

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Kwasi Konadu. *Indigenous Medicine and Knowledge in African Society*. New York: Routledge, 2007. 240p.**

The historical analysis of conceptions of health and healing in many traditional African societies offer an interesting avenue for the study of the contradictions and ambivalences within definitions of medical knowledge and the concept of disease. *Indigenous Medicine and Knowledge in African Society* brings to mind the challenges of writing and investigating the therapeutic knowledge of indigenous societies and provides important suggestions for the study of medicine and knowledge systems in Africa. As much about therapeutic knowledge as about culture, it adds to our understanding of the resilience of traditional practices in contemporary Africa. Kwasi Konadu consciously modeled his discussion of traditional Bono-Takyiman (Akan, Ghana) medical knowledge to refute the work of Dennis M. Warren in "Religion, Disease, and Medicine among the Bono-Takyiman," which relied on the healing knowledge of one traditional healer (Nana Kofi Donkor) as the baseline data in looking at the work of several indigenous healers.

Konadu argues that although Warren's work is laudable, "it must be stated that the experiences, perceptions, and levels of competence amongst healers are not identical, and to use one person as a standard or benchmark seems problematic in the articulation of an 'ethnomedical system' authenticated by so few sources that possess equivalent levels of in-depth medical knowledge and aptitude" (xxix). Konadu also hopes for his work to serve as foundation on which future research into indigenous medicine and knowledge would be embedded. He laments that the production of indigenous knowledge from the perspectives of producers and users has received the disdain and little consideration from African scholars and medical practitioners (12). Konadu contends that these Africans have failed to recognize or even accept that the process of indigenous medicine has now been "scientifically demystified," in addition to the vast medicinal knowledge acquired through pragmatic experiences and close natural observations (172).

For his own part, Konadu relies on oral interviews, material culture, linguistic data, historical, and other archaeological sources to investigate the ways in which "Bono-Takyiman healers and indigenous archives of Akan cultural knowledge conceptualize and interpret medicine and healing" (xxx). In so doing, he provides a complete outlook of how indigenous healers conceptualize medicine and how that conceptualization translates into their healing practices. *Indigenous Medicine and Knowledge in African Society* will undoubtedly appeal to the intellectual response of scholars in various academic areas, particularly, scholars in West African and African history, African Diaspora, and in Atlantic history. Others interested in

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v10/v10i4reviews.pdf>

health, disease, medicine, ethnicity, and identity will find the author's thesis and direction of argument insightful.

Ghana's colonial past and political economy reflects in the country's traditional health and healing practices. As Konadu asserts, the colonial administration, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, suppressed indigenous medicine specialists with an introduction of biomedicine into the country. The postcolonial era interfaced with military coups and economic failures equally affected the nature of the indigenous healers' vocation (2-3). The dependence of West African nations on "foreign aid" and their continuation of colonial economic policies have resulted in rapid ecological changes, which not "only disturb and facilitate vectors of infectious diseases, but also severely limit crop and medicinal plant development." From hence, Konadu discusses the activities of the practitioners of Bono-Takyiman therapeutic system in the context of Bono socio-political history. The discussion provides an overview of the Bono cosmological system with the author arguing, "Bono cosmology is a 'living' entity, arising out of the process of culture development—which may be impeded but is continuous as long as people of that culture exist—and from an experiential reference for Bono existence," (38). Thus, specialists of Bono-Takyiman therapeutic system situate their curative ideas and conceptions directly in the Akan cosmology. In the Akan tradition, the human being is "spirit encapsulated" rather than "matter-animated," thus, the fundamental nature of the human being is spirit and any attempt at healing the human body should be spirit-oriented. By such a design, traditional healers serve as experts of the complex cultural system and its spiritual conventions.

A brief overview of the traditional healers' perspectives on the environmental context of their healing practices ends the discussion in chapter one; with the author using chapters three to five to elucidate the indigenous conceptions of medicine as held by the Bono healers. Konadu describes the essence of both tangible and abstract ideas as they relate to medicinal notions and practices, and a cultural-linguistic analysis of those medicines most commonly used because of their effectiveness. He also explores some of the central Akan indigenous knowledge annals, for instance, proverbs, gold weights, adinkra symbolism, and oral narrative, to gain a better perspective on what these annals reveal about Akan medicinal conceptions. In his conclusion, Konadu reiterates his overall disenchantment with African scholars and biomedical practitioners and his earlier objection to the work of Warren. He argues that in order to access the depth of knowledge and sensibilities that provide more than a 'glimpse' into the nature and workings of traditional healing institutions, a person has "to be 'born into' the varied spiritual-cultural Bono institutions, rather than arrive as a researcher or participant-observer," (158). African scholars who ignore indigenous knowledge systems, according to Konadu, "are largely divorced from their indigenous cultural reality and values." These intellectuals "uncritically" accept and identify with Eurocentric conceptualization of Africa to the extent they have "created African versions of Western things," (179).

Konadu's final analysis is that the Bono spiritual-temporal forms the foundation upon which the healing practices of indigenous healers depend. Konadu's account is thoughtful, well researched, and likely to provoke discussion from African historians of health and medicine and even from scientists. The inclusion of a comprehensive glossary containing the translation of some Akan words, an example of Akan libation, a map of Ghana, and the map of the district of Bono-Takyiman complements the actual content of the book. Nonetheless, the extensive use

of Akan words, while useful and easy for the Akan language speaker, becoming distracting and confusing for the non-speaker having to sometimes go back to the glossary to check the meaning of some words not explained in the text. As a Ghanaian and presumably an Akan, Konadu's mistranslation of some Akan words leaves much to be desired. Writing that *mmogya* (blood) is synonymous with *abusua* (lineage) and translating it as "matrilineage" gives the wrong implication. His intention was to show that in the Akan tradition, lineage comes through the bloodline of the maternal side, yet blood is not necessary identical to lineage. I must however stress that the minor translation errors in the book only serve a distraction for the native speaker of the Akan language and does not, in anyway, mar the author's trajectory of thought, discussions, and arguments. The text is well written and accessible to a wide range of researchers and graduate students of African history.

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**Donald A. Yerxa, ed. *Recent Themes in the History of Africa and the Atlantic World: Historians in Conversation*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press. 2008. 128p.**

In 1963, Hugh Trevor-Roper dismissed the idea of an African history, let alone that of the Atlantic world, stating, "Perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none, or very little: there is only the history of Europe in Africa."<sup>1</sup> Such a dismissive remark would be absurd if made today because of the inundation of scholarships produced in recent years on Africa and on the Atlantic world. Now we can all call ourselves Africanists or Atlanticists, or so it appears, as the history of Africa and Atlantic world have become the subjects of interest among scholars of the Caribbean, North and South America, Africa, and Western Europe. Indeed, African and Atlantic histories have taken an important place in recent historiographical developments and there is no challenging of this fact, yet there remains an important question, "how adequately the history of Africa is being integrated into world history. And when the attempt is made, does the African past get flattened out, as Patrick Manning notes, with single, civilization-wide generalizations."<sup>2</sup>

The need to conceptualize Africa's place in world history and address other pressing questions about the Atlantic world, is what resulted in Donald Yerxa's book under review here. The book is a compilation of academic debates drawn from *Historically Speaking* and written by outstanding African, Atlantic, and world historians who have investigated the links between Africa and the rest world, particularly the Atlantic world, and reviewed the growing field of Atlantic history. The book is simply as the subtitle suggests—historians in conversation. The various works have been thoroughly researched, presented in a lively argument and counter-argument approach, and touches on several issues that contribute to a better understanding of Africa's elusive past. The state of the field of Atlantic history, the principal theories in the field, and the nature of academic contestations regarding the spirited Olaudah Equiano, are some of the themes the contributors situate in the context of colonialism.

The African past is perhaps the only past in world history that is compressed and interpreted within frameworks of other historical pasts to such an extent that it leaves Africans without their own history. Joseph C. Miller takes this challenge on by arguing for an alternative approach, a “multicentric” world history that accentuates the African past on its own terms. Miller argues that if we see African history in world history through the lens of European or Asian standards we hold the African past in intellectual oppression (14-17). Eight historians respond to Miller’s thesis, and indeed, their counter-theses signify a lot. The exchanges indicate how historians are wrestling with the important conceptualizations and the complexities in world history. Patrick Manning, for instance, argues that while “multicentrism” is essential for writing Africa into world history, doing so “does not resolve problems in interpreting the world and Africa’s place in it. Instead, they reveal further complexity,” (26).

As the debate on Africa’s proper place in world history continues, that of the growing field of Atlantic history takes on a life of its own. One of the prominent scholars in the field, Bernard Bailyn, has cautioned against understanding Atlantic history as “the aggregate of four or five discrete European histories together with the regional histories of the native peoples of West Africa and America,” (76-77). Against Bailyn’s argument, Trevor Burnard argues that the “principal theme of Atlantic history is that from the fifteenth century to the present, the Atlantic world was not just a physical fact but a particular zone of exchange and interchange, circulation, and transmission,” (76). Hence, we must view the various component parts of Atlantic history as “additives” to the making of the Atlantic world.

