines ranging from scientific and medical publications to politics and economics to help her effectively frame the unique predicament of women with regards to HIV/Aids. Perhaps what is most appreciable

about this book is the fact that although topics like medicine and economics have their own and at times intimidating language, Fuller is prudent in ensuring that any esoteric jargon is clearly defined. Her straightforward and clear organization of each vulnerability issue contributes greatly to making the book accessible to the wide readership she strives for. The book is organized into sections each addressing the aforementioned issues and then concludes by discussing the potential for more utilization of diverse forms of communication in combating the pandemic on the continent.

The first chapter goes into biomedical vulnerabilities where the issues of contraception, fistula, and childbirth are examined to demonstrate how the unique physiology of women places them at a higher risk than men. This chapter brings to light the complexity of addressing issues like female genital mutilation and gum-tattooing that are rooted in cultural tradition and encourages readers to approach such topics with sensitivity. The lengthiest chapter explores sociocultural practices and traditions that place women in a place of unique risk. Fuller presents the many familial obligations and expectations that most African societies have for women and the aspects of these delegated roles that can contribute to the burdens of women. Because “African society” can be a nebulous term that varies from region to region, Fuller is careful in identifying the location of her examples of tradition and practices to underscore the importance of context. Through the discussion of gender-based violence, she is able to somberly illustrate the pervasive reality of rape on the continent and how greatly exacerbated it is by conflict. Furthermore, through the discussion of marriage, polygamy, religion, and traditional rituals, she exposes readers to the social dynamics and systems through which women navigate and construct behavioral responses as they relate to HIV/Aids.

The following two chapters on the economic, legal and political vulnerabilities present the structural hurdles that contribute to limiting women’s opportunities to play a more active role in personal decision-making. In the educational vulnerabilities section Fuller discusses the widespread gender imbalance that exists in African schools across various regions of the continent. She touches on what a sex education curriculum entails and how financial educational responsibilities sometimes lead young women to make risky choices to meet those expenses. The last two chapters present her argument for what she sees as the real solution to addressing the problem: communication. She clearly defines her usage of the term to include “interpersonal/intercultural communication, mass media (print, electronic, visual) and ICTs [information and communication technologies]” (p. 145). After introducing how African media is disseminated through various outlets (i.e., print, radio, and TV/film), she then discusses where opportunities exist for harnessing this power to change societal behaviors and attitudes towards HIV/Aids. Fuller welcomes and sees merit in utilizing many traditional communication methods that would help make HIV/Aids and sensitive topics surrounding HIV/Aids more approachable. Fuller includes the arts, music, song, dance, and even puppetry all as effective and valuable forms of instruction and dialogue.

Linda Fuller is successful in achieving her stated goal of presenting “what is happening today in Africa real and readable” (pg. 21). Her holistic approach contributes greatly to illustrating to the reader not only the structural, societal, and personal vulnerabilities but also helps demonstrate the complexity of the issue and the sensitivity it deserves. Research on

women's vulnerabilities in the midst of the epidemic is currently growing and what sets Fuller's book apart is the inclusion of her communication perspective. This book is highly recommended as a beginning resource to anyone interested in the issues of HIV/Aids, the role of communication in public health, and/or women's issues in general.

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**Sandra E. Greene. *West African Narratives of Slavery: Texts from Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Ghana*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011. ix, 300 pp.**

*West African Narratives of Slavery* analyzes five stories from what is today Ghana. As the author states at the outset, there are many things about the trade that have come to light in the past forty years thanks to the groundbreaking work of historians (and I would add, at the least, anthropologists and archeologists). However, there is still much that we do not know. "This is especially true with regard to the impact that slavery and the slave trade had on the individual" (p. 1).

Greene repeatedly states throughout the text that her purpose in undertaking the task of reading and analyzing these sometimes opaque narratives was "to expand the discussion of the slave trade and slavery on West Africa by highlighting how West Africans themselves, specifically those who never left the continent, thought about, remembered, and were prepared to discuss their lives in both slavery and freedom" (pp. 1-2). She also alerts the reader to her analytical framework, which she locates both within the Africanist and African-Americanist scholarly traditions. She draws upon African history methodology for checking the personal narrative against the historical record and looks to scholars of North American slavery—particularly those who study the slave narrative—for a sense of the mediation of texts under such conditions as slavery and post-emancipation. Even when people tell their own stories, the messages that come through are mediated by who is doing the telling, to whom, the economic, social and political conditions under which the stories are told, and to what end.

The book consists of four parts. The first is the narrative of Aaron Kuku, an evangelist whose story is told by an Ewe minister named Samuel Quist. The second part is composed of two biographies: one of a woman named Lydia Yawo; the other of a man named Yosef Famfantor. Ms. Yawo's biography was penned by a Bremen missionary named Johannes Mertz who did so specifically to encourage more European women to take up mission work in Africa. Mr. Famfantor's biography was written in Ewe by his neighbor, friend, and minister, Rev. G. K. Tsekpo after the former's death. The third part is based on the diary of Paul Sands, a man whose ancestors were slaves. Greene includes excerpts from Sands' multivolume work to illustrate his insecurities and concerns about his slave heritage and make sense of his life's trajectory given his history. Finally, the fourth part discusses a story from the oral tradition that was reinvigorated many years after the incident was rumored to have occurred. Greene's discussion of why the particular story is remembered and retold over others is particularly illuminating and builds upon work that historian Anne Bailey has done around the same story.

While Greene disagrees with some of the conclusions that Bailey comes to in her own reading of the story, the two analyses of the story are complementary.

Each part begins with the author's situating the stories in a historical, literary, and cultural context. This analysis is then followed by a short preface in which Greene discusses the subject of the story, giving personal background, and alerting the reader to interventions that she has made to the original text. The importance of her intervention as a scholar who is sensitive to the personal and political investments that descendants of sellers and sold have in the history of slavery is brought home in her prefaces. For example, in the preface to Paul Sands' diary Greene discusses her use of pseudonyms for a number of individuals that Mr. Sands mentions in order to protect him and his descendants, as the issue of slavery is still a fraught topic in Ghana.

The words of folklorist Harold Scheub seem most prescient to a reading of the narrative from Aaron Kuku through his amanuensis, Rev. Samuel Quist. Scheub writes: "Stories provide us with truth; they take the flotsam and jetsam of our lives and give those shards a sense of narrative, of form, and therefore of verity" (p. 3). In her preface to Mr. Kuku's narrative, Greene discusses the "flotsam and jetsam" that have gone into making the story that follows, mentioning how, in other incarnations of Mr. Kuku's story, certain important facts are left out of the narrative so that it would conform to the pietistic goal that it was written to serve.

What may seem like small omissions leaves gaps in the narrative that sometimes result in the reader having more questions than answers. Of course, the obvious response is that these silences are at the heart of Greene's project, and I agree. Furthermore, while Greene does not read the narratives for their literary value she seems to utilize a methodology posed by literary theorist Pierre Macherey in the project that she undertakes here. That is, she reads the silences in the texts, recognizing that they are just as important as what is included. However, the texts along with their silences are rich and can be read in a number of different ways. What may be missing in her reading of the narratives is attention to the *way* that things are said (and not just *what* is said) as integral to the meaning of both the oral and written texts.

Because of the way that Greene sets up her arguments, poses and reposes her questions and diligently contextualizes the stories that she analyzes, the text would be very useful to other historians as well as anthropologists who are interested in conducting similar research. The book is an important contribution as well to the fields of memory and trauma studies. I expect that others will seek out the narratives that Dr. Greene has introduced and continue uncovering, on multiple levels and from various disciplines the tales that these important voices from the past have to tell.

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Toni Pressley-Sanon, *University at Buffalo*.

**Larry Grubbs. *Secular Missionaries: Americans and African Development in the 1960's*. Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009. vii, 243 pp.**

The era of the decolonization of Africa which began in the 1950's opened up Africa to more non-European political, cultural, and economic influences, particularly that of the United States. This particular relationship between the United States and Africa during the decade that followed (the 1960's) is the subject of inquiry in Larry Grubbs' *Secular Missionaries*. Focusing on the economic and cultural dimensions of the relationship that was forged during the decade, Grubbs aims to convey "a history of representations of 'developing' or 'underdeveloped' Africa and the conceptual and practical problems that bedeviled American aid to Africa" (p. 4). Weaving together scholarship from political science, sociology, history, and anthropology while also bringing in the works of travel writers and journalists, Grubbs intends to impart the knowledge and images that shaped America's ideas about Africa during the 1960's. In outlining the theory and policies implemented to spur African development, Grubbs argues that the inclinations, assumptions, and beliefs that underlay Europe's colonization of Africa to a great degree also motivated America's attempt to "develop" it. Consequently, Grubbs chose the book's title to convey that proselytizing had not ended with decolonization. Rather, missionaries remained in great numbers, only this time they were preaching modernization.

For Americans in the 1960's, Africa was a place of the strange and offbeat. Changing these perceptions would require an effort to increase knowledge about the continent. Grubbs provides an analysis of the emerging sources of scholarship on Africa during the time. His discussion about the formation of African Studies as a field and the African Studies Association (ASA) does much to highlight the intellectual chasm between African-American scholars and those shaping African Studies at the time.

In the first quarter of the book, Grubbs also outlines the impetus and reasoning for America's great desire to forge a strong relationship with Africa during the 1960's. The book perceptively complicates the predominant narrative of American innocence by discussing how it ignored the treatment of African-Americans in the United States who were fighting for civil rights at that very moment. This discussion about the domestic challenges facing the U.S. provides needed context in understanding the ability of African-Americans to influence policy during the decade.

Grubbs moreover provides a discussion of the international challenges posed to the U.S. by the looming Cold War as one of the main motives behind this increased interest in Africa. According to Grubbs, fostering development in Africa via an American devised scheme would not only ensure a modernized Africa but an Americanized one at that. For as much concern the newly independent nations gave policymakers, Grubbs argues that they provided just as much if not more excitement. There were now many individuals eager to "modernize" the continent whereas before the desire was to "civilize" it. The next four chapters of the book detail the efforts of several individuals who shaped policy towards Africa during the decade and the outcome in key African countries that served as their testing grounds. Grubbs' discussion of how many of the main policy makers of the decade often switched between their roles as

academics obtaining funding from private foundations to holding government posts showed how findings in academia could have been politically motivated.

