

African Studies Quarterly

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BOOK REVIEW

Historical Dictionary of Women in Sub-Saharan Africa. Kathleen Sheldon. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005. 403 pp.

Country-specific, historical dictionaries abound in the field of African studies; yet reviewers of even recent editions of these dictionaries have highlighted the paucity of entries on women (see, for example, Gardinier 2001 and Reynolds 2001). To fill this void, Scarecrow Press has recently launched a new series on women in the world. Kathleen Sheldon's *Historical Dictionary of Women in Sub-Saharan Africa* is the first in this series, and it is an excellent first step toward filling this scholarly lacuna.

The volume consists of a chronology of African women's history, a brief (13-page) introductory essay that traces broad developments in African women's history, 276 pages of dictionary entries, and an extensive (115-page) bibliography. The dictionary entries are wide-ranging. Sheldon covers prominent female politicians, activists, writers, artists, and historical and religious figures; historical and contemporary women's organizations; and more general topical entries (e.g. missions, nationalism, structural adjustment programs, and shari'a law) that emphasize how these topics have affected women in Africa and/or how women have participated in these movements and processes. The bibliography begins with a brief—but quite interesting and useful—essay on the evolution of scholarship on women in Africa. Most of the sources included in the bibliography are in English and have been published since 1975. The first part of the bibliography is organized chronologically; the second part is organized around specific topics. The last section of the bibliography provides lists of journals, films, and websites. Dictionary entries on contemporary organizations also generally include the organization's website.

Country specialists will undoubtedly find that Sheldon has excluded some prominent women and organizations. In the case of Cameroon, for example, Yaou Aissatou, Françoise Foning, the *Association Camerounaise des Femmes Juristes* (ACAFEJ), and the *Association de Lutte contre les Violences faites aux Femmes* (ALVF) are omitted. Also, the depth of coverage varies quite significantly across countries. South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya have a significant number of entries (75, 52, and 31 respectively), while Rwanda (6 entries), the Democratic Republic of Congo (1 entry) and many others are covered far more superficially. Yet, these shortcomings are by no means fatal. A project of this breadth will inevitably contain omissions, and the unevenness of country coverage largely reflects the state of scholarship on African women. Unfortunately, there is relatively little written (especially in English) on African women in certain African states. Those teaching and doing research on African women and women and politics more generally will find Sheldon's book a useful resource. It serves the dual purpose of providing concise information on a broad range of topics and offering a thorough list of sources to assist those seeking in-depth knowledge on particular individuals, organizations, and issues.

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BOOK REVIEW

Adventure Capitalism: Globalization and the Political Economy of Stock Markets in Africa.
Todd Moss. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 202pp.

The story of how African states abandoned the state-led economic policies pursued during the 1960s and 1970s, and moved to adopt market orientated structural adjustment policies in the 1980s and 1990s has been the subject of a large and voluminous literature. However one aspect of this – the emergence of stock markets – has been relatively under-explored and what has been written has tended to fall into one of two camps. The first has been authored by those professionally involved in the financial sector and has tended to focus on the new investment opportunities that the emergence of these markets has given rise to. In the other camp are a range of more technical studies focusing on issues within financial economics. By contrast, issues relating to the political economy of these stock markets and questions such as why they have been created, by whom and for whose benefit, have received less attention.

Todd Moss's book does a good job in redressing some of these previous omissions. Having provided an overview of the development of these stock markets in chapter one, Moss goes on to spend two chapters looking at the reasons for their creation before exploring the actual and potential consequences in a further three chapters. The book ends with a concluding chapter which suggests that while stock markets offer no panacea for economic development, they have the potential to make a positive contribution so long as a range of prerequisite conditions can be put in place. Whether or not this is the case will depend not so much on the internal dynamics of the stock markets themselves, but rather the wider political and economic environments in which they operate.