What Atlantic history conversation goes without a reflection on one of the most prominent figures of the field, Olaudah Equiano? In Atlantic history, Equiano’s narration of his life as an enslaved person has often been used as the reference point for the horrors of the “Middle Passage” as well as with life in eighteenth century North American and West Africa. Vincent Carretta opens the discussion with the observation that Equiano was “a central figure in the reconstruction of Atlantic history, and to our understanding of the Atlantic world” (81). Yet, he questions, what if Equiano was actually born in South Carolina and had fabricated his African identity, (83-84)? Although Carretta notes that Equiano was “an Atlantic Creole whose life and writings demonstrate the challenges and opportunities of the Atlantic world,” he concludes Equiano probably fabricated his story; hence, there is the need for re-examination in the way historians interpret and use Equiano’s autobiography (90). Paul Lovejoy, Trevor Burnard, and Jon Sensbach disagree with Carretta’s assessment that Equiano lied about his identity; pointing out that the document, which Carretta based his argument on cannot be authenticated.

Although originally intended as a course companion for students of African and African Diasporic history, world history, and Atlantic history, this book will undoubtedly appeal to the intellectual response of scholars in various academic areas, particularly those interested in race and identity formation. It also holds a real treasure in historical analysis by providing in a single volume not only arguments and counter-arguments, but also opportunity for the proponents of the arguments to respond to the counter-arguments.

## Notes

1. Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The Rise of Christian Europe," *Listener*, (1963): 5, cited in Donald A. Yerxa, *Recent Themes in the History of Africa and the Atlantic World: Historians in Conversation*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008, 1.
2. Ibid. See Patrick Manning, "Africa in World History and Historiography," *Historically Speaking*, Vol. 6 (2004): 15.

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**Roy Armes. *African Filmmaking: North and South of the Sahara*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006. 214p.**

*African Filmmaking North and South of the Sahara* is a study of African filmmaking that links the production of film in the Maghreb (comprising of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco) to what is often referred to as Francophone sub-Saharan Africa (which includes the former colonies of French West Africa; French Equatorial Africa and the protectorates of Togo and Cameroon).

The book begins with an overview of the postcolonial context of African filmmaking with the formation of nation states in the late 1950s and early '60s ideologically opposed to imperial colonialism, yet inextricably linked. Armes describes not only the vastness and diversity of the continent, the existence of modern national states alongside different ethnicities, languages and religious practices but also looks at how modern African nations inherited a colonial structure based on autocratic centralism, a Euro centric educational system and the languages of the colonizers.

The French system in West Africa produced *assimilés*, a class of educated Africans who assimilated the colonizer's culture and administration and became the first leaders of independent African states. This system in turn produced what Armes describes as emotional ties between France and its ex-colonies seen for example in French cultural policies concerning filmmaking. Filmmaking was of course a foreign technology adopted after independence carrying with it prestige. While the vast majority of films north and south of the Sahara use local and national languages, including variants of Arabic, in order to receive foreign aid or co-production finance, films have to be originally scripted and dialogued in French. Similarly, the term Francophone African cinema (as opposed to Anglophone or a Lusophone one) is still a dominant yet limited definition. These are some of the contradictions and layers of meanings Armes offers as a backdrop to Africa's rich cinematic history and suggests it has inspired African filmmakers and cultural workers alike to use culture as a means for emancipation and freedom from imperial and autocratic political systems.

Armes places the importance of Islam on the African continent, north and south of the Sahara, in its rightful place, describing not only the long history of Islamisation and trade in Africa but also the Africanisation of Islam, seen for example in its visual culture. Although the

pioneers of African film like the leaders of the newly independent African nations in the 1950s and '60s were politically influenced by socialist sentiments and created filmic critiques of colonialism as well as the practice of Islam in Africa, Armes suggests that "today's filmmakers – caught between their French education and their Islamic heritage – offer an ambiguous, but totally contemporary – African visual culture" (p.10).

In Part 1, Armes describes the origins of cinema in Africa starting with the beginnings of film during the colonial era in the 1890s, pretty much at the same time cinema spread across Europe and the United States. Although these colonial films tended to use Africa just as a scenic backdrop to a purely European drama or perpetuate racial stereotypes to legitimise western cultural, political and financial dominance, Armes describes the varying types of film production in Africa from colonial rule to post-independence, including the Tunisian pioneer filmmaker, Albert Samama Chikly (1872-1934) who was the only one from the Maghreb or West Africa under colonial rule to make feature-length films.

Going on to post-independence filmmaking, Armes looks at the emergence of African filmmakers alongside the dominance of Western films over African screens, while the structural organisation of African film production retained fundamentally a colonial structure. Early film production in post-independence Africa was very much seen as a state production, while Armes suggests a shift occurred in the 1980s and 1990s due to the closure of numerous state production organisations and the development of French aid to finance African film production.

In Part 2 & 3, Armes gives a comprehensive overview of films led by the pioneers of the 1960s such as Ousmane Sembene in Senegal, Ahmed Rachedi and Mohamed Lakhdar Hamina in Algeria and Omar Khelifi from Tunisia, following on into the 1970s with filmmakers such as Mauritanian Med Hondo, the Malian Souleymane Cisse and Senegalese woman director Safi Faye, who used film to highlight the social issues of a postcolonial society and their liberation struggles, developing an African perspective denied after a long period of colonisation. He suggests that in the 1980s and '90s filmmakers shifted to a more personal dimension to represent individual struggles as a result of political and ideological disenchantment. Armes also writes about what he calls experimental narratives and looks at the work of Djibril Diop Mambety from Senegal and Med Hondo (Mauritanian by birth but based in Paris), as well as examples of comedies from Morocco and Ivory Coast to exemplify the alternatives to social realism prevalent in the first generation of African filmmakers. As Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike notes, this "compelling experimentation enables us to appreciate African cinema as innovative and diverse" (p.122), which Armes suggests is a trend that continues with many filmmakers working in the 2000s.

The new generation of African filmmakers represented by the "New Millennium" group includes "forty filmmakers--five of them women--[who] have given us over fifty feature films in the years since the late 1990s"(p. 143). Thirteen of these filmmakers come from Morocco, ten from Tunisia, one from Algeria, and sixteen from sub-Saharan countries. Almost all are film-school trained (mainly in Paris), and, as a whole, they represent one of the most highly educated groups of filmmakers in the world. Most have a production base in Europe where they tend to reside in order to qualify for European production funds. This group has a strong sense of unity and is organized in the Paris-based *Guilde Africaine des Réalisateurs et Producteurs*. Many of

their works explore exile and diaspora such as Jean-Pierre Bekolo from Cameroon, whom Jonathan Haynes described as “a cagey and attitudinous guerrilla roaming the post-modern globalized mediascape, opening the way for other bold young experimenters who made award-winning films” (p. 154). Armes also acknowledges Nigeria's booming video film sector to contrast it with the financial continuities in the Francophone world. The book concludes in Part 4 with a focus on the most promising New Millennium directors: Mahamat Saleh Haroun (Chad); Dani Kouyate' (Burkina Faso); Raja Amari (Tunisia); Faouzi Bensaidi (Morocco) and Abderrahmane Sissako (Mauritania) giving this new generation of African filmmakers the final say.

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**Sara Dorman, Daniel Hammett, and Paul Nugent (eds.). *Making Nations, Creating Strangers: States and Citizenship in Africa*. Boston: Brill, 2007. 277p.**

*Making Nations, Creating Strangers* is part of the African Social Studies Series. It consists of a collection of more than a dozen papers from those presented at the ‘States, Borders and Nations: Negotiating Citizenship in Africa’ conference held at the University of Edinburgh in 2004. The papers examine the processes through which nations are made, citizenship is defined, and the political expressions of those constructions. They are grouped into five sections: 1) an introduction on citizenship in Africa by the three editors, 2) two case studies of inclusion, exclusion and conflict in Cote d’Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 3) three papers on land and belonging, focusing on Cameroon, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, 4) a section on nations building boundaries which explores the politics of language in Cameroon, nationalism in Tanzania, and race in Zimbabwean politics, and 5) an exploration of citizenship, in a paper on South Africa and two others for Africa as a whole. One-third of the essays were contributed by scholars based in Africa, with the remainder from Canadian, British, and American authors.

The contributors note that citizenship laws in Africa have received little scholarly attention and they seek to examine the many possible outcomes across Africa as its people negotiate their colonial histories, patterns of inequality, population pressure, land shortage, and entitlement to resources within the boundaries of individual states. Their approaches, though often not articulated in methodological sections, include interpreting and reflecting upon relevant primary and secondary source materials and interviews with African leaders, United Nations officials, immigrants, and ordinary citizens.