The book's major focus is the recommendation of these experts — that the newly devised modernization theory serve as the guide for policy towards Africa. Grubbs' approach in evaluating how America used modernization theory to shape its policies is where the book is most compelling. Although Grubbs does make mention of both the Soviet and economic factors, his desire to bring the cultural undertones of this endeavor to the forefront is quite fascinating. Grubbs demonstrates how many aspects of these "traditional" societies were considered impediments to modernization from culture, religion, and most especially what Americans termed "tribalism." Through his examination of the Peace Corps, Grubbs effectively demonstrates that to Americans at the time, the customs and traditions of African societies were seen as incompatible with development. Furthermore, to illustrate the US attempts at transformation, Grubbs details experiences in key countries to show how optimism quickly dissolved. By choosing countries with differing dynamics and leadership he was able insightfully to expose how there were fundamental flaws across the board with respect to the U.S. plans that contributed to a failure in each case. He also includes the criticisms of academics with respect to the development plans made by American officials.

In the closing chapters, Grubbs discusses the factors that contributed to the lack economic growth in countries where these aid and development programs were implemented. Most importantly, he focuses on the fact that for all the rhetoric about modernization and development, aid was difficult to access due to complicated and inconvenient USAID bureaucracy and how much of what was promised never arrived. Grubbs concludes with an analysis of how Americans viewed this failure and argues that the same stereotypes about Africans that were used as reasons for the necessity of development were once again cited to explain this failure.

Grubbs' book, while providing interesting analysis, adds more to scholarship about US foreign policy history than African history. Its greater focus on American academics and US government officials primarily yielded insights about how the US felt about the decade and its prospects, whereas African ideas about development were limited. The addition of the views of African-Americans about events during the decade, however, did add an interesting dimension. Furthermore, the book would have been better formatted had it included a bibliography rather than just a notes section.

Nevertheless, considering current debates about the efficacy and future of aid in Africa, this book provides a useful background on its early beginnings. *Secular Missionaries* does much to explain how modernization theory shaped aid policy and why its prospects looked grim even amidst the high optimism of the 1960's. This book is written and organized in a fashion that makes it highly accessible to a wide audience. The fact that it cuts across several disciplines from economics to anthropology allows it to provide an interesting and unique perspective on the issue of development. There are limited books on Africa's economic development during this decade, information and communication technologies and the insights of this book show that there is much more that should be explored.

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**John W. Harbeson and Donald Rothchild (eds.). *Africa in World Politics: Reforming Political Order*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2009. xvi, 408 pp.**

*Africa in World Politics*, a book devoted to one of Africa's leading international relations scholars, Donald Rothchild, is a contribution by reputable scholars on Africa. The book is an endeavor to construct an understanding of the place of Africa in world politics. With reference to informative literature on Africa, the authors make a convincing elucidation of various contemporary issues surrounding Africa's involvement in world politics. They articulate the significant issues of this involvement. The introduction illuminates the historical factors that have shaped relations between Africa and the outside world, largely espousing issues that have characterized African society. These issues center on aspects of state weakness, collapse, and reconstruction.

Part II analyzes the most important influence on the African state in its behavior in the international system. In essence, it does so by analyzing how colonialism shaped the African state in relation to other actors in the world system and how post independent states have inherited and reshaped institutions that interrelate with the outside world. Largely, their dealings with the outside world have been met with great limitations as a result of actions and reactions by major international actors. Policies and measures put into practice in Africa in its attempt deal with the great limitations were elaborated. Key issues regarding Africa's development were analyzed, and specifically these relate to structural adjustment, aid, and debt. How key players have implemented various policies to deal with emerging issues was clarified. One critical issue has been enunciating the historical issues that have affected African development discourse in the past, the present, and the future.

Part III is an examination of the most dominating and contentious issues in Africa's interaction with the outside world in the contemporary world political discourse. This relates to the issues of democracy, civil society, governance, and privatization. How Africa is going to materialize from dealing with these emerging issues becomes a key question. But what emerges from the contributions in this part of the book is that much will depend on how Africa's key actors are likely to respond appropriately to the issues under consideration and also with the propinquity that it requires.

Part IV is an analysis of the actions and reactions of global actors in relation to Africa regarding specific issues. How the changing world and specific issues that have shaped actions, reactions, and interactions between Africa and the international world were examined. The contributors are well intentioned in setting forth issues for global engagement from the point of view of the U.S, Europe, and China and the weakening of Africa concerning the understanding of sovereignty and the most accepted principles of international responsibility. The most current contribution did expose how terrorism in Africa as a subject of international concern becomes one subject that Africa keeps afoot with without realizing that the same subject can be used against it in the protection of international society. Whilst liberation from within sounds as the modest ideal to be pursued on all fronts limitations, exist to some extent in alienating societies from the goal as the total liberation of a human being exists at all levels of analysis without being subject to conditional change.

Overall, the subject matter addressed by the book is a pertinent issues in as far as it addresses the dominant international relations discourse. Those interested in Africa's interaction with the outside world will find the text very useful and informative. By way of conclusion, the remaining question on *Africa in World Politics* in as far as reforming the political order will be: What form and where will Africa's political power base come from to be able to maneuver its political standing in world politics. Are those maneuvers going to be acceptable to the international community as a whole and the great powers in particular? In essence, it seems that world politics dictate that the objectives for state's existence whether small or great remains the same, and is that of survival as reflected in the state's ability and capability to influence change in the society and the existing environment. What future works on Africa's relations with the outside world will largely have to dwell on will be to address the policy options for Africa in relation to the overwhelming challenges and limitations that structurally limit the achievement of its objectives. Also needed is an examination of policy options for the powerful actors to enable Africa to become an actor with equal intentions and aspirations in as far as interaction in the international system is concerned.

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**Kassim Mohammed Khamis. *Promoting the African Union*. Washington, DC: Lilian Barber Press, Inc., 2008. 421 pp.**

Since the transformation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU) in 2002, there has been an increasing scholarly interest in understanding African continental politics. Unfortunately, as of today, most of the academic writing on the African Union has taken an “outsider-perspective,” often from a policy-distant point of view. Against this background, Kassim Khamis’ book on a history of challenges of African continental projects marks a crucial exception and contributes valuably to a new reading of African unity.

Khamis, himself a Tanzanian diplomat, was a consultant to the OAU General Secretariat during the transformation period. Having thereby developed a clear assessment of the OAU’s weaknesses as well as insights into the difficulties of formulating and implementing real alternatives, Khamis’ aim is to “help readers understand why the African unity project has proceeded so slowly as against the intended establishment of the African Union” (p. xiv). The book impressively illustrates that many progressive ideas—the importance of strengthening supranational elements as well as the need to integrate political and economic cooperation among African states—were already formulated in the 1976 plan to establish an African Economic Community, whose implementation yet failed. The establishment of the AU was thus, according to Khamis, aimed at fulfilling this endeavor. Yet, instead of accomplishing the long-held vision of African unity, it was built upon the same shortcomings that once flawed its predecessor.

Comprising twelve chapters, *Promoting the African Union* is organized into four parts. Part one discusses the weaknesses of the OAU, where Khamis finds the absence of a well-defined goal, member states’ dissent over the preferred union, a lack of bureaucratic professionalism, as

well as an inadequate institutional and financial framework as the main reasons for the organization's inefficiency. The latter is illustrated by the OAU's efforts towards decolonization, the promotion of "Africanism" in the international arena as well as regional economic integration. It is the book's emphasis on the African Economic Community as well as the OAU Charter review process (pp. 29-65) that evidences the longevity of ideas to reform and enhance the continental organization that are usually only attributed to the reform processes of the 1990s. This marks a major refinement to hitherto dominant interpretations. The second part discusses the developments since the Sirte Summit in 1999 that culminated in the establishment of the African Union, including a very detailed comparison of the AU Constitutive Act with the OAU Charter and the Abuja Treaty, as well as an in-depth reconstruction of the transitional process from 2001 until 2005. The chapter coins a vivid testimony of the slow and stony negotiation process that preceded and followed the signing of the Constitutive Act and thereby contributes decisively to understanding the political aspects of forming an African Union.

Parts three and four finally discuss in great detail the many ways in which the implementation and institutional framework of the AU hinders the accomplishment of the Sirte Declaration's initial vision and suggest necessary future reforms. Khamis proposes to strengthen and re-integrate the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) into the continental project as well as to strengthen the Pan-African Parliament as democratic check to the Assembly of Heads of State. Those that have been following the continental discussions over the past years will recognize that *Promoting the African Union* is deeply rooted in those current debates on the future of the Union and the United States of Africa that have preoccupied the Union at least since 2005. It thus is not only a narrative *about* the African Union, but is itself a vivid contribution to the contested imagination of the most desirable continental order. Yet, the mindful reader may assume that any of the presented solutions—similar to the long list of previously formulated ones—will face strong opposition in the implementation phase. In fact, if there is one shortcoming to find in the book's argumentation, it would be that the political cleavages among AU member states that ultimately explain *why* decades of searching for continental solutions to Africa's socio-economic and political problems lacked producing a real effect, remain unreflected, although this was also not the stated aim of the author.

Khamis' reconstruction of a history of continental projects rests on a thorough and comprehensive analysis of over 250 primary official documents from the OAU/ AU Archives in Addis Ababa that have never been presented to an academic audience in such detail before. It therefore constitutes an invaluable resource particularly to those scholars without direct access to the Archives. The detailed analysis of primary documents enables the author not only to illustrate the thematic threads that have preoccupied the continental organization since the 1970s, but also to shed light on the history of internal processes of consecutive decision-making, re-negotiation, committee-building that are such fundamental aspect of continental politics even today.

The in-depth and sometimes repetitive reconstruction of bureaucratic processes may on the one hand unfortunately diminish the book's appeal to a wider audience without substantial interest in the workings of an international organization. Yet, on the other hand, *Promoting the*

*African Union* thereby offers in itself a solution to its main concern: the lack of an institutional memory that ultimately prevents decisions from being implemented. It is thus not only an important contribution to a field of knowledge that is otherwise dominated by Western, policy-distant academia, but also helps those engaged in continental politics to understand the *longue durée* of ideas as well as the “OAU heritage” of the African Union in a more comprehensive way and hopefully enable them to learn for the future.

In sum, *Promoting the African Union* is an empirically rich study on the history of African continental politics and thus a crucial contribution to understanding its past and current challenges. The book’s particular strength lies in its focus on an analysis of primary sources and its reflection of a long history of negotiating African unity that perfectly connects to current developments on the continental level.