As Moss notes, there are now fifteen stock exchanges across sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of these having been established since 1989. Despite this, established patterns remain resilient, with South Africa's Johannesburg Stock Exchange (the oldest on the continent) continuing to dwarf the combined size of all the rest. This may of course change in the future, and Moss sees the potential for moderate growth in the capitalization and turnover of the newer markets, but it will certainly take some period of time for this pattern to change.

Generally, I found the earlier parts of the book to be the more engaging. For example, in chapter three, Moss explores the 'political logic of stock markets' and develops an interesting line of argument on the symbolic nature of these institutions. From this perspective, they can be seen as a 'low cost' reform which nevertheless demonstrates to the international business and donor communities the commitment of a country to engage in the international market economy. However, they can also be seen as yet another high profile 'white elephant' project, aimed at impressing foreign visitors but providing little practical benefit to local people. In exploring these questions, Moss draws on a range of interviews that he conducted in the course of his research, with policy makers, business people and investors. Together they begin to paint a picture of the complex and sometimes contradictory ways that market capitalism is imagined by these actors and the role within it which they see for both themselves and each other.

As with all books which aim to cover the breadth of the African experience, there is a balance to be struck between the coverage of different individual countries and broader comparative observations. At the start, Moss declares that his primary focus is on Ghana (justified as being "relatively typical among African bourses owing to its size, liquidity, age and other features") and this remains his lead case study throughout the book. This does not stop Moss from providing the reader with useful insights and illustrations drawn from other stock markets from across the continent – such as Mozambique, Ethiopia, Botswana and Zimbabwe – which enrich the study. However, as this proceeded, I began to feel that the central focus on Ghana was slipping into the background, to be replaced by a more cross-continental and in places global coverage. While this did provide interesting insights, I did feel that I gained more of an insight from the in-depth country based sections.

Notwithstanding these points, I feel that overall it was a good book that begins to address a gap in the existing literature. When it does not provide the whole answer to the questions it raises, it certainly

provides the reader with a good range of raw materials to start thinking about how to address these issues and a good knowledge of the strengths and limitations of the existing debates.

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BOOK REVIEW

Witchcraft, Violence, and Democracy in South Africa. Adam Ashforth. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. 396 pp.

Five years after the publication of *Madumo: A Man Bewitched*, Ashforth presents us with a more conventional academic text examining spiritual insecurity in Soweto, South Africa.¹ If his general purpose is to “begin reflecting on the implications of the quest for spiritual security in a world of witches for the project of democracy in an African state”, the book accomplishes other objectives as well (311). While democratic initiatives and state efforts are addressed in Part III (Spiritual Insecurity and the State), Part I (Soweto) and II (Sources of Spiritual Insecurity) provide rich ethnographic descriptions and analyses valuable in their own right.

Drawing on extensive research in Soweto, Ashforth begins by describing different dimensions of spiritual insecurity in the township at the turn of the century. Arguing that spiritual insecurity is closely linked to other forms of insecurity (poverty, violence, political oppression and disease, nowadays especially AIDS), he illustrates that there is a “presumption of malice” underpinning township life (69). This observation leads him to develop the notion of “negative *ubuntu*.” In his words, a “[t]o the adage ‘A person is a person through other people,’ the negative corollary of *ubuntu* adds: ‘because they can destroy you.’ That is, a person can survive only to the extent that others in the community choose *not* to destroy him or her. How they might do so is less important than the fact that they can. And when they do, whether by physical or by occult violence, the demand for justice inevitably arises” (86). Township life is in large part predicated on jealousy, and is motivated by complex relations of power operating alongside ‘traditional’ norms of reciprocity and kinship. Moreover, witchcraft thrives in a place where recent sociopolitical transitions have differentiated the black middle classes from their poorer counterparts, and where the AIDS pandemic is ravaging the population.