Several themes reoccur throughout the book, including the following: strategies used by states to unite diverse people and promote nationalism; the politics of inclusion/exclusion as well as approaches employed by political leaders to define those who are or are not rightful members of the state; the use of education and the media to frame, and if necessary, remake the past to control the future; social standing, belonging, and using immigrants, from settler-

colonists to more recent arrivals, as scapegoats; the centrality of the ability to access or possess land in determining who 'belongs' in a state; the role of 'guerrillas' and insurgents in gaining supporters and shaping debates over rights and belonging; and, the failure of the end of the Cold War and the 'decade of democratization' (1990s) to end to violent conflict or ensure lasting political stability.

In no country are immigrants viewed neutrally. Even in Côte d'Ivoire, where immigration has been valorized for promoting economic success as well as viewed as indicative of the moral superiority of Ivoirians who welcome outsiders in the spirit of pan-Africanism, fraternity, and generosity, national identity cards have been used to determine voting and land rights, as well as who may seek the highest political office. In the DR Congo, Hutu and Tutsi 'outsiders' viewed as faring better economically than local inhabitants are subsequently mistreated by political leaders, even though by law some of these former Rwandans qualify for Congolese citizenship. Migrant farm workers in Zimbabwe, like migrants to Côte d'Ivoire, have been labeled as morally suspect or "less virtuous" (p. 116) than indigenous groups. The question of who is Tanzanian has been debated for decades and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century; at the heart of the query is whether resident South Asian Indians are Tanzanian or if they should give up their economic privilege to qualify.

Although long-term residency has served as a major determinant of potential citizenship in African countries, other factors have been used as markers of belonging. In Cameroon, the Anglophone minorities have been treated as second-class citizens and non-sedentary groups have been labeled as non-autochthonous, because they move over land rather than being ancestrally rooted to it. In South Africa, Nigeria, and elsewhere, people owning private property or living in urban areas have been politically privileged, while rural dwellers have been viewed as second class "'subjects' rather than as citizens able to engage in civil society" (p. 125).

*Making Nations, Creating Strangers* indicate that the more rigid categorization of people by ethnic background and occupation arose during the colonial period, but that post-independence leaders have used and manipulated these categories for their own benefit. There is a call by the authors, directly or implied, for Africans to broaden their notion of citizenship beyond individuals with claims to ancestral lands within state boundaries to include non-indigenous and non-sedentary people and incorporate them at all political levels in the name of democracy, nation-building, and sustainable development. At the same time, several contributors note that the use of language/ethnicity, long-term residency, and other claims to citizenship in African countries are quite similar to those which have been used on other continents throughout time. Furthermore, some of the contributors also note that constitutional reforms, although needed, may prove insufficient to resolve present-day inequalities if corruption and patronage remain widespread.

Though the essays in *Making Nations, Creating Strangers* are well-written and informative, with several being written by leading experts in the field, the inclusion of an essay on the impact of oil on statehood would have been welcome. Oil states such as Angola, Sudan, and Guinea Bissau receive virtually no mention and the essay on Nigeria does not address how oil plays into citizenship and identity. Furthermore, refugees receive only the briefest mention, yet their large numbers and unique position as "non-citizen others" (p. 255) who have experienced

varying degrees of social integration into their host countries position them as worthy of greater coverage in a volume which delves deeply into bounded states, citizenship and identity. *Making Nations, Creating Strangers* contains two high quality maps, but no photographs, tables or charts. The essays are pertinent to current events in Africa, and could serve as readings for upper-level undergraduate and graduate courses on African politics or international relations. Additionally, the book should be useful for anyone with an interest in African politics and identity as it relates to statehood.

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**Preben Kaarsholm (ed). *Violence, Political Culture & Development in Africa*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006. 208p.**

This edited book volume consists of 10 chapters: an introductory chapter, a comparative chapter on state collapse in Africa, plus eight case study chapters on countries as far apart and politically diverse as Rwanda, Darfur, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Liberia. The contributing authors to this volume – all attached to universities in the Global North, all of whom attended a workshop at the Hotel Romantik on the Danish island of Bornholm in 2002, sponsored by Roskilde University and the Danish Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies - include scholars trained in and writing within the fields of history, anthropology, development studies, and political science.

The introductory chapter by the editor situates the individual chapters in the context of the ‘third wave of democratisation’ unfolding in African countries since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. While this wave has seen an increase in competitive legislature elections across the continent, it has also occurred in the context of violent conflict, war, genocide, state failure and collapse, and the disintegration of social orders. This book, as the editor notes, aims at contributing to the scholarly debate regarding the contemporary political situations and the “contradictions of development” (p. 2) in Africa, by which is meant the empirical realities of “possibilities, stalemates and violence conflicts” on the one hand and the different scholarly “understandings of contradictions and capacities for change in African political cultures” on the other (p. 2). In doing so, the contributions in this volume are explicit about the need for historical approaches to contextualise both the empirical political realities in Africa and, self-consciously, the lenses through which these realities have been theorised.

The introductory chapter confronts the second aim of the book: that is, the lenses through which the ‘African’ realities have been understood. Starting with what is by now a very familiar and established line of argument, this chapter rails against a number of journalists and commentators for writing about Africa in a ‘negative way’. Correspondent Ryszard Kapuscinski and writer Robert Kaplan are deservedly singled out for their particularly biased and unflattering writings on and analyses of ‘Africa’. Echoing an argument made as far back as 1996 by one of the contributors to this volume, Paul Richards, the introductory chapter criticises the

likes of Kaplan for their Afro-pessimism, moralistic prejudice, generalisations, etc. The chapter proceeds to wonder aloud whether such normative evaluations found in less academic analyses of African individuals and societies - the 'heart of darkness' narrative - do not perhaps also influence scholarly writings on Africa.

Continuing with this line of argument, histories of economic underdevelopment and analytical concepts such as rent-seeking, personal rule, patrimonialism, neo-patrimonialism, clientelism, elite cronyism are exposed as leading to arguments and conclusions that may reinforce the 'heart of darkness' narrative. This is because these perspectives and concepts were developed by scholars inhabiting a different "conceptual universe" than the political actors and political cultures of the countries under discussion. Such a culturalist argument seems too easy to make without seriously considering what is meant by different conceptual universes and how such universes are construed or relate to the material and discursive conditions of industrial capitalism and colonialism, i.e. the conditions under which these concepts and perspectives developed and flourished. The flip side of such a culturalist argument is that it requires the authors of this volume to stress and emphasise (cultural) coherence and similarity between the incredibly divergent countries under discussion (they are all 'African' in some way or another). The editor tries to grapple with this dilemma through a critical discussion and attempted revival of the notion 'political culture', but more intellectual work is needed to sharpen this potential theoretical knife.

In this introduction, too many of the recent writings on Africa are dismissed as somehow belonging to this 'heart of darkness' narrative: the author finds 'echoes of stereotypes' in Mbembe's work and of course Bayart's influential phrase 'politics of the belly' does not sound all that positive either. Too easily, Chabal and Daloz's work are dismissed as "heretic". Rather than seriously engaging with the varying and new ideas these authors had put forth, they are too easily condemned for the assumed possible consequences of their analyses. Consequently, they are all lumped together in a category of the sinners perpetuating negative narratives about 'Africa'. Interestingly, while the editor draws heavily on Paul Richard's earlier work in developing this line of argument, Richard's own contribution to this volume, tucked away as the last chapter, moves beyond his earlier work on Sierra Leone by reviving Durkheim's arguments about the connections between forced labour, fatalism, violence and civil war.

Given the expected lengths of these reviews, I can only briefly point to few of the individual chapters, and my selection was influenced by my disciplinary background and appreciation of rich analyses of the histories and current dynamics of specific local political struggles and such struggle's links to regional and global dynamics. Alexander offers a reworking of some of her earlier collaborative work on Zimbabwe and, drawing on archival sources and life histories, makes some compelling arguments for the ways in which party political discourses and symbols in contemporary Zimbabwe draws on regional contestations, religious routes and shines, memories associated with land and gestures. Demonstrating in rich detail the local and particular ways in which narratives provide legitimacy to rulers, her chapter is a fascinating read given the current political contestations and humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe. Avoiding the explanatory line that favours seeing meaning and rationality in violence, she is careful to note that not all violence can be reduced to the struggle for power in a narrow sense; even struggles over identities and culture cannot be reduced to struggles over

political power. Kaarsholm's chapter deals with local politics in Amaoti outside Durban, South Africa, and shows how good historical and social analysis provide us with a map through which to interpret contemporary local political struggles. Through a close analysis of the material and symbolic dimensions of historical and contemporary struggles between IFP/ANC/UDF structures in the 1980s, social class markers, social identities locally formulated by ideas about ethnicity, generational contestations, gender divisions, localist versus cosmopolitanist lifestyles, conservative versus modernist moral orientations, Kaarsholm expertly demonstrates a most important contribution of rich ethnography to political science. That is, showing in this instance, how "the politics of every life are not necessarily bound up symmetrically with the politics of parties and instead act themselves out in contestations between groupings and discourses that differ on the moral issues regulating the relationships between older and younger people and between men and women" (p. 155).