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**Stephen J. King. *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa*.  
Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2009. 290 pp.**

Steven J. King’s *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa* is an excellent expansion of and follow-up to his previous book, *Liberalization against Democracy: The Local Politics of Economic Reform in Tunisia*, which details how economic liberalization fostered the expansion of authoritarianism in post-colonial Tunisia. King, Associate Professor of Government, Georgetown University, is a comparativist who focuses on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). He draws from a variety of sources and disciplines to complete a comparative analysis of authoritarian MENA regimes during the latter half of the twentieth century in this his second book. It is a timely addition to the body of knowledge to which scholars and policy-makers alike defer for help in understanding the present era of MENA revolutions, and to predict the impact of these revolutions on the political future of the region.

The book’s six chapters detail the transformation of MENA authoritarianism *vis-à-vis* economic liberalization following the mid-century independence movements in Egypt, Syria, Algeria, and Tunisia. King argues that authoritarian rule in this subset of Arab single-party republics persisted in spite of and, to some extent, as a result of patronage-based economic liberalization. The first two chapters outline the theoretical framework from which King approaches economic liberalization in MENA countries. He views the powerful revolutionary movements, their distaste for multi-party politics, and their reliance on patronage for legitimacy as driving factors behind the development of powerful single-party systems.

Chapter 3 presents “Old Authoritarianism” by demonstrating how the political institutions and national policies in the examined MENA states led to the development and legitimation of dominant political parties. Chapter 4 defines “New Authoritarianism.” Here, King argues that the façade of democracy, brought about by privatization and the imposition of *faux* multi-party (i.e., dominant-party) politics, ensured the persistence of a repackaged authoritarianism by allowing patronage to continue through the private institutions that were run by the same elites who had previously dominated the private sector under Old Authoritarianism. The book’s final

two chapters explain why democracy emerged from authoritarian regimes in Argentina, Brazil, and Spain, and how Egypt, Syria, Algeria, and Tunisia may overcome economic liberalization characterized by patronage and the legacy of single-party institutions to achieve true democratization.

The single drawback to this book is its failure to address wholly authoritarianism in the MENA region. Indeed, the title of the book is misleading, given its narrow focus on four countries that followed relatively similar post-colonial socio-political paths. Nevertheless, King's unique perspective on how some developing MENA economies progressed during the post-colonial era exposes seasoned scholars, who specialize in the development of the modern Arab state, to a realistic analysis of how economic liberalization is used to reinforce authoritarian regimes both domestically and internationally. Additionally, King's theoretical approach to authoritarianism can be applied to regions outside MENA, and may be of interest to scholars of economic development in sub-Saharan Africa, and Central Asia, where the haphazard application of economic liberalization will help shape political outcomes in both the near- and long-term.

Note: The views expressed in this article are the author's own, and do not necessarily represent those of the U.S. Department of State or the U.S. Government.

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**Herbert S. Klein. *The Atlantic Slave Trade*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. xx, 242 pp.**

Since the late 1960s scholars have been collecting data from unpublished sources on slave-trading voyages. Philip Curtin's *The Atlantic Slave Trade: a Census* (1969) was the first attempt to estimate, from available secondary literature, the volume of the trade. Herbert S. Klein, professor of history at Stanford University and research fellow at the Hoover Institution, was one of the pioneers in the field. In 1999, when information on over 27,000 slave-trading voyages had been collected, he published his well-regarded synthesis of the research, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*. In the ten years since the first edition the research has been uploaded to the online Transatlantic Slave Trade Database hosted by Emory University in Atlanta and now contains details of almost 35,000 voyages, including records of Portuguese and Spanish slaving expeditions. Hence, the appearance of a second edition of Klein's work, in which the author makes use of the new data, is most welcome. The book draws on the work of scholars in Africa, as well as in the Americas and Europe.

The study is organized around four themes addressed in the latest scholarship: the origins of the slave trade; its basic economic structure; the demographic, social, and economic impact of the trade; and, the causes and consequences of its abolition. These four themes are explored in eight chapters varying in length from seventeen to thirty-two pages: "Slavery in Western Development," "American Labor Demand," "Africa at the Time of the Atlantic Slave Trade," "European Organization of the Slave Trade," "African Organization of the Slave Trade," "The

Middle Passage," "Social and Cultural Impact of the Slave Trade on America," and "The End of the Slave Trade." Each chapter reveals evidence of the author's wide reading and meticulous scholarship. The new edition preserves the layout and structure of the original, while incorporating the new evidence to hone and deepen the careful analysis of the trade.

The book starts with an overview of slavery in Europe and Africa to the end of the fifteenth century. It notes the imperial Roman law definition of slaves as property, a definition that had a profound influence on the development of American slave societies. The plantation model for American slavery emerged in the mid- to late-fifteenth century with the use of African slaves as the principal work force on sugar estates on Atlantic islands, such as Madeira and the Canaries, recently occupied and settled by Portugal and Spain. As early as the 1450s, sugar was being sold on markets in London and other European trading centers. European demand for sugar increased after 1500 and was met with the creation of slave plantations in the Americas. Klein shows the demand for labor in the Americas as the key factor in creating the mass transportation of Africans across the Atlantic. Simultaneously, the rising prosperity of Western Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries discouraged migration of peasants and laborers to the Americas. The demographic disaster that befell the Indians in the first hundred and fifty years of European settlement left the transportation of Africans as an attractive and viable solution to the "problem" of labor.

A specialist in Latin American and comparative history, Klein makes excellent use of evidence and analysis from across the whole Atlantic slave trading world. The presentation and analysis of the active role played in the trade by African rulers and merchants is particularly well drawn. "European buyers were totally dependent on African sellers for the delivery of slaves" is the author's contention. Different social and economic circumstances and the varied impact of slave trading along the African coast are similarly well explored. What is most surprising to this reviewer is the wide variety of slave experiences in the Portuguese and Spanish colonies, which differ considerably from those in North America. For example, Brazil used slave sailors in international shipping and on Atlantic slave routes.

The text is supported by four maps of the African coast, figures, and tables that provide statistical details of the impact of the trade on Africa. The work is not footnoted; instead it concludes with a twelve-page bibliographical essay serving both as a guide to the literature and a means to further research.

In just over two hundred pages Klein has produced a superb work of synthesis, demonstrating an impressive mastery of the vast amount of material now available to scholars. Throughout, he highlights economic arguments and the dynamism and variety of the trade. On almost every page there is something to stimulate thought and challenge assumptions. The book is much recommended to students of the slave trade, and to scholars of Africa and the Atlantic World.

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**Kofi Oteng Kufuor. *The African Human Rights System: Origin and Evolution*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010. vii. 182 pp.**

As Kofi O. Kufuor states, his *The African Human Rights System: Origin and Evolution* is “essentially a study of human rights law in Africa” (p. 3). However, it’s in his in-depth analysis of the African human rights system that the book moves beyond the study of law and contributes effectively to both the fields of political and social science. He challenges critics who claim the African human rights system is weak and problematic and offers a clear re-assessment of the system’s utility, combining international law and international relations theory. Kufuor sets a foundation for his study with a discussion of the history of the African human rights system, as recognized in the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR), and then skillfully applies traditional institutionalism (specifically, the rational choice, sociological, and historical strands) and regime theory to augment his analysis of the evolution of the system.

In addition to the Introduction, *The African Human Rights System* consists of six chapters, with the final one offering future issues in the evolution of Africa’s human rights system. According to the author, current conventional wisdom concerning the origins of the ACHPR’s includes four factors that are typically offered to explain the decision by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to adopt the ACHPR: US President Carter’s policy that US aid be linked to states’ human rights records; the impact of several tyrannical regimes; Tanzania’s invasion of Uganda; and the claim that OAU was the best forum for solving African disputes. In Chapter One, “The Origin of the African Human Rights System,” Kufuor argues against this orthodox view and contends that Africa’s human rights system emerged as a “response by African governments to developments that threatened their survival at the time” (p. 8). Given the dynamic legacies of Africa’s colonial and independence-era past, exploring and understanding the lineage of its human rights system is critical in analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the documents and institutions that make up the current system, specifically, the AHCPR itself and the African Commission it set up. Kufuor thus begins with an examination of the origins of the ACHPR in an effort to dispel previous assumptions and offer an alternative explanation that he hopes will “enrich scholarship” and assist in analyzing and identifying “key variables in the emergence and strengthening of human rights law in Africa” (p. 12).

The next three chapters present a thorough exploration of the African Commission. In chapter two, Kufuor analyzes what he considers the most serious issue facing the AHCPR, that of its clawback clauses—those clauses in the AHCPR that “allow states parties to take back the rights granted at the regional level if they collide with their domestic laws” (p. 38). In fact, Kufuor stalwartly highlights the hypocrisy and weakness of the system that makes the “protection of human rights subject to laws that were designed to suppress” them (p. 38). Chapters three and four look in depth at the Commission’s treatment of economic, social, and cultural rights, and the growth of its power through its *rules of procedure*, respectively. While the majority of the book examines the African Charter and the African Commission, Kufuor utilizes chapter five to analyze additional human rights instruments that make up the entire body of Africa’s human rights system; specifically, African Charter for Popular Participation in

Development and Transformation, the Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance in Africa and the OAU Grand Bay Declaration and Plan of Action. His explanation for this detour is that “it is the proliferation of these post-African Charter laws that amount to the start of what we call the fragmentation of the African human rights system” (p. 99).

*The African Human Rights System* provides academia a thorough examination of the origins and evolution of Africa’s human rights system. From a pragmatic perspective, however, Kufuor’s book excels in that he provides practitioners with issues for further direction such as dialogue on the right to sexual orientation and the friendly settlements of disputes for African citizens. While realistic in understanding that “institutional change is glacial,” he is more optimistic that “even in the absence of a hegemonic power, there will be the continued development of the human rights system” for Africa (pp. 145-46). It is this optimism that gives credence to the conventional wisdom of African solutions for African problems.

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**John McAleer. *Representing Africa, Landscape, Exploration and Empire in Southern Africa, 1780-1870*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010. 241 pp.**

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, guidebooks, handbooks, sketches, oil paintings, and maps, in addition to travelogues, increasingly provided an impressive insight into African landscape description to growing literate and culturally demanding British and European audiences. There developed a solid relationship between landscape representation, exploration, and imperial understanding and imaginings. The representations analyzed in the book were mainly produced, distributed, consumed, and interpreted at the imperial center. It was in the metropolis that they were constructed, made, and used because the market resided there and strategies meant to convey specific meaning of these landscapes to audiences were concocted there.