Ashforth then proceeds to ask what he terms the rationality question—Are people who believe in witches and witchcraft rational?—and the modernity question—Why do people *still* believe in witches? (111). Regarding the first, he writes that in recent years “the interpretation of witchcraft talk as idiom focused more on aspects of modernity, such as colonialism, capitalism, and globalization... While this literature has revealed much about African social life, it suffers from the singular defect... of treating statements that Africans clearly intend as literal, or factual, as if they were meant to be metaphorical or figurative” (114). Ashforth suggests that scholars enrich their analyses by treating witchcraft statements literally. While well-intended, his regular interpellations in the text expressing his own skepticism about witchcraft and his emphasis on the relations between spiritual and other forms of insecurity made this writer wonder to what extent he himself succeeded in this effort. Ashforth then considers the work produced by the ‘modernity of witchcraft’ school.² The problem here, he argues, is that its writers “acknowledge the fallacies embodied in the old ways of distinguishing tradition and modernity” while they continue to “invoke the notion of progress in the guise of a multiplicity of ‘modernities’” (117). The author’s own inclination is to do away with the concepts of tradition and modernity, though he submits that “ideologies of modernism” and “celebrations of ‘modernity’” are “everywhere to be found” (117). I found his analysis here somewhat wanting as well, since he fails to present the reader with an alternative theoretical model.

Part II of the book concerns people’s interpretations of and attempts to manage invisible forces. Ashforth addresses the dialectical properties of *muthi* (literally ‘tree,’ meaning medicine, poison or herbs) and the ambiguous status of healers, witches and ‘African science’ in contemporary Soweto. Dangers associated with dirt, pollution, and death are considered, including the latter’s significance in light of the AIDS epidemic. The author also describes the ‘hosts of invisible beings’ and ancestors presence in people’s lives. This discussion is illuminating in its contemplation of how Christianity has reconfigured people’s interpretations of invisible beings, while the concept of spiritual insecurity adds depth to earlier, resistance-focused examinations of African Christianity.³

In Part III Ashforth directs our attention to the implications of witchcraft for democratic governance. While the first parts of the book reveal the multifaceted 'belief complexes' associated with witchcraft, the regularization of persons and elements related to invisible beings and powers (healers, *muthi*) is here shown to complicate matters even more. Ashforth explains how earlier governments failed to deal with witchcraft and 'traditional healing' through the implementation of suppression of witchcraft acts, one of which remains in force in South Africa today. Consequently the ANC has inherited a situation wherein the prevalence of witchcraft must be addressed, while remaining duty-bound to maintain basic human rights and the rule of law. There are no easy solutions to the contradictions thus generated.

In sum, Ashforth's book forms an important contribution to African studies, political science and anthropology, one of its strong points being the author's development of the notion of spiritual insecurity in a world of witches. It will also be of interest to scholars and others working in the medical field, particularly if their work concerns HIV / AIDS in Africa. The discussion on the tensions between contemporary witchcraft and democratic governance forms a good analytical start by laying out current complexities, though it remains to be seen how this matter will work itself out in post-apartheid South Africa.

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NOTES

1. Ashforth, Adam. *Madumo: A Man Bewitched*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
2. See for example Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press (1997); Henrietta Moore and Todd Sanders (eds.) *Magical Interpretations, Material Realities: Modernity, Witchcraft and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*, London: Routledge (2001).
3. See for example Jean and John Comaroff's *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume 1 and Volume 2, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1991 and 1997).

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BOOK REVIEW

Africa's Quest for a Philosophy of Decolonization. Messay Kebede. New York: Rodopi, 2004. 256 pp.

Messay Kebede's *Africa's Quest for a Philosophy of Decolonization* focuses on the liberation of the African mind from the shackles of Eurocentricism as a panacea to the problem of underdevelopment. In doing this, Kebede raises many questions. These include: Who is an African? Is it possible to safely affirm sameness or difference of the African with or from the West without running into the problem of evolutionism or relativism? Is the African essentially emotional and intuitive? Is mysticism, which is celebrated in traditional African Philosophy, compatible with 'universal' Philosophy? Can the African mind be decolonized, using Western paradigms and concepts?