This volume makes an important contribution to the effort of developing comparative views on political events and processes unfolding across several African countries. The historical approach shared by most of the contributors demonstrates well the shortcomings of much journalistic analyses of violent conflicts and state failures. The chapters drawing on field research in particular illustrate the complexities of political cultures and the dynamics of local struggles in a global context, which to some extent undermines the theoretical bases of the sort of comparative work on which the introductory chapter is constructed.

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**Michael Ba Banutu-Gomez. *Africa: We Owe it to Our Ancestors, Our Children, and Ourselves*. Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2005. 214p.**

"We owe it to Our Ancestors Our Children and Ourselves" is a one man reflection of what Africa is about pausing evaluative questions for readers to explore. It indicates Africa right from its title page but internalizing much more of the authors own African environs and what transpires therein.

His pride of being Africa is impeccable and in the introductory chapter of the book, the author reminisces over what it was like when he was in Africa and then concludes the chapter by stating his mission to serve as an effective, responsive and creative leader in private and public organizations and government.

A sense of everything African is made known by the author however as his story based on a debate he stirs and reinforces with notable quotes from other authors to substantiate his arguments targeting African professionals, students and leaders into having insight into the continents traditional acumen and opportunity to development.

Issues relating to the significance of African culture such as the significance of African music, the link between the dead and living, child birth, elders, traditional religion, medicine and occupations. As well as health and education management in the African traditional

setting, marriage, family, environmental management, implications of rural – urban migrations on labor and democracy in Africa are deliberated upon.

A depiction of what life was about, mostly in Banutu – Gomez’s Gambian experience indicates the oneness in African practice as well as the value of life, marriage, family and health.

The authors description of Africa portrays a continent possessing its own functional values, development models and strategies, yet these are dormant which leads to his critique that necessitates such interventions as thoroughly understanding and respecting each others needs, designing more flexible public institutions by replacing the ineffective European vertical hierarchies of our past with modern horizontal networks that link together African people in a continental alliance, investment in Agriculture, sharing knowledge and skills as well as having African leaders achieve organizational coordination by mutual adjustment. Some harmful customs like forced marriage and female circumcision are noted with caution by the author to be cultural but not moral.

However it is basic to note that the basis of the narrative given in the book holds bias and therefore an objective opinion is more appreciated in terms of the author urging an African management and development model but also identifying opportunities in the Western culture that would enhance the African model. Rather than rubbishing the Western culture wholly as irrelevant. For example he insinuates that we cause conflict and confusion when we move away from our traditional forms of music and music instruments. The author would do justice to indicate what exactly was in the African music that was good and part of the revolution would be to achieve a better music model probably African but with comparison to the western music model. This not only helps strengthen the African models but also makes them applicable to global integration.

The author needs to realize that culture is dynamic and though it is only right that Africans evaluate what they had and value what their tradition culture can produce, it is only fair that they add value to their traditional cultures by integrating positive cultures from else where.

Another point of contention among others in Gomez’s deliberations is seen in the message that the elders should still be in custody of society’s wisdom. This notion can be disapproved based on the reality that gray hair does not necessarily mean wisdom because wisdom ought to be practical and proper reasoning built on experience and knowledge not simply age. Therefore it is no wonder that a character in Chinua Achebe’s traditional placed novel ‘Things Fall Apart’ Unoka is Okwokwo’s father and elderly, but not highly regarded or even sought after, while his son Okwokwo raises high to the position of an elder or bearer of wisdom due to his experience and fulfillment of his society’s norms. Besides this in contemporary time’s age does not represent virtue, in contemporary Africa some elderly folks have become symbols of vice as well therefore forfeiting the right to be sought out as wise and able guardians in society.

The subject of God as Gomez inducts could not be possibly envisaged as the author implies. That Africans worshiped one God and ancestors were not considered to be gods. The reality of African religion is ingrained in worship of the ancestors – not just recognizing they lived and hold memorials of in their honor but also in believing in the living – dead. Sacrifices are made to the spirits of those long gone and they are adored as gods. The essence of such titles as Nasibati and Nyamuhanga only recognized the creative force of nature to be God the creator and maker of all things.

The book makes a great contribution to literature on Africa providing a shared experience with constructive quotes from other sources to enhance the quality of information the author gives as he states his arguments of what Africa ought to do. However there is a lot of speculative thought than application. To create an African model of development or more functional values there is need not to simply talk about how things were and what ought to be done but how ought it to be done with reverence being given to the past traditions and how best these can be recovered, rejuvenated and appreciated practically.

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**Alfred Nhema and Paul Zeleza, (eds). *The Roots of African Conflicts: The Causes & Costs*. Oxford, UK: James Currey (in association with OSSREA), 2008. 238p.**

Portrayal of African wars and woos is central to the text 'The Roots of African Conflicts: The Causes and Costs. Authors indicate the factors that have attracted Africa into continuous conflict cycles mostly intra-state conflicts. Wars are typically related to imperialism, decolonization, ethnicity, religion and political malfunction in the various papers. The external and internal pressures leading to terrorism are identified as national, transnational and global.

In his review of the papers Zeleza notes "African wars can be differentiated in terms of causal factors and dynamics, spatial scale and location, military equipment and engagements deployed, impacts of military and civilian populations, and consequences on politics, the economy, society, the environment, cultural structures and mental states."<sup>1</sup>

This view cuts across the papers as reflected by in what Ali Mazrui extensively writes about the patterns in African wars pointing out religion, ethnicity and racism, which he identifies as aspects of pluralism which is dangerous to society's harmonious co-existence.<sup>2</sup>

Henderson examines the event entailing political malfunction in African states citing the circumstance of state building in Africa as having the challenges of a 'state strengthening dilemma' where in this formation instead of achieving citizens allegiance to the state resistance was developed leading to political repression and thus insurgency.<sup>3</sup>

Ghaffer offers a case study of Sudan, an African state he describes jeopardized by not only religion, ethnicity and language but economic inequity which has escalated into strife caused by distrust between North and South Sudan.<sup>4</sup> Ghaffer centres his argument on the colonial intention of halting the Islamizing of black Africa which in the process opened the door to other forms of disunity and thus conflict.

Akokpari links African conflict to the colonial experience, failure of the state and external factors. He notes that African states are artificial a design of colonial imagination rather than the actual nationhood. Akokpari cites the contradiction and complexities of managing heterogeneous African states as well as the implications of external impacts on African politics such as the fact that independence for African states was a product of the cold war.<sup>5</sup>

Further examining the trend of conflict in Africa Thandika Mkandawire gives various explanations taken from other authors to illustrate the scenario of rebellion and violence in Africa. He notes the peddling of Afro-pessimism quoting the Economist (May 13, 2000) which stated 'The Hopeless Continent' as a headline. In the cultural view he demonstrates African violence as a hereditary trait, then points out Chris Allen's paradigm of 'spoil politics' in Africa noting the urge for self enrichment hence the urge to grab power with intent to loot. The rational choice explanation Mkandawire gives suggests there is some injustice that rebellion seeks to rectify culminating into violence.

In his final argument he give the common African scenario of elite persons teaming up in the urban areas as factions and then steaming up rebellion mostly in the rural side basing on the failure in the cities. The argument that stimulates the debate further is in the reality that all rebel groups are made up of persons with different motives and so are a challenge in them.

The role of women play in revolutions is focal in Aaronette Whites paper about African women combatants. Her discussion centres on women's contribution and how often they are sidelined by governments they supported into power.

Sandra MacLean identifies Africa's political disheveled environment with the global network in which transnational networks emerge including those dealing in arms. Though MacLean states that not all transboundary formations are exploitative many such formations are constructed as 'networks of plunder'.<sup>6</sup> She brings out an important reality in the creation of NEPAD, on how Africa has continued to be a continent lingering in decision made by the western world.

An interesting state of affairs is brought out by Cephias Lamina on legislative responses and protecting human rights. In his paper, he cite a number of African countries who are party to the international conventions and protocols on terrorism but interpret them in such a manner has led to the violation of human rights such as the right to expression, life, human dignity, association and fair trial.

Fondo Sikod points out the implication of war or violent conflict in Africa mainly as poverty and food insecurity which also perpetuate conflict as a result of frustration brought on by lack of social reciprocity and tolerance for different ideas. The proposition seems to act out the notion a hungry man is an angry one. In that the root cause of the violence is traced back to poverty and food security.

The last paper in the book by Timothy Shaw and Pamela Mbabazi focuses on Uganda bringing out the attributes of a state under reconstruction and yet still in conflict. The North – South divide is noted as well as the advantage western Uganda in particular Mbarara has had in development.