McAleer examines the changing trends of exploration and the developing British and European imperial preoccupations and how these impacted on British and European travelers’ engagement with the southern African landscape. In recording, diffusing, and picturing non-European landscapes in ways of all sorts, travelers and writers popularized the empire and made it accessible and visible to all at home. Landscapes were many and diverse, reflecting the geographical size, environmental wealth, and power of the empire and echoing the personal interests and perceptions of those who depicted them. Travelers, settlers, missionaries, officials, artists, and sporting tourists made the empire at the core of their landscape representations, which were nothing but a commentary on the changing economic, political, and domestic fortunes and priorities of the empire. In so doing, they invited their fellow citizens to fill in this vast empire fit for them and eager to be exploited, improved and appropriated, it seems. In the process, this unknown and unfamiliar landscape was domesticated.

British imaginative and aesthetic engagement with the southern African environment went through different stages, thus revealing how the empire, in this case southern Africa, was perceived. The “fairest Cape,” a victualling and recuperation station for travelers and explorers

on their way to the Indian and Pacific Oceans, a penal colony, a pleasant, abundant, and fertile land, a commercial asset and scientific laboratory, and a region awaiting the words of God and European civilization: southern Africa's landscapes were subject to British and European imperial conveniences. They were, in addition, determined by the viewers' subjective understanding and visions that is how they seem to tell us as much about the latter than about southern Africa's topography. These landscape representations were more built on impressions than on the realities encountered by their viewers, who insisted on their authenticity. Landscape depictions were partly made to impress and puzzle, to be published and sold, and to make reputations. Travel books, illustrated books, exhibitions, private, and museum collections, then, played the role of perpetuating them.

Southern Africa was both a vital and complex component in the British imperial puzzle: a region located at the tip of Africa, with coastlines on two oceans, a gateway to Asia, majestic landscapes and seascapes, a mix of peoples and cultures, and, following this, a prey to competing European imperial powers. This is why it moved up in Britain's political agenda towards the late eighteenth century. Southern Africa, the would-be imperial target could help Britain secure a route to India and its commercial potential, have access to a highly productive land, relocate a growing population in Britain, facilitate travel and missionary work, and help with developing exploration and scientific enquiry. Because of the unbridled competition among European imperial powers and changing British attitudes towards these landscapes, the British failed to "anglicize" these and the region more generally. Their engagement was, therefore, much broader than elsewhere.

British visions of southern Africa's landscape, overwhelmingly male constructed and oriented, included, excluded, filtrated, and selected their representations from a lavish reservoir of landscape and topographic resources to focus on a content evolving mostly around home, the empire, science, and religion. The four components were firmly intertwined and echoed British main preoccupations in the period under analysis. These preoccupations were shifting with British shifting imperial strategic, political, and socio-economic interests and priorities. This, of course, strongly suggests that British engagements with southern African landscapes show the extent to which the notion of empire depends on that of landscape as both controlled space and the means of responding to such control. Similarly, this focus on landscape has been put forward as a strategy, which downplays the antagonistic aspect of British and European encounters with indigenous people and serves to marginalize and dehumanize the indigenous presence within that landscape. This subsidiary status and almost concealed position allotted to the people of southern African within the landscapes hints to their lack of interest or capacity to engage with it and provides evidence in support of British and European exploration and colonial domination.

Lavishly illustrated, Mc Aleer's study is a useful reading to the student and scholar of the empire, art history, exploration history, and environmental studies.

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**Hassimi Oumarou Maïga. *Balancing Written History with Oral Tradition: The Legacy of the Songhoy People*. New York: Routledge, 2010. xi, 206 pp.**

Professor Hassimi Oumarou Maïga manages not only to balance written history with oral tradition to trace the origins and legacy of the Songhoy people, but he also succeeds in re-balancing history itself by offering readers an African world-view. The first half of the book chronicles the origins and development of the Songhoy people with their beginnings in east Africa and Yemen and the east-to-west migration, to the earliest formation of the ancient city of Koukya (Kukia). Maïga goes on to introduce the empires of Ghana and Mali with the decline of Axum (Ethiopia), Nubia (Sudan), and Kemet (Egypt) in east Africa to give a firm context to the development and flourishing of highly organized administrative, economic, political, and cultural structures in west Africa. Maïga dedicates Chapter 3 to the city of Gao in northern Mali as the cradle of the Songhoy Empire and the beginnings of the Koungorogossi Gariko Dynasty, the first Songhoy dynasty, while pointing to west Africa's links with Muslim Spain and north Africa (with the Moroccan, Fulanese and Tuareg invasions at the end of sixteenth century), through to the European invasions and domination in the 1880s.

Importantly, Maïga writes: "The complete chronological order of the Songhoy Chieftaincy, which begins with the Koungorogossi, has never been recorded in the annals of any formal history book in English (or before the earlier edition of this book was published in French in 2007). The history of this dynasty, which was also not known to European scholars, explorers, and colonists, has been preserved in the Songhoy oral tradition and recorded in a family manuscript. In contrast to the previously published scholarly record, this manuscript documents the existence of the Koungorogossi Gariko Dynasty nearly three centuries before the arrival in Gao of the Dia brothers from Yemen in 670 C.E." (p. 3). The text could have made greater use of visual diagrams and timelines to indicate the chronology of the Songhoy dynastic kingdoms and empires of Koungorogossi, Dias, Sonnis, and Askya between 670 A.D. to the Moroccan invasion of 1591 to further illustrate their significance.

The second half of the book is dedicated to looking more closely at Songhoy society, language, spirituality, and culture. Drawing on his intimate knowledge as the descendent of the legendary Askya Mohammed, Maïga provides a fascinating record of Songhoy oral traditions of story-telling (for transmitting values) and riddles to illustrate Songhoy concepts of knowledge, which Maïga proposes "are two forms of character education conveyed through a powerful tradition of oral cultural transmission" (p. 4), while presenting Songhoy writing traditions and in particular the original seven Songhoy names of the week, to illuminate Songhoy cosmology.

Maïga sets out the book's goals clearly in the introduction: "To systematically and concisely illuminate a vast historical and socio-cultural record that is little known in the New World" (p.1), and to highlight the historical links between Africa and Europe so as to challenge the euro-centric views of the African continent as essentially "dark." For as Maïga points out: "To some extent this concept of 'darkness' that has been associated with Africa is partially due to European unawareness of Africa's rich cultural heritage" (p. 2). While Maïga is in my view very successful in recording Songhoy history from both written and oral sources, my criticism lies in his over-ambition to include final chapters on the legacy of the Songhoy in the twentieth

century with movements against slavery, African contributions to the development of the New World and France, independence, and pan African and Diasporic shared heritage. These chapters, although interesting in themselves, are too short to be given full justice and remain sketches of a larger thesis that deserves further investigation and insight.

It is worth noting that this book is part of a Routledge series "African Studies: History, Politics, Economics and Culture," headed by Molefi Asante as general editor. It represents a truly multi-disciplinary collection of original research of which Hassimi Oumarou Maïga (a distinguished Professor of Education, University of Bamako, Mali) is a part.

Overall the book is a highly accessible read and useful reference book offering readers a fascinating and original multi-disciplinary view of Africa's rich history.

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**Cedric Mayson. *Why Africa Matters*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2010. 217 pp.**

*Why Africa Matters* is by the South African Methodist minister Cedric Mayson, who took part in the fight to end apartheid in South Africa in the early eighties. Mayson seeks to share his insights about why he believes the entire continent of Africa matters to the rest of the world. He attempts to reverse stereotypes and to shed light on what he perceives to be a "dark" and "ignorant" world outside of Africa. He argues that the knowledge that African people hold has the potential to save humankind from an "apocalypse" (p. 60). Indeed, the author's main objective is to show that the human race is spiraling downward into an eventual doom because of organized religion and self-serving greed borne out of "western civilization." In his opinion, the world must look to Africa and its spiritual ways to start a spiritual revolution. This book is meant for a western audience, despite the fact that it is very critical of western societies.

The book has ten chapters and a conclusion, of which eight focus on religion and the importance of spirituality. Very little attention is given to issues of economics, politics, and society, or to current affairs in Africa. There are no pictures, maps, or special features, and most of the author's citations come from theological texts. In the introduction the author begins with a dramatic and poetic presentation of his aim for writing this book. He claims that it is intended as a "contribution from Africa to a world seeking to rebirth itself!" (p. 4). Mayson contends that this book will have a transformative effect on its readers.

He divides chapter one into five sections with biblical references and subtitles such as the "the 5 horsemen" which he identifies as religion, economics, politics, science, and the media. In the following chapters, Mayson explains that like the biblical five horsemen these agents come to us disguised as bringers of peace and enlightenment, when in reality they are the bringers of destruction of civilization and the inevitable apocalypse. He uses the term "earthlings" instead of people to refer to all human beings and explains that he intentionally chose to do this throughout the book to remind the reader that we are all humble beings on this planet. Throughout the book he uses the African term *ubuntu*, meaning the collective love and allegiance for one another, to refer to an African way of life. He argues for a pure spiritual

oneness with the earth and with nature, one that is absent of war, violence, and greed known to the western man with the introduction of the five horsemen.

The author has an extreme view of the world, proclaiming that the entire world is “arrogant, infantile, and depraved” (p. 14). He believes that organized religion and the Christian church are one of the main reasons why the western world is ignorant and blind to reality. He wants the western world to look to Africa and its “primal” and “spiritual” ways of life for salvation. His reasoning for why Africa matters in today's world is because first, we all come from Africa, and second, unlike the rest of the “civilized” world Africans have kept in touch with the “primal” ways of their ancestors. He refers to all westerners as greedy people in desperate need to be saved. Although the author's attempt to cast all Africans as spiritual, happy, altruistic beings is positive in a sense, unfortunately his choice of words and extreme opinions isolate the reader and typecast all Africans in the same stereotypical ways as the former colonizers did. This book is more introspection than a work of scholarship, and is being advertised in various Christian venues.