To answer these time vexed questions, Kebede employs works, which are apt and very appropriate to his set agenda. These include Lucien Levy-Bruhl's *How Natives Think*, and *Primitive Mentality*, Henri Bergson's *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* and *Creative Evolution* and the works of contemporary African scholars such as Placid Temples; Paulin Hountondji, Odera Oruka, Frantz Fanon, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Cheik Anta Diop, Kwasi Wiredu among others. In more ways than one, Kebede's book seems to be reacting to the works of Levy Bruhl, especially, *How Natives Think*. The rebuttal of Levy Bruhl's categorization of traditional African thought as prelogical, mystical and therefore, lacking in the universal rational characteristic of philosophy, is a major task Kebede sets for himself.

Using the debate method in the presentation of positions and temperaments, Kebede divides the book into nine chapters, which treat the different themes germane to his set goals. The book opens with the traditional exploration of Western discourses on Africa. Kebede draws inspiration from the works of Henri Bergson, Immanuel Kant, Kiekegaard, Heidegger, etc to demystify reason as exemplified by Levy Bruhl. In his effort to demystify the role of reason and affirm intuition, Kebede agrees with Schopenhauer on the power of intuition and maintains "the revelation of the power of intuition protests in advance against the hierarchy established by Levy-Bruhl: rational thinking is not the highest mental ability; intuition or feeling obtains a deeper view of reality, especially spiritual realities. This role of feeling endows art with a greater cognitive dimension than science and speculation" (p.14) This position implies the affirmation of cultural otherness, pluralism and thus strengthens ethno philosophy rather than the school of professional philosophers.

Making allusions to Western evolutionist approach, Kebede discusses the hierarchy of cultures in a manner akin to Temples' hierarchy of forces. Brandishing '*Bantu Philosophy*' Kebede demonstrates that African philosophy cannot be inferior to Western philosophy. "[T]he demonstration of the existence of African philosophy confirms the participation of Africans, notes Kebede, "in the same process of reasoning as the West"

To further show that similarity of experience may not necessarily mean identity in their interpretation, Kebede uses Senghor's concept of Negritude to affirm the otherness of Africans and African philosophy. Far from unwittingly accepting the inferiority of Africans, Negritude proclaims the "otherness" in such a manner that the universality of human ideals still remain. Just as in other cultures, there is always a need for modernization of Africa. As a prelude to this modernization, Kebede suggests a method of cultural adaptation, which he calls *Creative Synthesis*. This, is perhaps the greatest contribution of Kebede to the search for a philosophy of decolonization for Africa. Such a synthesis, according to Kebede avoids the mere borrowing of Western institutions and ideas by placing modernity as a continuity of the past. However, Kebede fails to show the disconnect between the past and the present in the dialectical game of explaining modernity.

A large chunk of the book is equally devoted to the analysis of well-known arguments about the canons/schools /approaches/ trends in African philosophy. However, Kebede's articulation of some of the basic arguments, either in support or against some of these trends is lucid, logical and incisive. An example is his dismissal of Oruka's distinction between ethno-philosophy and philosophic sagacity.

According to Kebede “the belief should be that the so called collective and uncritical beliefs owe their existence to critical inquiries, however scanty and faulty they may have been, for the simple reason that individual thinkers first initiated them” (p.85) In the same vein, he discards the philosophy of violence in the effort to rehabilitate and modernize Africa.

The tone of the book radically changes from chapter six. From here, Kebede concentrates on fundamental issues of reform, stability, modernity and progress. In a systematic manner, the author shows that there is no necessary conflict between tradition and modernity. Kebede’s position is that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with reviving the past as long as what is exhumed is of value and capable of bringing progress. One major factor hindering progress discussed by the author is ethnicity. Kebede rightly traces the origin of the ethnic conflicts in most African states to their artificiality. His position is that for effective state formation and peaceful co-existence in multi-ethnic states, mystic drive rather than rationality is required.