The book covers a wide range of view which holds truth to the African situation in terms of the root causes of conflict. It is evident that internal and external forces have led to the underlying violent conflicts but with a number of motives and thus cause. However key cases for instance the fact that pre-colonial Africa had conflicts rooted in trade and the desire for territorial expansion is left out. The mention of Kingdom and Empire formation by the Asante, Hausa, Nyamwezi, Banyoro and Zulu are not mentioned plus such mercenary activities as those conducted by the Ngoni Ruga Ruga warriors.

Furthermore there is no mention of the actual role of women in empire or nation building in pre-colonial Africa. This mention would enhance the depiction of the role of African women, such as the Amazon's who were famous warriors in Dahomey as well as the female warriors in the Monomotapa Kingdom, in revolutions and war.

Mention of recent incidents on the global scene such as the 2004 Mark Thatcher scandal which involved former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's son engaging helping finance a foiled plot to overthrow the president of oil-rich Equatorial Guinea would add weight to the debate as evidence implicating the western world in Africa's conflict.

### Notes

1. Tiyambe Zeleza. Introduction: The Causes and Costs of war in Africa, pg. 3.
2. Ali Mazrui. *Conflict in Africa: An Overview*, pg. 38.
3. Errol Henderson. *When States Implode: Africa's Civil wars 1950 – 92* pg. 54.
4. Abdel Ghaffer Ahme. Multiple Complexities and Prospects for Reconciliation and Unity: Sudan, pg. 75.
5. John Akokpari. *Citizenship, the State and African Conflict: Ivory Coast*, pg. 89 - 91.
6. Sandra MacLean. *Fighting Locally, Connecting Globally*, pg. 171.

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### **Stephanie E. Smallwood. *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007. 273p.**

Stephanie Smallwood, a professor of History at the University of Washington, Seattle uniquely and interestingly comes up with a book with a subject of its own kind on the Atlantic slavery. Intellectually, the book catches the attention of the reader with its compelling force and stories of what slave trade was like during the early seventeenth century Africa, the nature of the Sea journeys and its related experiences and how that might have transmitted to the New World. The book shows the wisdom of understanding the collaborations that existed between Africans, Europeans, and the European and American slavers. The volume effectively analyzes the history of American slavery which begins in the West African shores, through the Atlantic Sea to the New World. It comprises of seven chapters. Chapter one tracks the history of Atlantic slavery going back to the Gold Coast of West Africa and basically examines the roles played by Africans and foreigners (Dutch, Portuguese, and English) in the commercialization of slavery.

In chapter two, Professor Smallwood tackles the topic, "Turning African Captives into Atlantic Commodities" whereby this section articulates the nature of African resistance against Europeans who attempted to force them into slavery with limited success. The chapter continues to show the unsuccessful attempts against the Europeans slavers and the treachery of African compromisers of the trade. The methods used in capturing slaves, their sufferings and

death through the Middle Passage in the name of economy come out vividly in this chapter. The Third chapter deals with “the political economy of the slave ship” which provides details of how African slaves became commodities in exchange of European goods rather than the use of Gold. Professor Smallwood brings into content the statistics of those who were enslaved from early 1700 and the kind of ships that were used in shipping them to their destination (71-42). Not only was the issue of shipping slaves a major concern, but also negotiating their prices is masterly argued in this chapter. “The Anomalous Intimacies of the Slave Cargo” is the fourth chapter which critically analyzes the formation of a new community in the cargo that was imposed onto Africans on their way to the unknown destination. With this, came a new challenge that slaves had to deal with as they faced forced migrations from their homeland into the New World. The book argues that even as much as some of the slaves in the Ships were able to communicate in their tribal languages, in many cases most slaves were not able even to find someone to communicate with in their language (118).

The atrocious conditions under which slaves went through in the slave ships cannot even be put into words. Professor Smallwood does an excellent job in bringing into picture essentially those horrible experiences in the Ships showing that the Sea lifestyle was not accustomed by Europeans and Africans at the time forcing them into a learning adjustment process. The European colonization of the New World is presented to have been a source of indent and control of the innocent Africans. The last two chapters deal with the immersion of African slaves into American slaves and their life challenges in the New World. Of course those who survived the Sea arrived in the New World with continued mistreatment as commodities contributing to their increased mortality rate in Diaspora.

It must be argued here that while this magnum opus boldly communicates a new message to the reader, chapter one would have drawn more data on the role played by the Dutch in the trade and also show the nature the historical background of slavery in Africa from the fifteenth to seventeenth century. This however, does not affect the book’s well done job. Brightly written and meticulously appealing, the book still stands as a groundbreaking text with detailed substantiation of African experiences, authentications, and verified reactions. Unlike the vast majority of books on the same subject, this volume brilliantly shows a history before, during, and after the Middle Passage in a more persuasive manner.

In summary, *Saltwater Slavery* stands out to be one of the few well written, researched, and intellectually presented to the readers (Africanists, African, and African American history students) and other interested parties. This volume is a must read text for every class that deals with the history of slavery or African History.

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**Alvin O. Thompson. *Economic Parasitism: European Rule in West Africa, 1880-1960*. Barbados, West Indies: University of West Indies. 2006. 544p.**

*“Economic Parasitism: European Rule in West Africa, 1880-1960”* is a rather massive critique of European rule in West Africa. The author disputes the theory of “trusteeship” or the “dual mandate” — the claim of apologists of European rule that colonialism was meant to benefit both Europeans and Africans, and that it actually did so. He insists that “the main reason for the European occupation of Africa was to make money” (p.139). In the quest for money, he adds, colonial powers not only neglected African interests; they seriously threatened them. He concedes that some effort was made to “revamp” the economy of West Africa, but argues that this was meant “to suit the imperatives of the occupying powers, to the detriment of the vast majority of local peoples.” He endorses the thesis of Walter Rodney and other scholars that had laboured to prove that Europe “underdeveloped” Africa. He adds however that his objective is “to show in greater breath and depth [than Rodney and others] how colonialism led to the breakdown of economic and related structures in West Africa” (p.xix).

*Economic Parasitism* is based on a very extensive use of secondary sources—books, chapters and journal articles on different countries of West Africa. On the whole there are 677 entries in the bibliography. The sources cover all regions and countries of West Africa. Generally, the sources are more than adequate for the purpose of the author. Between the book’s Introduction and conclusion (“Reflections”), there are twelve chapters. Apart from the first two chapters and the last, which cover the early stages and last stages of the colonial era, the others are based strictly on themes—land, labour, monetary and fiscal reform, agriculture, etc. This approach enabled the author to exhaustively analyze each of the colonial policies he treated. But, as the author himself admitted (p.xv), it led to numerous repetitions. The book is written with everyday language and uses commonsense explanations. However, because it is big and largely argumentative, it is so complex that it will find audience only among mature readers—research students and scholars.

In almost every page of “*Economic Parasitism*,” Thompson demonstrates from the words and deeds of European government officials and business interests that the quest for profit was the primary motive of the European powers that colonized Africa. He also demonstrates how they accomplished this and how Africans suffered in the process. Among other things, he discusses forced production of cash crops, mining concessions to European companies that did not pay tax on their profits, repatriation of profit, discriminatory banking policies, oppressive labour policies, low wages and reluctance to develop industry (“industrial retardation”). He also writes briefly about how African resistance helped to moderate some of the policies of the colonial powers.

Before making a general comment on Thompson’s effort, it would be well to make a few remarks on a few specific points. He asserts that, basically because it led to the depletion of manpower in Africa, the slave trade retarded industrialization in pre-colonial Africa. This is not convincing: the industrial revolution is yet to take place in places like North Africa which did not export slaves in the 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century; the revolution started in Europe from where millions migrated or were forced to the Americas during this period. Like many other critics of colonial rule, Thompson sees no merit at all in Hyla Mint’s “vent for surplus theory” and reaffirms the

view that the drive to increase cash crops production adversely affected food crops production in colonial Africa. There is need to qualify this widely held view. The view is valid in relation to some colonies e.g. Senegal and the Portuguese colonies. In many others, like Nigeria and Cameroon, there was adequate labour for both cash crops and food crops production. Indeed, partly through the policies of the colonial government, there was a boost in food production. Thompson splits much hair trying to refute Poly Hill's thesis that migrant farmers in the Gold Coast were not capitalists. His reasons were that their holdings were small in size and that much of the land they acquired was not cultivated. Hill's view on the matter, which emphasized the profit making and risk-taking orientation of the farmers, is more convincing.