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**Janet McIntosh. *The Edge of Islam: Power, Personhood, and Ethnoreligious Boundaries on the Kenya Coast.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2009. xi, 325 pp.**

Studies on Islam in contemporary Kenya are a scarce commodity, hence making Janet McIntosh's *The Edge of Islam* a highly welcome contribution. This innovative and invigorating book provides invaluable insights to the highly complex interplay between religion and ethnicity, making it a significant contribution to our understanding of issues such as Islam, ethnic boundaries, and identity in African societies. Situated in the town of Malindi on the Kenyan coast, McIntosh tells the story of the Giriama and the Swahili and their complicated and ambivalent interrelations. While the Swahili are exclusively Muslim, the Giriama are divided between followers of Islam, Christianity, and what McIntosh calls Traditionalism. With a particular focus on religion (Islam), in conjunction with blood, lineage, and class, she claims that this is a major factor for the demarcation, accentuation, and maintenance of boundaries between the two. Her core argument is that while Islam ideally would be universal and open to newcomers, Giriama conversion to Islam and assimilation into Swahili is inhibited by increasingly clear-cut boundaries.

Applying the concept of *folk essentialism*, the author provides a nuanced reading of ethnicity and processes of boundary crossing, fluidity, and permeability. By surveying the political and socio-economic developments during the colonial and post-colonial periods (chapter 1), she convincingly argues that the current situation is characterized by ethnic absolutism—exacerbating the division between Giriama and Swahili. This is further elaborated through a discussion of spirit narratives as reflections of the current socio-economic discrepancies between the Swahili and Giriama (chapter 2) and spirit possessions summoning conversions to Islam (chapter 3), suggesting that this represents an embodiment of a hegemonic premise in

which Giriama is incompatible with Islam, while also reflecting an articulated ideology of resistance.

Chapter 4 details Giriama healing rituals, through which the practitioners draw simultaneously from spiritual forces located in Islam and in Traditionalism. Making some highly relevant remarks on the concept of syncretism, charged with being grounded on a Western premise of religions as integrated and consistent systems, she introduces the term *polyontologism* as a pertinent tool in construing how the actors deliberately move between and appropriates discrete supernatural ontologies drawn from the two traditions—yet without reconciling the two “into a new systemic whole” (p. 188). Discussing the linguistically loci of the these traditions and the issue of code switching, chapter 5 further elaborates the politics of language and provides vivid accounts of both Swahili and Giriama usage of Arabic in divination ceremonies. These accounts point to different and conflicting perceptions of Arabic, in which the Swahili underscores the semantic meaning of the texts, while the Giriama rely on the spiritual potency of the language, accessed through spirit possession.

McIntosh’s overall discussions is framed within the concepts of hegemony (and ideology) and personhood. The former is defined as meanings and values taken for granted—and largely shared by all social groups—while +ideology represents the articulation of what is taken for granted. Hegemony constitutes an accurate analytical tool for understanding the asymmetric relationship between Swahili and Giriama, in which notions of Islamic potency as belonging to the Swahili reinforces the intrinsic link between ethnicity and religion. Personhood is seen as a way of indexing culturally specific expectations and ideologies about people’s independence and interdependence, related to the intertwined notions of agency and interiority. Swahili and Giriama personhood is seen as qualitatively different, the former being more individualistic oriented, whereas Giriama valorize a more sociocentric model of the person, grounded in communal interdependency and customs.

Far from being caught in an essentializing trap, McIntosh’s rich ethnographic material contains detailed accounts of divergent opinions, sentiments, and perceptions of one’s own and the other’s personhood. What is left unanswered, though, is the basis for such diversity; being it gender, class, or religious affiliation. Further, as she informs us that a third of the Giriama are Christians, one is left with the question of how Protestant Christianity’s emphasis on interiority and personal choice/belief might have impacted Giriama personhood. The role of religion in defining Swahili personhood is duly recognized, in which McIntosh points to an influential Islamic reformist movement in conjunction with Swahili participation in the urban economic marketplace. As noted by several other scholars on contemporary Islam in Africa, this conflation has paved the way for a changing moral economy and a profiled “individualistic ethic”. While this remains integrated in the study, it would have benefited from a more elaborate discussion of Islamic reformism (instead of merely labeling it Wahhabism), some more details on its impacts on Swahili personhood, and effects on discourses on hegemony and power. This is not to say that the study has some critical deficits, but rather to point to possible areas for future research, generated from this highly stimulating read.

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**Augustine S. O. Okwu. *Igbo Culture and the Christian Missions: Conversion in Theory and Practice, 1857-1957*. New York: University Press of America, Inc., 2010. x, 336 pp.**

Augustine Okwu has served as a Roman Catholic missionary assistant, diplomat, and professor of history at the State University of New York. He has drawn from these experiences and training to produce *Igbo Culture and the Christian Missions*, a work which shows the interaction of political, religious, and cultural dynamics before and during Nigeria's colonial era.

Okwu describes how Western missionaries altered their strategies as a result of their encounter with the Igbo. Igbo culture—which Okwu broadly characterizes as "pragmatic," "utilitarian," "innovative," and "competitive"—caused missionaries to shift their focus from evangelization for religious conversion to providing services like hospitals and schools. Okwu rightly points out that missionary competition to establish schools in areas often arose from the requests of the local Igbo themselves, for fear of being exceeded or outwitted by neighboring Igbo communities. In this sense, the rapid expansion of Western missionary education resulted from Igbo demand, and Igbo towns and individuals utilized these institutions to their own advantage. This demand drove mission societies to devote a tremendous amount of time, personnel, and money to these institutions in order to maintain the appeal of Christianity to the Igbo. Thus, Igbo culture determined missionary policy as mission societies negotiated "conversion-effectiveness." "Igbo culture," however, is not explicitly defined (beyond broad descriptors) and is more illuminated through pericopes than by a focused explication of Igbo worldview(s).

The Igbo recede into the background as the book progresses. The text increasingly focuses upon the missionary dimensions of the encounter between the Igbo and Europeans, and Okwu excels at presenting a cogent narrative of this complex movement. While he repeatedly includes materials from Protestant mission societies (namely, the Church Missionary Society [CMS]), Roman Catholics receive the bulk of his attention (the Holy Ghost Fathers and *La Société des Missions Africaines*). This emphasis is welcome, as Catholic missions in Nigeria have received less attention than the CMS Okwu generally portrays Catholic missionaries in a more positive light than their Protestant counterparts. Catholic missionaries, he argues (despite his acknowledgment that Protestants learned local dialects and ordained Igbo priests more quickly), were more attuned to the educational wants of the Igbo, and were less paternalistic, judgmental, and iconoclastic toward African traditions (pp. 160 ff.). However, Okwu does not discuss why, given these distinctions, Anglicanism still spread more rapidly than Roman Catholicism.

Okwu does not attempt to redeem Western missionaries from imperialistic complicity. He shares many of E.A. Ayandele's critiques of missionary involvement in the European colonial project (*The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria* [1965]). Okwu's work is more nuanced, and his evaluation of missionary imperialism is generally limited to specific instances, avoiding Ayandele's broad generalizations (Okwu, pp. 131, 137-38, 155). Okwu's assessment of Christian missions is that they were unnecessarily destructive or dismissive of Igbo culture. They misunderstood its "social" practices (e.g., festival, political, and moral institutions) for "pagan" (e.g., religious) practices, condemning both indiscriminately. The "social" practices could

reasonably have remained with no threat to the orthodoxy of the Christian communities (pp. 109, 196 ff., and epilogue).

Curiously, Okwu does not present a theory of conversion (per the book's subtitle). The only discussion at any length about conversion is in the epilogue, with no interaction with other scholarship on conversion, such as Robin Horton's "intellectualist" model ("African Conversion" [1971]), or Okorocho's "salvationist" study of Igbo conversion to Christianity (*The Meaning of Religious Conversion in Africa* [1987]). What Okwu seems to mean by the subtitle to the book is that Christian missionaries, in theory, sought to convert individuals from "paganism" to Christianity. Instead, these missionaries had to contend with Igbo demands for education and their responsiveness to advancement within Western political and economic systems. Though Okwu notes the appeal of missionary services to the Igbo, their actual impact upon Igbo culture is vague in parts. For example, in one sentence Okwu mentions in passing that Catholic medical practices led to a diminishing of Igbo notions of causality regarding illness and health, without expounding upon the cultural ramifications of this shift (p. 232).

Okwu compiles a variety of sources to illuminate both the "Igbo" as well as the "missionary" sides of the religious encounter. Thus, he extensively uses the archival resources of multiple missionary societies, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, and government records. His use of "oral tradition" is more ambiguous. He does pepper the work with frequent references to local tradition or memory. These are predominantly autobiographical and anecdotal in nature (though they are frequently quite fascinating examples) (p. 172, 179). However, these references are not cited or based upon obvious field research.

*Igbo Culture and the Christian Missions* is more a study of the impact of Igbo culture on Western missionary societies' policies than of the changes that missionary presence effected within Igbo culture itself. Okwu accomplishes his task of demonstrating this relationship. His work provides an impressive history of Catholic missions in colonial Nigeria, and would certainly be of interest to scholars of the history of Christian missions, especially in the colonial era. It also shows that the introduction of European civilization and religion into southern Nigeria was a complex phenomenon in which both Europeans and Africans negotiated cultural ideals with colonial realities.

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**Tejumola Olaniyan and James Sweet. *The African Diaspora and the Disciplines*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010. viii, 363 pp.**

The relationship between the African homeland and its diaspora has increasingly become an object of study, particularly since the last decade of the twentieth century. However, there has also been a lack of conceptual frameworks that would best make sense of the phenomena being studied. Where scholarship has not been frozen in mildewed theory and anachronistic research methodology, interdisciplinary suspicion or animosity has put paid any real chances for meaningful dialogue between the competing and contending disciplines. It has been extremely rare to see scholarship that goes against the operation of disciplinary border police in an

attempt to unlock the essence of the African diaspora. Therefore, African diaspora studies, has, first off, been in dire need of an avenue for cross-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary dialogue and for the rethinking and reconfiguration of conceptual frameworks that would make scholarly investigations more meaningful and effective. Secondly, it has been in dire need of a platform where any number of disciplines can meet and dialogue freely and beneficially in a manner that is mutually intelligible.