The dilemma of Africa’s underdevelopment can only be resolved, in Kebede’s view, by settling for what he calls “complimentarism”. By this he maintains that “the best way to get out of the African dilemma is neither to assert nor deny the African difference; it is not to look for an uncontaminated vision of the past essence either. The recognition of the concomitance of myth and rationality, of traditionality and modernity, is the appropriate way to diffuse the African dilemma” (p.208). The kernel of Kebede’s argument here is that the liberation of the African mind would be the foundation of an authentic and true decolonization.

No doubt, *Africa’s Quest for a Philosophy of Decolonization* is an in-depth study on the African personality. In a refreshing way, it provides an insight into the intellectual pre-requisites for the resolution of the problem of underdevelopment of Africa. However, Kebede’s resolve to avoid evolutionism at all costs prevents him from accepting the existence of a wide divide between myth and reason. It is important to note here that philosophy in the real sense of the word began only when a sharp line was drawn between myth and reason. The future of philosophy lies in the sustenance of this divide.

The book is a worthy contribution to the debate about the future of Africa, not only in philosophical terms, but also about the development problematic of the continent. The book will certainly be useful to both undergraduate and graduate students of philosophy, sociology, political science and anthropology. It should also serve as a guide to other academics and politicians interested in issues of emancipation and development, within and outside the African continent.

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BOOK REVIEW

Black Poachers, White Hunters: A Social History of Hunting in Colonial Kenya. Edward I. Steinhart. Oxford: James Currey, 2006. 248 pp.

Employing a Marxian perspective, Steinhart examines the social history of hunting in colonial Kenya to highlight the prevalence of hunting by subsistence farmers who have been largely overlooked relative to 'pure' hunters in academic literature. He also demonstrates that the big game safari represents a truly cross-cultural or 'trans-cultural' practice, and notes the mixed blessings of the triumph of the preservationist ideal as evinced by Kenya's 1977 ban on hunting. Steinhart argues that there were so few female hunters as to be negligible thus the book concentrates on men. Geographically the focus is on Kwale, Kitui, and Meru Districts because each contains a major national park (Shimba Hills, Tsavo, and Meru respectively) and was inhabited by Bantu-speaking people who supplemented their agro-pastoral activities with hunting. The author believes that his book is the first history of hunting and wildlife conservation in Kenya to treat both African and European hunters and gamekeepers. The author hopes to contribute to understandings of the place of wildlife in the world and humans' relationship to it.

The introduction is followed by four parts: The African Hunters, The White Hunters, Black and White Together, and Gamekeepers and Poachers. Part one describes the tradition of bow hunting and African hunting generally in each of the three research districts. African elephant hunters using bow and poisoned arrow were viewed as primitive or non-existent by Europeans, yet bow hunting persisted during the colonial period and was arguably more humane than Europeans' rifle use. Steinhart believes it was European prejudice against peasants that blinded them to the prevalence of hunting among African farmers and herders, such that they dismissed hunting activities as aberrant behavior. Steinhart argues that meat from hunting regularly supplemented local diets during dry seasons, not only during crisis or drought and that Africans contributed to Europeans' misperceptions by considering elephant kills, but not animals caught in traps as 'real hunting'.

In part two, the focus is much more on class, ideology, and individual action as opposed to the more geographic focus and non-class based analysis of part one. Steinhart posits that the European hunting heritage is steeped in the upper class and the expression of mastery over nature. The hunt was also associated with military skill and leadership and East Africa seen as a virtual Garden of Eden with an infinite supply of wildlife. Africans became the "dark companions" of early European hunters in the form of guides, porters, gun bearers, skinners, and cooks setting a class-based stage for later years when settler colonists from diverse class backgrounds joined in the hunt. The wealthy remained the dominant figures among hunters (Lord Delemere, Lord Cranworth, Berkeley and Galbraith Cole), but a movement towards a more populist movement in hunting was underway. Steinhart points to the abuses of the privileged including the literal hunting of Africans by a Hungarian Count and colonial officers who issued themselves licenses in violation of game regulations. Corruption and other abuses would remain an element of the big game safari, the focus of part three.