Now we have to sum up. Given the large size of "Economic Parasitism," its focus on the colonial era, and the large volume of sources used by the author, it is, to a much greater extent than Rodney and others before him, a profound and detailed exposé of the evils of colonial rule. However, Thompson overstates his case. Many colonial policies that he considers progressive, like the abolition of slavery, introduction of new crops, infrastructural development, and immunization, are not credited at all to the goodwill of the colonial rulers. In his view such measures were either inadequate, or were meant to ultimately advance the economic interests of Europe, or they were concessions made to African resistance. This is not a balanced view. While it is true that trusteeship was subordinated to profit by the colonial rulers, much was done in the area of trusteeship, with the result that Africa was modernized during the colonial era. Thompson's verdict on colonial rule would have less harsh and more balanced if he had, as Amilcar Cabral did, viewed colonialism as "a historical necessity." According to Cabral, colonialism brought much-needed modernization to Africa. In the course of doing that, however, inequality and other forms of injustice could not be avoided. Thus the goal of the independence struggle was not to stop the process of modernization but to minimize the injustices associated with modernization. This is a more balanced view of European rule in Africa.

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**Kathleen Bickford Berzock. Hesi how BENIN: Royal Arts of a West African Kingdom. The Art Institute of Chicago. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. 35p.**

*BENIN: Royal Arts of a West African Kingdom* is a 40-page (inside out) catalogue of the Art Institute of Chicago that accompanied the exhibition *Benin- Kings and Rituals: Court Arts from Nigeria-* collection of royal artworks from ancient Benin Kingdom, now Edo State of Nigeria, West Africa. The "Acknowledgments" tells us that the exhibition "was organized by the Museum für Völkerkunde Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, with the participation of the National Commission for Museum and Monuments, Nigeria, and the Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin," [including] "the participation and support of his Majesty Omon'Oba Ukpokpolo Erediauwa, the current Oba of Benin." For its glossy, high-definition color,

plastic-texture paper, and most especially the royal status and quality of the collection in the book, the catalogue is a collector's item, more so for the protective jacket of the same design with the actual book. The color choice, which is black, for the front cover provides an appropriate projecting backdrop template for the brown plaque image of Oba Esigie cast on brass on the front cover. The red color on the back cover matches the photograph of the royal appearance on the back cover, and it should interest the readers that such colors 'ododo' have some significance of royalty in the kingdom.

The content of the book is organized into two parts: The first contains photographs and some historical bits on origin, people and events that seem to define what Benin Kingdom was. In all, there are ten photographs, photographs that document the Obas and Chiefs in their rich royal regalia (figs. 2, 6 and 8), historical photographs of the drawing of old Benin city (fig. 7), Oba Ovonranwen's capture, looking pitiable on the British yacht *Ivy*, 1897 (fig. 10), members of the British military expedition sitting amid hundred of looted artworks in a courtyard of Oba's palace, 1897 (fig. 11) and a group photograph in which Oba Akenzua, his retinue and British colonial officials appeared (fig. 12). This part also features royal cavers/casters at work (figs. 4 and 5) and ancestral alters of Oba Ovonramwen and Oba Eweka II (fig. 9).

In compliment to all the featured photographs is a brief history of the reigns and achievements of few of the Obas of the kingdom. For example, it is noted in the book that "in the ancient past Benin was ruled by the Ogiso, literally 'Rulers of the Sky' ... that the first Ogiso was the son of Osanobua, the High God." The book also notes another source of Benin origin which claims that following the failure of Ogiso leadership, "the village chiefs of Benin, ... *uzama*, sent a messenger to Ile-Ife asking its divine ruler, Ooni, for a leader to restore order." The messenger, who happened to be a prince from Ile-Ife conceived a child with the daughter of an Edo chief. The child was later crowned Oba Eweka I. While the book notes that the kingdom became a powerhouse during the reign of Oba Ewuare, it also documents "Benin's Golden Age" during the reign of Oba Ozolua the Conqueror and Oba Esigie who "carefully regulated trade with the Portuguese and created a guild of commissioned traders to act as his emissaries." A brief history of the internal conflicts in the kingdom, including the invasion of the kingdom by the British in 1897 which led to the deposition of Oba Ovonramwen and his eventual death in exile is included in this part (pp. 6-7).>

The second part of the catalogue-book highlights 22 objects depicting various motives for their different cultural interpretations. For example, head objects; royal alter head of an Oba and Ife Head linking Benin history to that of ancient city of Ile-Ile (pp.16-17). There are the plaque pieces; those depicting the reverence and mythical being of the Oba (p. 19), plaque depicting authority (p.27), war plaques (pp. 21-22) and a plaque depicting palace interior (p.26). Other pieces include royal alter objects on pages 29-32, objects depicting individuals- a Portuguese (p.20), an Ewue palace official (p.23) and a plaque of three traders from Benin (p.24). Each of the pieces is accompanied with a brief resume which includes size, period or date, present location of the object, motive and interpretation.

To the extent that the book serves as a guideline on an art exhibition, the catalogue provides illuminating information and commentary on these beautifully displayed master pieces of African cultural milieu. The brief history of ancient Benin Kingdom and how the cultural objects depict the semiotics of that culture and time are particularly noticeable.

Another major important information the catalogue documents is how these masterpieces got ruptured from their original home and got scattered all over Europe and United States of America, residing now in both private and public museums, becoming objects of booming tourism in these regions of the world. The plunder of these objects, the book notes, was the aftermath of British invasion of 1897, leading to the looting and carting away of these cultural artifacts by the invading British army. In this regard, one would have expected the curator to inform the reading public efforts being made to return these objects to their place of origin, given the controversy this has generated overtime. In any case, whatever omission that may have been committed, the compact, well-packaged book remains an invaluable source of information for art lovers, historians, tourists and general interest readers.

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**Patrick Harries. *Butterflies and Barbarians: Swiss Missionaries and Systems of Knowledge in South-East Africa*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007. 279p.**

This study is a very strong example of historical research on missionary ethnography in colonial Africa. It brings together a number of important subjects in colonial African history: the impact of writing on African intellectuals and languages, the role of metropolitan European concerns in shaping narratives about Africa, the links between scientific research and colonialism, and the interplay between Africans and Europeans in constructing knowledge in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The author warns his readers that his main concern will be the ways Swiss missionary Henri-Alexandre Junod (1863-1934) created a wide body of anthropological, ecological, and linguistic knowledge about Tsonga-speaking people. In contrast to much of the literature that deals with European constructions of Africans, however, this book clearly shows how Africans in Mozambique and South Africa participated in the construction of botanical, ethnographic, and zoological knowledge.

The intellectual and religious climate of mid-nineteenth century Switzerland greatly shaped Junod's views on anthropology, Africans, and science. Sharp class, religious, and regional differences divided Swiss intellectuals. While some claimed that scientific advances had fatally undermined Christian faith, others contended that the study of nature furnished evidence of God's active role on earth. Romantic ideas regarding the majesty and antiquity of the Alps furnished Swiss people with a common understanding of landscapes and national identity. Swiss writers contended that the Alps were a place where ancient beliefs and remnants of the past survived untouched by modernity. Junod and other Swiss missionaries applied these ideas to African landscapes and peoples. Furthermore, missionary work was a way for Swiss people to take pride in their nation. Pastors and scientists could present themselves as redeemers of Africans and serve the needs of progress without engaging in colonial expansion.

Intellectual and religious diversity characterized Swiss people at home, but Swiss missionaries presented themselves as the emissaries of a unified Christian modernity in

southern Africa. They were faced with a plethora of languages and varied African understandings of Christianity. Furthermore, missionaries were beset with personality conflicts, debates over languages and doctrine, and the unstable economic and political climate of the Transvaal and Southern Mozambique between 1880 and 1910. At first, Junod was horrified by many indigenous cultural practices once he arrived in Southern Africa. However, his training in the natural sciences and his conception of the prehistoric nature of the Alps led him to different conclusions over time. Junod turned to analogies with Europe, maps, and the collecting of botanical and zoological knowledge as a means mastering African landscapes.

Junod believed that they had discovered the rules of Tsonga language and Tsonga society in much the same way he believed he had uncovered botanical and zoological categories. By formulating rules of grammar and vocabulary lists, Junod hoped to domesticate the Tsonga language and to instil European modes of thought into Tsonga culture. African readers did not treat books and literacy in ways that missionaries expected. Book possession became a means of constructing alliances of Christians, and photographs of Tsonga converts often featured books. African readers combined orality with literacy in ways that disturbed Junod at times, such as treating written messages as a form of power.

Missionaries were equally disturbed by the social changes that came with Portuguese occupation and the rise of migrant labor on Tsonga people. Junod presented Tsonga society as static and orderly in his renowned monograph published in 1913, *Life of a South African Tribe*. For him, Tsonga society was based on a coherent foundation of social practices, language, and knowledge of plants and animals. He drew insights from contemporary anthropological writers like Emile Durkheim, even though French ethnographers criticized Junod for not adopting comparative approaches and making explicit moral judgements. He rejected arguments that Tsonga people somehow had a “pre-modern” mentality that differed significantly from Europeans.