Tejumola Olaniyan and James Sweet's edited volume could not have come at a better time. With a title fashioned after Robert Bates and V.Y. Mudimbe's *Africa and the Disciplines* (1993), this new text echoes the spirit but not the letter of its precursor. The earlier text is preoccupied with how Africa has contributed to various disciplines, whereas this new one focuses on strategies of studying the African diaspora from different disciplinary perspectives. Olaniyan and Sweet's text has the potential to reinvigorate African Diaspora Studies, itself a burgeoning field crying for more illuminating conceptual anchoring. The volume is a collection of a wide range of theoretical essays grounded in divergent fields of inquiry, which nonetheless converge in their quest to make sense of the mystique of the African diaspora. It is this diversity of disciplinary voices and stances that lends this volume its richness and profundity. But this is also greatly enhanced by the quality and divergent disciplinary biases of the essayists contributing to the volume. On the whole, the book adroitly brings together erudite voices from the humanities and social science as well as hard sciences such as genetics that have a bearing on African Diaspora Studies.

The book contains fifteen chapters divided into four distinct parts, covering history, the sciences, arts, and cultural studies. The bulk of the chapters are judicious selections from a conference on the African diaspora and the disciplines that was held at the University of Wisconsin-Madison under the sponsorship of The African Diaspora and Atlantic Research Circle in March 2006. The chapters deal with theorization of the African Diaspora Studies and initiating dialogue between and within various disciplines with respect to African Diaspora Studies. The volume emphasizes conceptual debates over primary research and analysis. And in developing their various conceptual arguments and analyses, the writers do not equivocate. The outcome is an edited volume that confronts and illuminates upon conceptual debates with authority, acuity, and clarity.

The text is remarkable in the way it privileges the overlap between disciplines in general but particularly between the humanities (history, philosophy, and musicology), the social sciences (geography, anthropology, archeology, and political science), and genetics (science). Fatimah L. C. Jackson and Latifa F. J. Borgelin's enlightening article "How Genetics Can Provide Detail to the Transatlantic African Diaspora," is an example of the magnitude of disciplinary diversity in the volume. In this article Jackson and Borgelin bring the science of genetics to bear on our understanding of the Transatlantic African diaspora in ways that are truly rewarding and refreshing. As they argue compellingly, the DNA or "genetic information can yield a more robust perspective on the migrations of African peoples" (p. 75). Their article not only shows the methods at work in the past and the present in assessing the African diaspora but also suggests new and innovative ways with which that could be done in future.

In his “African Diaspora and Anthropology,” Richard Price provides a survey of the trajectory of thought on continuities and disjuncture of aspects of the homeland in the cultural heritage of the African diaspora, particularly in North America. He is severely critical of scholars such as Michael Gomez, who insist on retention of African cultural practices in the diaspora. Instead, he maintains: “We must grant full agency to African Americans, making them the central actors in the construction of their cultures” (p. 66). In other words, in his view the diasporic African is responsible for his self-creation, his formulation of a uniquely diasporic identity, ethnicity, and culture. Evidently, Price is unlikely to have the last word on this debate, but what is important at this point is how his chapter like, others in this volume, not only articulates issues beyond disciplinary particularity, but also self-consciously engages other disciplines.

In brief *The African Diaspora and the Disciplines* is a luminous collection of essays, indeed a must read for anyone interested in diasporas in general and the African diaspora in particular. This book has the potential of becoming a touchstone for the field of diaspora studies.

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**Brett L. Shadle.** *“Girl Cases:” Marriage and Colonialism in Gusiiland, Kenya, 1890-1970.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2006. x, 256 pp.

The title of this remarkable text, borrowed from a saying by a British official in the South Kavirondo District of colonial Kenya in the 1930s, refers to the gender and generational disputes over the meaning of marriage and its customs in the region of Gusiiland in the twentieth century. More specifically, “girl cases” referred to the phenomenon, beginning in the 1890s, of Kenyan women in Gusiiland being abducted, raped, or running off with lovers. Brett Shadle uses the events of “girl cases” to illuminate the changing notions (and conflicts) about marriage in twentieth century Gusiiland. Thus, the main aim of the book is to “describe from where the ‘girl cases’ emerged and what became of them . . . untangle the contentious struggles over marriage, and trace the trajectory of Gusii marriage from the turn of the century up through the 1960s” (p. xx).

Shadle’s significant arguments stem from the myriad reasons why “girl cases” occurred. He asserts that the era of innumerable “girl cases” —the 1940s through the early 1960s—was born of the union of two factors, one old and one new. First, was the nature of Gusii bridewealth. Gusii men’s primary source of bridewealth cattle was what they received from the marriage of a daughter or sister. A father had to ensure that what he received as bridewealth would be sufficient to give as bridewealth in return. However, when a man heard rumors of increased “going rates” for bridewealth, he had to abide by the current rates. Consequently, a Gusii man might be left without enough cattle to make a new marriage if he abided by the increased current rates for bridewealths. The second reason for “girl cases” was the colonial economy. Shadle emphasizes that unevenly distributed new wealth circulating in Gusiiland forced the bridewealth rate up to levels unseen for decades. Because the going rates for bridewealth dramatically increased, only a few men could afford a wife, let alone multiple wives. As

bridewealth climbed and wages stagnated in the colonial period, many young men found themselves without enough cattle to get married, and many young women found themselves without husbands. Therefore, “girl cases” culminated when young women were forced into marriages with undesirable but cattle rich men. Many of these women ran away and some went to new men. Other women avoided undesirable marriages by eloping with their lovers. The most desperate unmarried young men abducted and raped women; should an abductee become pregnant she and her father would be more likely to accept the “marriage.”

Shadle’s argument that women who ran away from undesirable marriages were not rejecting the institution of marriage is a noteworthy strength of this brilliantly researched book. The author articulates that the women of the “girl cases” did not run away to urban regions but stayed within the confines of their rural communities. It might be assumed that the women who ran away were rejecting marriage and flexing their feminist muscles. Shadle asserts, however, that Gusii women who remained in their rural homes neither left their homelands nor rejected the institution of marriage. He scholar clarifies that Gusii women’s ultimate goal was marriage, but on their *own* terms. Therefore, by running away from unwanted marriages, Gusii women were active agents in the making (and unmaking) of illicit unions.

Shadle’s emphasis on Gusii women and marriage positively diverges from the dominant focus on African women’s rural-urban migration. Much scholarship emphasizes how during colonialism, urban centers allowed rural African women to escape unhappy marriages or impending marriages. By highlighting Gusii women who remained in rural areas, Shadle’s work contributes greatly to the historiography of “run away” women who did not flee their rural communities and defended their ideologies about marriage at home.

This book is a monumental research achievement based on an astonishing array of archival sources. The author draws heavily on civil and criminal case records and transcripts from the three *ritongo* (court or tribunals) that served Gusiiland. These sources, such as the *ritongo* transcripts, are significant because they provide the history of Gusii local practice and understandings of marriage. What is also remarkable about the sources is that that most come from local and isolated African courts. The court cases fall under three types of criminal cases. One category highlights situations in which an unmarried girl was removed from the custody of her parents without their consent. Shadle’s excellent use of his primary sources are illuminated in chapter four when he scrutinizes the ways in which Gusii men and women entered the courts to hash out their disputes and offered up their ideas about what made a proper marriage. Shadle successfully argues in this chapter, through his analysis of transcripts, how it was in the *ritongo* that Gusii articulated their views of marriage.

A minor blemish in the text is the limited mention of the Mau Mau rebellion. More specifically, there is little contextualization of this historical event and how it may have influenced “girl cases.” This is astonishing because the event (1952-1960) was a critical period for many Kenyans and influenced the social, political, and cultural fabric of the lives of Kenyans. It is hard to believe that such an important event did not impact ideologies of marriage or influence marital actions. For instance, did fewer women run away from undesirable marriages during the Mau Mau rebellion? Answers to such questions would have

enhanced and contextualized the historical circumstances of “girl cases” in the late colonial period in Gusiiland.

Despite these concerns, however, Shadle’s book is a closely argued, well-written, and carefully researched study that raises crucial issues. The text persuasively explains how the economic, political, and social circumstances of bridewealth were connected to “girl cases.” In addition, the book successfully traces the changing gender and generational debates and tensions over Gusi marriages. This thoroughly researched book makes essential reading for any scholar or student of African history or gender studies. Those teaching in such courses should consider the book for adoption.

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**Elinami Veraeli Swai. *Beyond Women’s Empowerment in Africa: Exploring Dislocation and Agency*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2010. xv, 189 pp.**

Ever since the first women’s conference, held under the theme “Equality, Development and Peace,” was held in Mexico City in 1975 and followed by the declaration of 1975 as the International Year of Women, women empowerment issues have assumed pride of place in public discourse. The second (1980; Copenhagen), third (1985; Nairobi) and fourth (1995; Beijing) women’s conferences followed, together with the Millennium Summit in 2000, and, thereby, gave impetus to the women’s rights movement. Thus, any book, such as Swai’s, that addresses same is a welcome addition to the burgeoning literature on women’s empowerment issues. Particularly notable, the timing of the publication of the book is perfect given the fact that it came out a year before the centenary celebration of the International Women’s Day (IWD) on 8 March 2011 (IWD was first celebrated on 8 March 1911). Thus, as the world reflects on the hundred-year old odyssey on the women’s rights movement, Swai’s book, amongst others, helps us knowledgeably to audit women’s achievements and challenges since the first IWD was celebrated 100 years ago. In this connection, if women’s knowledge systems are trivialized and marginalized as Swai asserts in her book, at least in her case study, did Tanzanian women have reasons to celebrate the centennial IWD? It appears the answer is a qualified no.

The seven chapter book is organized as follows. The very elaborate introduction delineates the universe of the discourse whereby the author tells the reader that the book is primarily concerned with the subject of women’s knowledge systems in Africa. It makes the argument that this kind of knowledge, which is unacknowledged and given labels such as indigenous, local, informal, domestic, and private, sustains the African continent in a myriad ways. Furthermore, it lays the blame for the marginalization and trivialization of women’s knowledge systems at the door of the colonial and post-colonial governments. In this connection, Swai argues that education, which according to conventional wisdom is a liberating and empowerment tool, is used in “dislocating women and suppressing their creativity and agency in Africa” (p. 7). In addition, and very importantly, Swai attempts to distinguish her book from similar others on three grounds: (i) she rejects the notion that modern education, which she says is premised on Euro/American cultural hegemony, is a silver bullet and argues that its socializes

women into pre-determined goals without due regard to their peculiar circumstances; (ii) she argues that education for women is parochial and patronizing and, amongst others, blames it for denigrating their knowledge systems; and (iii) she dismisses the widely-held view that education for women is the only way to empower them to grapple with challenges of modern society and argues that empowerment needs many strategies and that “the institution of education for women needs to be critically assessed” (p. 8).