However, Junod contended Africans should be shielded from the harmful effects of industrialization and European influences. As a result, he downplayed discussing the effects of migrant labor and the rising power of the Portuguese colonial state. By the time British anthropologists seriously considered Junod’s research in the 1920s, his findings did not correspond with communities deeply changed by migrant labor, mandatory cotton cultivation, and forced labor. While South African anthropologists critiqued Junod for his missionary views and lack of formal training, they too argued that African cultures based on tribes that had been stable before colonial rule but now were in danger of being destroyed by modernity. Such ideas later would help shape the intellectual framework of the apartheid regime.

*Butterflies and Barbarians* deserves a wide audience. Students in advanced undergraduate and graduate courses on African history, imperialism, and missionaries would find many insights here on the politics of knowledge in a colonial setting. The book carefully treats the agency of Africans in the formation of literate Christian communities, even as it focuses on European understandings of African societies. Specialists would do well to use this study as a model for examining the social and political context of ethnographic research. All in all, this is an impressive work.

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**A. E. Afigbo. *The Abolition of the Slave Trade in Southeastern Nigeria, 1885-1950*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006. 210p.**

This book is about the history of the British campaign against the internal slave trade in colonial Nigeria. It focuses on the Bight of Biafra and its hinterland, a region long buffeted by slavery and slave trading. In five chapters, Afigbo skillfully demonstrates how the export trade in palm oil, missionary expansion, and British ideas of civilization, undermined slavery and the internal slave trade in the region.

Afigbo shows that the abolition of the internal slave trade in southeastern Nigeria took three distinct stages. The first phase, often characterized with a language of philanthropy, humanitarianism, and evangelicalism, concerns the period 1830-1885. This phase (the subject of chapter one) was dominated by the British navy, which policed the West African Atlantic coastline, seizing ships that carried human cargo bound for the Americas. This initial campaign was largely on the sea with limited action to enforce the ban on the mainland. The coastal phase of the campaign (c1885-1900) instituted a tighter control of coastal towns and cities. During this period, the British government and its agents had started to advance British economic and political interests in the African interior. For example, in 1849, Britain appointed a resident agent as consul to oversee and protect British interest in the Bights of Benin and Biafra. This British establishment overtime grew from strength to strength. Even though the British agents were stationed mainly in coastal towns, it enabled Britain to gradually consolidate its imperial authority in the Biafran frontier. The final phases of the campaign described what happened during the colonial period proper (i.e. 1900-1950). This period witnessed the British advance into the heart of the Biafran hinterland. This coincided with the declaration of a Protectorate Government, a by-product of the use of military force or conquest. The entire region was apportioned into divisions and districts, each with its own headquarters, courts, military post and colonial staff (47).

Despite the paucity of sources on the working of the internal slave trade and/ or its abolition, this study has made a significant addition in the overall historiography by eloquently showing how the abolition of the trade was inextricably linked to southeastern Nigeria's colonial history and the processes that undermined its existence. While Afigbo's analysis does not diminish the efforts made by Great Britain in eroding the internal slave trade, at the same time, it discusses the crucial role played by the African middlemen in the overall process. The presence of the British on the coast limited the scope the coastal merchants and rulers had to continue to engage in the slave trade "since the European supercargoes would not take kindly to such an activity" (17). Consequently, these coastal merchants diverted their interest away from trading in slaves to trading in "legitimate" goods. The British also mobilized them "as part of its motley army of legitimate traders, free traders and abolitionists" in the hinterland (40). In the end, these merchants not only abandoned slave dealing as their main line business but

became anti-slave police. They entered the Biafran hinterland, creating awareness among the interior peoples how unviable slave dealing was. In this way, Afigbo argues that they helped to pave the way for the gradual decline of the trade. Subsequently, the political arm of Britain's *civilizing* mission began following behind these coastal traders to implant the British presence further and further into the interior. Afigbo argues that without the African middlemen, the abolition of the internal slave trade by the colonial government would have been slow, if not tedious (p. 28). The role performed by these middlemen yielded positive results in that the people "responded in an impressive manner to the lure of the new trade" in natural products such as palm oil and elephant tusks (p. 21).

The missionaries, especially the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Presbyterians, also played an instrumental role in depressing the internal slave trade. In fact, Afigbo argues that their activities in the Biafra were by nature anti-slave trade. The missionaries "preached, knowingly or unknowingly, by word and by deed, the doctrine of legitimate commerce" (23). They also preached their doctrine of the equality of all men, a message which supposedly undermined the nefarious trade. This preaching posed a fundamental challenge to the "old" culture of the inhabitants of Biafra, and by extension, slavery and slave trading (22). It not only turned Biafran culture and society upside down but helped "drive more people into other lines of business, especially trading and agricultural production." The pitfall of Afigbo's analysis, however, is that he does not give us enough information on the groups that were carrying out much of the slave trading. To what extent were they an organized group? In many ways, he seems to assume the readers' familiarity with the Aro and as well as the region's history.

Colonial brutality and/ or the oppression of colonial subjects have received a fairly amount of attention in the past decades. Many scholars have used instances of such brutality to criticize European colonialism in Africa. Yet, while such instances of colonial violence and brutality occurred and were inhumane, Afigbo shows that the British actions also had a profound impact in transforming Biafran society and modes of economic interaction to replace slavery. The British adopted harsh punishments which "taught all . . . that the new masters were not to be toyed with." It produced shock and fear and made people realize that participating in the illegal trade could bring them into conflict with the British (p. 53). Afigbo's work also suggests that the colonial policy of conscription had vital implications in weakening internal slave trading in the Biafran frontier. After the British passed the Roads and Creeks Proclamation in 1903, a huge burden of work was imposed on the adult male population, the class of people usually involved in slave raiding and kidnapping. Adult males took to hiding instead of wandering around. The proclamation required an adult male work for the colonial government for six days in each quarter. Moreover, Afigbo views conscription as a "kind of social leveler." He implies that the twentieth century conscription policy of the British, unlike earlier forms of conscriptions, did not discriminate between free and un-free. It did not also spare the freeborn from brutal treatment to which workers were subjected to. By subjecting all workers to similar brutal treatment, the colonial government indirectly undermined the social prestige of acquiring and owning slaves, even if it did not undermine the economic value of slaves (50).

Finally, most of the literature on the slave trade in Africa focuses on the external slave trades (i.e. the trans-Saharan slave trade, the Indian-Ocean trade and most importantly, the Atlantic slave trade). In short, the internal slave trade in Western Africa in general and the Bight

of Biafra in particular “has been neglected by many scholars” (117). Thus, although the author should have shed more light on the slave markets in the Niger Delta and Upper Cross River as well as the “consumers” of slaves (whose demand helped sustain the trade for decades, if not a century), the end product is no doubt a major contribution to the historiography of slavery, slave trading and its abolition in Africa.

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**Fyle C. Magbaily. *Historical Dictionary of Sierra Leone*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006. 288p.**

A lot of important events take place everyday and almost certainly, yesterday’s events become today’s source of history. Therefore, to reflect history’s dynamic and volatile characteristics, a historical dictionary should be flexible enough to keep up with the rapid changes that history presents us with. But what exactly is a historical dictionary meant to accomplish? Well, in the broadest view, it should serve as a point of reference for a country or region’s history. However, contemporary historical dictionaries are becoming more thematic and inclusive of diverse foci such as religion, culture, and language. Whatever the definition scope, comprehensiveness and cross-referencing of entries are prime to such works. A survey of historical dictionaries pertaining to Africa reflects a few in numbers and large time gaps between editions. This is particularly true for historical dictionaries on Sierra Leone. To date there have been only two, with the second arriving 29 years after the first. Nevertheless, the second historical dictionary on Sierra Leone effectively redeems the lost time.

The value of *Historical Dictionary of Sierra Leone* by C. Magbaily Fyle is evident in its coverage of persons, academic institutions, ethnic groups, political parties, and important events. The book is well structured with the inclusion of a chronological sequence of events. A sizable and informative introduction offers brief insights into the land and its affairs, including the recent war. The core of the volume is an extensive dictionary supplemented by a subject-based bibliography at the end. This wide-reaching historical review is expected of an author who is known for his writings on Africa in general and Sierra Leone in particular. With eight books and a score of articles, this latest of C. Magbaily Fyle’s books is filled with dictionary entries that are concise yet informative. The usefulness of this volume stretches far beyond a point of reference for historians and history scholars. For anyone interested in learning about Sierra Leone, the book is a good starting point for a brief overview into a large array of topics including many important figures and events that have shaped the country. This is important as the country goes through postwar reconstruction and continues to receive increased international attention and research interest.

The greatest point of value for *Historical Dictionary of Sierra Leone* comes from the subject-based bibliography at the end of the book. C. Magbaily Fyle has followed in the path of the predecessor volume to list an ample bibliography of literature mostly since the 1970s, in subject-

based categories. The author also makes up for both published and unpublished sources excluded from the book's bibliographic listing by pointing readers to alternative sources of information. In continued praise of its value, the book contains references to important works such as Cyril Patrick Foray's *Historical Dictionary of Sierra Leone*, Christopher Fyfe's *A History of Sierra Leone* and Akintola Wyse's *The Krio of Sierra Leone*. Certainly, this is far from the complete list of key references. Furthermore, the author has omitted unpublished sources which may compromise the integrity of a good volume. Much of the information contained within the book (e.g. *Islam in Sierra Leone*), is beyond the scope of a history class in primary schools in Sierra Leone. For this reason, the book provides a valuable background to a number of contemporary issues and events that can be pursued by young Sierra Leoneans. The same can be stated about the numerous historical figures found within the book, but missing in history lessons in Sierra Leonean primary schools. Clearly written and well organized, the presentation is also a plus for this volume.

As a follow up to its predecessor, *Historical Dictionary of Sierra Leone* introduces an improved amount of new entries missing in the previous volume. The Bo Government School, the Lebanese, and Kande Bure, a 1970s political figure who became cabinet minister, all make new entries in this volume. However, still missing as in the previous volume is I. B. Taylor-Kamara, the first northern Lawyer, and Paul Dunbar, a prominent SLPP politician. There are also subtle issues which take away from the great work put into this volume. The lack of consistency in presenting entries in alphabetical order (e.g. Fula Mansa, Marlay Bokari, and Kande), is only compounded by a missing book index. The lack of separate entries for such items as the Bundo female secret society presents cross-referencing problems. Errors such as the discrepancy in Max Bailor's birth date of 1929 and his tenure as chief electoral commissioner from 1888 to 1991, only steals away from the integrity of the work. Highly political and cultural in context, the volume fails to cover major religious institutions such as the St. George's Cathedral in the heart of Freetown, Masonic Lodges, broadcasting and communications, the Internet, censorship, blogging, Libraries, and other contemporary relevancies, all of which are significant enough to be considered for entry.

By unknown criteria, some educational institutions make the entries and others do not. Coverage of education within this volume is deficient without an entry for the Rio Pongas Mission or the Reverend Thomas Davy, an influential colonial educationist. Missing from the volume is a number of colonial figures who are integral to Sierra Leone's history. Particularly frustrating for anyone searching for factual information, are the levels of subjectivity to be found within this volume. This is not surprising because oral tradition plays an important role in nearly all facets of Sierra Leonean life. It is therefore supposed that the rhetoric on spirits in secret societies is nothing more than the author's traditional beliefs seeping into the work. Even more significant are claims that Creoles resented the Lebanese due to their dominance in trade, or that the latter threatened to "make the Creoles eat grass." It is for this reason that *Historical Dictionary of Sierra Leone* can not be substituted for a standard history book and such claims can only be attributed to subjectivity or erroneous consensus that has been passed down throughout history.

The shortcomings of *Historical Dictionary of Sierra Leone* show how difficult a task it is to compile such a volume. Scope, cost, format, the rapid changes in events, and even subjectivity,

can all make an immense difference. Some of these variables seem to have played a role in the quality of this literary output. Nonetheless, *Historical Dictionary of Sierra Leone* stands as one of only two historical dictionaries relating to Sierra Leone. C. Magbaily Fyle has yet again accomplished a mammoth task of educating us about Sierra Leone. Case in point, the volume is not an option for a history book on Sierra Leone. Rather, it is a great source for anyone looking for a general overview of the country, but particularly those who know what they are looking for.

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**George O. Ndege. *Culture and Customs of Mozambique*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007. 128p.**

*Culture and Customs of Mozambique* is Professor George O. Ndege's contribution to the book series 'Culture and Customs of Africa', which comprises to date twenty-two case studies. By introducing the reader into the respective cultural setting and its characterizing customs, it is the series' stated objective to spark intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding in an ever shrinking, globalizing world. Whereas it is deliberately chosen by the contributing authors to define in each case the term 'culture', 'custom' is overarchingly understood "not as static or as a museum artifact but as a dynamic phenomenon" (p. viii). Each book of the series aims to capture the elements and essence of the analogous culture and customs, by "dwelling on such important aspects as religion, worldview, literature, media, art, housing, architecture, cuisine, traditional dress, gender, marriage, family, lifestyles, social customs, music and dance" (Series Foreword). In doing so, each volume follows a uniform format.

Divided in eight chapters and spanning 128 pages, the book "proceeds on the premise that tradition and culture are dynamic and dialectic, internal and external processes that shape the worldview of people at a given point in time" (preface). In this sense it "highlights the rich Mozambican cultural diversity by examining the interplay of many and varied factors" (preface). The author's intention to "facilitate dialogue between the past and emerging present in Mozambique" and to enhance the readers understanding of "the continuous process of change that has defined and continues to shape contemporary Mozambican society" (p. x) is, at least for the second part of the statement, an achieved objective. However, in doing so, the volume shows great light and shadow of quality.

After a brief historic 'chronology' of Mozambique, an initial 'introduction' provides the reader with essential information on history, geography, economy and politics. The historic facts are as such sound and mostly complete, yet with a few exceptions deemed necessary to cite. The chronology, although accurate in facts and dates, does not specifically name the Mozambican civil war from 1976-1992. In the subsequent depiction of the war between the then sole political party FRELIMO and the Anti-Frelimo resistance group RENAMO, it is neither stated that this has been historically identified as a classical *proxy war* on the African continent.

Ultimately, it is completely unmentioned that the RENAMO rebel group received covert financial backup from some private right-wing organizations in the US, while their support from South Africa's apartheid and South Rhodesia's regime is explicitly stated.

Thereupon, the book then proceeds with the various aspects of culture and customs as stated above, of which the highlights can be found in Chapters 2, 6 and 7, where gender roles, marriage, family, social customs and lifestyles of Mozambique's sixteen ethnic groups and their respective religious affiliations, namely Christianity, Islam and traditional religions, are well presented, reviewed and examined. Indeed, it is the book's true highlight how Ndege keenly portrays an ever evolving multiethnic and multicultural society, in which heterogeneity is embarked upon, and that is kept together by the commonly valued custom of 'respect for the other', a value traditionally nourished from generation to generation, and cultivated even in modern and contemporary Mozambique.

Yet, surprisingly disappointing are the chapters which deal with Mozambique's literature, art, architecture and cuisine. Whereas relevant examples are coherently mentioned and described, excerpts, corresponding pictures or anecdotes are entirely missing. This turns these passages into a tenacious read, which feels like a missed opportunity to establish an emotional link between what is presented and the recipient. Pictures are provided, although, they are not directly linked to the chapter depictions.

The glossary at the end presents in turn another pleasing aspect of the book. The reader is equipped with vital expressions and accommodating explanations used in Mozambique, interesting for general and academic readers alike.

Regarding the volume's handiwork it has to be stated howbeit, that despite the work's valid place in the English literature about lusophone Mozambique, it is not an innovative research project in itself. For the most part, analysis is minimal to nonexistent, rather focusing on description and review. The lack of examination might serve as an explanation for the absence of a conclusion. It is exclusively based on secondary research, a literature review of English works and facts about Mozambique. Lusophone references are completely missing in the Bibliography, which is at approximately three pages, also rather slim. The work often consults African handbooks, guides, encyclopedias and the CIA World Factbook as cardinal sources, which might explain the resulting *prose* writing style of the book. This, and the necessity to follow a strict format within an overall limited scope (128 pages), although outside the author's sphere of influence, creates a rather superficial examination in staccato step, comprised in a bullet-point scheme. At some points the reader certainly wishes for more in-depth analysis, for instance when the important role of drama and poetry in Mozambique's liberation struggle is mentioned, rather than the intersection to a further sub point.

This creates the aforementioned distance between the text and the reader, which is neither eased by the entire absence of primary research, e.g. interviews with selected members of society, nor by the omission of relevant information about the author. This leaves the reader in the unknown whether Professor Ndege has ever been in Mozambique, in lack of primary research their only focal point to trust that the information provided is correctly and relevantly chosen. Only temporarily does one feel attached to the delineated occurrences, for instance when the author supremely outlines the traditional customs of initiation, marriage, death, and social change across the ethnic divide. In sum however, a more narrative writing style, with

anecdotal evidence, interviews, excerpts, related pictures, etc. would presumably have proven to be the preferable approach in *capturing* the culture and customs of Mozambique, and to spark intercultural understanding, empathy and dialogue, the series' and author's primary objective.

Yet despite these drawbacks the information gathered proved to be well selected. With the exception of the few mentioned content weaknesses, no other major inconsistencies occur; on the contrary, the compilation is largely complete and coherent. People with a vested interest in African history will feel drawn to this work as readers with a limited knowledge of the case. As an introductory and reference text and this is what it should be perceived and valued as, it is utterly informative, and it awakens interest to intensify the reading about Mozambique's rich cultures and customs.

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