Following the introduction, chapter 1 refracts women’s dislocation through the post-structural, post-colonial and cultural-historical prisms. Although Swai blames modern education for women’s disempowerment, she, similarly, does not spare the quest for modernization, which does not acknowledge women’s traditional knowledge systems. Chapter 2 discusses the theory of the development of women’s knowledge systems and chapter 3 continues the debate by discussing ways in which women communicate through the medium of *khangas* (brightly colored pieces of cloth that many women in East Africa wear and sometimes use as head wraps). In this connection, the *khanga* is akin to human billboard, because all manner of communications are transmitted through it; for example, expressions as *hakuna kama mama* (there is none like mother) celebrate the important role that mothers (read women) play in society for “mother is considered to be the pillar of society” (p. 81). Importantly, *khangas* address diverse issues: for example, independence and the role that woman played in the fight for independence in Tanzania. Chapter 4 argues that Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are scientific and rational and, therefore, takes the reader through a journey on the application of IKS in areas such as medicine (as instanced by the case of Mama Mona, a traditional healer, farming (e.g., animal husbandry) and development. Chapter 5 uses the case study method to discuss real lives of rural women in Tanzania; for example, the case of Doris Ngabanu. The author uses life examples to demonstrate how stereotyped images of woman negatively affect their self-image, belief systems and values. Chapter 6 discusses women and the development enterprise, and chapter 7 integrates all issues that are discussed in the book.

Overall, the book possesses many strengths. The key ones are: (i) short length; (ii) objectivity, honesty and depth that permeate the narrative; (iii) simplicity; although it addresses a subject that is not common place, it is jargon-free and, thus, the reader need not possess a passing knowledge of women’s empowerment literature to understand it. In addition, the author uses methodological triangulation; uses both primary and secondary data sources. Particularly, Swai goes “native” (interacting closely with her subjects) and, therefore, participant observation allowed her to live the experiences of her subjects. In a related sense, is she qualified to speak to the subject? On account of her professional training and work, she is and, thus, this favorably circumstances her to speak to the subject and, hence, strengthen book. However, there are some minor problems; e.g., Swai’s definition of IKS comes late (in the notes section) and there are some typographical errors.

To conclude, did the author achieve the primary purpose of the book? That is, to prove that African women possess knowledge systems that are often unacknowledged and trivialized and that if same is acknowledged and harnessed it can benefit society? Yes, through the use of some case studies, she demonstrates the veracity of her assertions. Importantly, even though the book

is about Tanzania, it is generalizable to the rest of Africa. In this connection, I see Botswana, my home country, in Swai's story.

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**United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. *African Governance Report II 2009*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. xii, 274 pp.**

Governance in Africa is popularly a knotty issue. In the past few decades, African states have been pressured to live up to good governance ideals as a strategy and culture for pursuing balanced development. *African Governance Report II 2009* is a scorecard on the governance situation in the thirty-five African countries it covers. This is an improvement on the previous report, *African Governance Report I*, which covered twenty-seven countries. It specifically presents a feedback from the monitoring and assessment of the progress African countries are making on democracy and governance from 2005 to 2009. The Report is not one of those usual compendia of bad news from Africa. Using the benchmarks of *African Governance Report I*, its main message is that "Africa has made modest progress in improving governance" (p. ix). It therefore identifies and promotes "better," "improved" (p. ix), and "good" (p. 17) practices on governance as a means of promoting new governance norms and culture in Africa. It identifies capacity gaps in governance institutions in Africa and contributes appropriate policy recommendations and ideas necessary for making interventions in improving governance on the continent.

The Report's methodological path is well explained and replicable. It utilizes a combination of expert panel, household and desk-top surveys as its research instruments. Covered governance themes include: political, economic, and public financial management; private sector development and cooperate governance; institutional checks and balances, effectiveness and accountability of the executive; human rights and the rule of law; corruption and capacity development. These themes form the Report's eight chapters. The main findings of the Report can be summarized as follows: multiparty systems flourish in Africa but with poor institutionalization; more incentives are being put in place to attract foreign direct investment but less is done for domestic investments; separation of powers is gradually taking root in the continent; there is still great need for deepening the culture of human rights in Africa; not much progress is being made in asset repatriation from Western countries.

This is one of the most impressive reports on governance in Africa. Even so, for a report that promises a timely intervention in understanding Africa's contemporary governance, readers may perceive one downside that is difficult to ignore. A major element of governance in Africa, *donor aid*, is not tackled in the report. It is difficult to gauge governance in Africa realistically without noting the influence donor aid may have on government policies, and then on governance. Considering that women and children make up nearly 80 percent of the Africa's population, some readers may be surprised to note that no major space is devoted to the core concerns of women and children. The reason, however, is probably too obvious. UNECA

published a separate report on women and children in Africa in the same year this report was published (see UNECA's *African Women's Report 2009*).

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa focuses its work on promoting regional integration and meeting special needs and emerging global challenges of Africa. Considering its country-wide network in Africa and its experience with research of this kind, it is surely difficult to argue that any other organization would have been in a better position to research and produce a more comprehensive Report on Africa. Overall, the Report is rich with genuine governance data on Africa. Its literature coverage is extensive. Also, considering the paucity of reliable research data about Africa, this report can serve as a useful source of data for future research on African governance issues. There is need to implement key policy recommendations made in this Report at the regional and country levels in Africa. This therefore calls for development experts, researchers, and government and non-government agencies to utilize the opportunities posed by its publication.

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**Michael Vickers. *A Nation Betrayed: Nigeria and the Minorities Commission of 1957*. Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press. 2010. xxvii, 324 pp.**

As Nigeria approached independence, the minority groups in the country (three sets of ethnic groups that collectively formed the minority population in each of the country's three regions) made it clear at a constitutional conference in London in 1957 that independence on the existing three-regional structure would result in unrestrained domination of the minority groups in the country by the majority group in each of the three regions. With the consent of the country's three leading parties, the Colonial Secretary appointed a commission to "enquire into the fears of the minorities and to suggest ways of allaying them."

Before Michael Vickers' book, what was known about the commission's work was based on media reports and government publications. *A Nation Betrayed* is based principally on what its author called a "trunk of 'gold,'" a box containing confidential papers about the commission's work, papers that, before being used by Vickers while working for his PhD in the late 1960s, had not been used by any other scholar. Confidential files in the trunk of gold were supplemented by several other sources, including correspondence between the author and some of the members of the minorities' commission, and interviews in Nigeria and the United Kingdom. However, rich as the trunk was, Vickers chose to cite only the documentary sources relating to the Western Region (where there was a movement for the creation of a Mid-West state). The campaign for a Mid-Western State was the subject of Vickers' 2000 book, *Ethnicity and Sub-Nationalism in Nigeria: Movement for a Mid-West State*. The book's the sub-title makes clear that the focus is on the Mid-West. That focus is not reflected in the title of the book under review. Although Vickers says that the commission "approached its undertakings in the North and East regions in identical manner," although he used the Mid-West evidence to draw conclusions about the entire country, the concentration on Mid-West evidence should have been indicated in the book's sub-title.

In different chapters, Vickers explained why the minorities commission was appointed, and gave a rather detailed background of its members. He showed that the commission's terms of reference were "restrictive." He then argued, convincingly in my view, that the terms were made restrictive because the Colonial Office did not intend to create any new regions. A further decision taken by the commission to ensure that the British government's predetermined objective was realized was that it did not provide for "privilege" (guarantee of protection for witnesses, the lack of which, the author reasoned, prevented many witnesses with crucial evidence from testifying). Much of the book deals with the following: evidence and arguments presented at sittings of the commission in Benin and Warri by the Mid-West State Movement in support of its demand; contrary evidence and arguments by organizations within the area of the proposed state that opposed its creation; and contrary evidence and arguments presented the Western Regional government to prove that it had not been discriminating against the minority areas, as well as the government's modified proposals about the territorial and ethnic composition of the proposed state.

As the author observed, the evidence provided by the Mid-West Movement was weak. It did not prove beyond doubt that the Yoruba-led Western regional government had systematically been discriminating against the ethnic minority groups in the region. What was beyond doubt, however, was that there was, among the minority groups, a strong fear of domination by the region's Yoruba majority population. It was also clear that, since the minority groups were "minorities of a permanent nature" (as it was not conceivable that in the foreseeable future they would be equal in population with the Yoruba), the fear of domination could not be allayed by any other means than the creation of a new region. The evidence also showed that the Western regional government was opposed to the creation of a Mid-West State, and that the Action Group (the ruling party) used persecution and several dubious means to advance its electoral cause in the minority areas. Concerning the opposition of the Western regional government to a Mid-West state, Vickers noted that while the government officially supported the creation of the state, it hinged its support on conditions designed to prevent the objective from being realized. Vickers devoted a chapter to the report of the commission, and, among other things, detailed its recommendations for allaying the fears of the minorities. These included the establishment of a federal police force, constitutional provisions guaranteeing fundamental human rights, and the establishment of a special board for the development of the Niger Delta. Among his many remarks, Vickers asserted that the provisions made for allaying the fears of the minorities were inadequate. He condemned the commission and the Colonial Office for not taking seriously the fears of the minorities. Indeed, he blamed them for being more concerned to allay the fears of the majorities and secure British interests. In his view, the British, with the support of the regional governments in Nigeria, committed "honorable treason" against the Nigerian state. The consequences of the treason, he asserted, led to the civil war.

It is pertinent to comment on one point Vickers failed to make, and on one he made with much emphasis. Vickers failed to make the point that the persecution of opposition groups in the minority areas of the Western Region was not different in pattern and intensity from what

the ruling party did in the opposition areas in Yorubaland. The point should have been made that, like stubborn step children in relation to stern step mothers, the minorities viewed “normal” processes of dealing with opposition groups or areas in Nigeria as evidence of hatred or bias against non-Yoruba peoples. More importantly, Vickers declared repeatedly that the non-creation of new states led to the civil war. However, he did not bother to show how this happened. No reader that is not quite familiar with Nigerian history can work out the argument himself, which is that division into small states would have made the subordinate units weaker, such that no head of a state government could have been capable of using the machinery of government to drag an entire region out of the country. In the same vein, the creation of states in the East would have placed the oil resources of the region (one of the main interests of both sides to the war) under the control of the minorities who, as of then, did not feel big or united enough to seek to pull out of Nigeria. Moreover, it is pertinent to stress that, contrary to Vickers’ assertion, it was not inevitable that the three-regional structure of Nigeria (four-regional structure from 1963 when the Mid-Western Region was eventually created) would lead to civil war. The war was not only due to weaknesses in the structure of Nigeria. There were other variables at play, including the inability of the military officers who were at the helm at the time to make needed compromises.

Vickers blended his narrative with exposition and analysis. His book is intellectually sophisticated, with many profound arguments. But there are two main weaknesses in his overall approach. One is that many facts and arguments were stated repeatedly, making the book somewhat prolix. The other weakness is that Vickers did not write with scholarly detachment. He wrote with much passion, such that the book could well have been sub-titled: “A diatribe against the Minorities Commission and the Colonial Office.” On the whole, however, and largely because it is based on previously unused evidence, *A Nation Betrayed* is a most useful addition to the historiography of decolonization in Nigeria.

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**Cherryl Walker, Anna Bohlin, Ruth Hall, and Thembela Kepe (eds.). *Land, Memory, Reconstruction, and Justice: Perspectives on Land Claims in South Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010. xiv, 335 pp.**

Black South Africans occasionally emphasized the importance of land to African existence and identity. Reverend Edward Tsewu, an important early twentieth century leader stated, in 1904: “Now the land question is a deep question among all men.” Dr. A.B. Xuma, presented the presidential address at the 1941 African National Congress Annual Conference and said: the “fundamental basis of all wealth and power is the ownership and acquisition of freehold title to land. From land, we derive our existence.” The expropriation of African rural land or the destruction of black urban areas and forced removal of populations during the apartheid years attacked this “fundamental basis.” Since 1994, land loss during the twentieth century is so vital an issue in South Africa that sections of the 1993 interim constitution and the 1996 constitution are devoted to the restitution of land rights. One example of the government effort to publicize widely the deadline for land claims was a tee shirt emblazoned with “Stake your Claim” across

the front of the shirt, together with the deadline, 31 December 1998, and a pencil in a fist between the two sets of words. On the back was written, "Know Your Land Rights." Thus, the land issue is still a "deep question" and Reverend Tsewu's statement resonates as loudly today as it did in 1904.

This background lends significance to *Land, Memory, Reconstruction, and Justice: Perspectives on Land Claims in South Africa*. The editors describe the book as a collection of articles which explore "the conflicted terrain of land claims and land restitution in post-apartheid South Africa" (p. 1). The introduction and seventeen chapters examine and evaluate the implementation of the restitution policy, mainly emphasizing examples from the Western and Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces. The authors build on a growing literature about restitution in South Africa, especially apparent in the bibliographies accompanying each chapter. Final updates to chapters were made in mid-2009 (p. 13).

Section 25 (7) of the 1996 Constitution establishes a right: "A person or community dispossessed of property after 19 June 1913 as a result of past racially discriminatory laws or practices is entitled, to the extent provided by an Act of Parliament, either to restitution of that property or to equitable redress." Both Ruth Hall and Alan Dodson include discussions of this legal right in their chapters. Why the constitutional provision refers to 1913 is inadequately explained within this volume. The date is associated with the passage of the notorious Natives Land Act, which prohibited black South Africans from buying or leasing land outside of designated rural "scheduled areas." However, Section 1 (1) of the Land Act included an exception clause which allowed the Governor General to approve rural land purchases, something he did regularly between 1913 and 1936 (knowledge scholars rarely describe and omitted from this volume also). The Parliament's choice of 1913 is perplexing because the Land Act was not responsible for the loss of African owned land (only buying opportunities), and the South African government did not have the power to expropriate African owned so-called "black spots" until 1939. Also missing from this volume are data on how many of the claims for restitution concerned land loss between 1913 and 1948.

Based on the Constitution, restitution should have been focused only on ownership and dispossession, especially to "redress the legacy of apartheid rule." According to Ruth Hall, restitution "is a rights-based program in that the dispossessed or their descendants have an enforceable right, confirmed in the Constitution, to restoration of, or compensation for, property that was unfairly taken" (p. 21). In order to pursue its restitution policy, the government established a Commission on Restitution of Land Rights, which recognized 79,696 claims, and a Land Claims Court. However, within a short period of time, restitution came to include broader land reform aims. The four authors of Chapter 16 summed the aims up: "Although the main objective of South Africa's land restitution program has been restorative justice and reconciliation, its rural component has always had a recognized role within a broader rural development strategy" (p. 288). The editors also write about the "high hopes" that restitution would "redress the injustices" AND "contribute to the objectives of tenure security, land redistribution, and rural development" linked to the "land reform ambitions" (p. 1), and Hanri Mostert suggests that "restitution is popularly (even if mistakenly) often perceived as the

‘heartbeat’ of land reform” (p. 61). The restitution program became a program to correct injustice but also to overcome the “physical, emotional, and psychological loss suffered by those who were dispossessed” (p. 76).

A dominant theme that emerges from the essays is the very complicated nature of restitution and land reform in South Africa. Alan Dodson begins his essay by writing that “processing and adjudication of land claims is a complex task” (p. 273). The complexity is linked, first of all, to the wide range of stakeholders: claimants, usually former owners of the land or houses, but eventually also tenants, and, on occasion, claimant organizations; national government agencies, including the Commission of the Restitution of Land Rights and the Regional Land Claims Commissions, as well as the Department of Land Affairs and other bureaucracies; local government, such as the governments of Cape Town and Durban; non-governmental organizations; and different racial groups. Second, there were the urban claimants (over 70 percent) and rural claimants, about 28 percent, but accounting for far more people. Third, there was the matter of expectations: for the dispossessed, monetary compensation or restoration of their land? Oom John from Covie had an answer: “The land is more important than money. If you take money, after five months, it’s gone. With land, you have land to leave for your children” (p. 135). However, if the land was returned, questions arose among the new owners: for what purpose will we use the land—to meet housing needs, to farm on a small scale, to earn money from rental income, or to maintain a large commercial enterprise? As Chizuko Sato pointed out, restitution “meant different things to different landowners” (p. 228), and this absence of unanimity sometimes complicated restitution negotiations or created tensions after restitution. For governments, should the land be used for development and productive use or should restored land be part of a larger land reform process? Fourth, the location of the land could make a difference: prime real estate, as with Cape Town’s District Six, or commercial farms in Limpopo province, for example. Even in this volume, the many different examples showed a great range, including Cato Manor in Durban, District Six and Black River (now a part of Rondebosch) in Cape Town; Kalk Bay, a fishing community in the Western Cape, Knysna and Covie on the Garden Route, and Roosboom in Kwazulu-Natal. In addition, other case studies included the Makuleke on the western border of the Kruger Park and four other examples from Limpopo province, Shimange, Mavungeni, Munzhedzi, and people in the Levubu Valley. Various authors also point out that restitution claims may become entangled with other issues, such as political agendas, traditional leadership, gender, identity, and racial tensions. Time might play a role in claimant decision making because many of those who filed claims were elderly and, fearing that they would die before receiving their land, chose to accept monetary compensation instead. And, government priorities for selected properties sometimes changed, for example, from owners to tenants, particularly if the circumstances of the owners had improved substantially since the time of the dispossession, or from coloreds or Indians to Africans.

While some writers viewed their essays as an opportunity to explore new ways to implement restitution, to describe lessons learned or others recommended “future steps that could ensure the sustainable resettlement of restored land” (p. 274). Angela Conway and Tim Xipu believe that the example of Covie on the Garden route “shows innovative ways of meeting

the challenges of land restitution that could inspire others" (p. 140). Chizuko Sato points to the "importance of not isolating land restitution from regional political and restructuring processes," and recommends linkages to the "development strategy for the region" (p. 228). And, Alan Dodson lists six ideas to help create a "clear vision" for the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights, which include staffing improvements, changes in the Restitution Act, new legislation and realistic targets "for the resolution of complex urban and rural claims" (p. 284).

Several other points are worth mentioning. The authors are individuals with a wide range of training and experience. They are academics, attorneys and a former judge, dissertation researchers, members of NGOs, and an employee of a government department. The quality of the book is enhanced by the participation of Cherryl Walker, a former regional land claims commissioner for Kwazulu-Natal (1995-2000), as one of the editors and writer of an excellent chapter on Cato Manor, in which Walker draws on her experience as a commissioner. Several of the chapters were revisions of articles published earlier. By December, 2006, 73,433 were settled. Final updates to chapters were made in mid-2009 (p. 13).

The tone of at least half of the essays is critical of the land restitution process or of the participants involved in trying to settle claims, including claimants themselves. Some analysts regard restitution as a great success and point to the real achievement involving the "mass settlement of urban claims through cash payouts alongside a handful of alternative attempts to rebuild urban spaces" (p. 32). Cherryl Walker refers to "imperfections," and "significant ambiguities," and criticizes the agencies associated with land restitution for failing to take a more "imaginative approach" to the Cato Manor case. Marc Wegerif is particularly critical, exclaiming against a "failing land reform and land restitution program in South Africa, one that is neither returning sufficient amounts of land to people nor facilitating the effective use of the little land returned" (p. 100). Conway and Xipu complain that "the restitution process is long, laborious, and bureaucratic, often creating frustration and conflict" (p. 139), while Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie concludes her particularly enlightening and sensitive chapter by referring to Black River claimants who "know now that justice cannot be done" because of a restitution process that is "characterized by delays and limited financial settlements" (pp. 97-98). In a similar vein, Anna Bohlin writes about Knysna and Kalk Bay claimants whose "fragile" faith in the restitution process "diminished" to the point where their "waning confidence" affected their decisions (p. 128). But some of the blame may relate to the claimants themselves; M. Aliber, T. Maluleke, M. Thagwana and T. Manenzhe effectively describe Limpopo province "claimant communities generally riven by internal conflict" (p. 303).

For this reviewer, the picture that emerges about the very complicated effort to achieve the constitutional restitution mandate is most enlightening and makes *Land, Memory, Reconstruction, and Justice: Perspectives on Land Claims in South Africa* a useful addition to the literature. Equally important, restitution is not yet complete; consequently, the critiques and recommendations presented in this volume may still have an impact.

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