Steinhart believes that the modern game safari has its origins in a melding of the Arab/African caravan trade and European hunting practices and that a few well-publicized safaris greatly shaped the nature of the industry. Theodore Roosevelt's 1909 safari involved the bagging of numerous trophy animals and set the stage for luxury safaris in which customers could bag desired animals without hardship. Eastman-Pomeroy-Akeley's 1926-27 safari captured wildlife using Akeley's new lightweight camera which would help popularize mixing hunting with photography increasing people's interest in natural history and wildlife conservation. In 1927 and 1930, the Prince of Wales undertook luxury safaris during which he sought to photograph animals and gain new travel experiences as much as hunt. Hemingway's published memoir of his 1934 big game safari helped romanticize the safari for the 1940s and 1950s when the reduced cost of air travel helped popularize the safari. White hunters served as professional guides for some time, but public sentiment and declining elephant populations helped Kenya transition to wildlife preservation.

In part four the transformation from hunting wildlife for sport and game control to preserving it in protected areas is described by focusing on the lives of colonial game wardens. Mention is made of Africans serving as scouts and former poachers including being used to as informants to capture others engaged in illegal off take of animals, but the reader does not gain much insight into African perspectives on wildlife management.

There is a notable lack of specific information on Africans in *Black Poachers, White Hunters* even though the author sought to have an inclusive study. Other than part one, the book is almost entirely about people of European descent. Three Kenyan districts were chosen for comparative purposes, but connecting people to specific districts is largely restricted to parts one and four. Steinhart used research assistants to conduct oral histories, but how many people were interviewed is unclear as is and why virtually no African voices are present even when covering events as recently as the 1960s. The desirability of using class analysis rather than the more conventional use of race or gender in East African studies is also not generally supported by the material presented—race and class essentially go hand in hand. The book is well-written and suitable for use in graduate courses in East African history or human-environment relations in Africa. Steinhart raises the interesting point of whether Kenya might not be better served by controlled hunting rather than allowing the hunting traditions of the Waata, Kamba and others to merely pass away.

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BOOK REVIEW

Lineages of State Fragility: Rural Civil Society in Guinea-Bissau. Joshua B. Forrest. Athens: Ohio University Press. 2003. 312 pp.

In this book, Forrest addresses the issue of the origins of Guinea-Bissau's state fragility and thoroughly analyzes the relationship between the country's rural civil society and state throughout the last century and a half. Basing his analysis on a comprehensive archival work as well as on more recent historical and anthropological studies, the author tests, through a historical and systematic approach, the applicability of J. Migdal's 'strong societies, weak states' theory in Guinea-Bissau. He very convincingly shows that both the strength and adaptability of Guinea-Bissau's rural civil society explain the inability of the country's fragile state to carry out its policies.

One of the obvious strengths of the book is that it follows a chronological pattern, which helps to underline the commonalities and continuity – comprised in the word 'lineages' - that characterized the relationship throughout three eras that are generally considered separately in African studies. In each chapter, the author methodologically studies the diverse strategies used by Guinea-Bissau's rural civil society to systematically escape central state rule. Goran Hyden's notion of an 'uncaptured peasantry' is another acknowledged reference: Forrest shows that, like its Tanzanian counterpart, Guinea-Bissau's peasantry was particularly skilled at escaping any form of state rule thanks to highly developed informal and cross-border trade networks. Guinea-Bissau's successive states were thus unable to submit the rural population to tax collection, forced-labor recruitment or even state-monitored circuits of capital.

Forrest here seriously challenges those who explain African state fragility by underlining the ethnic diversity of many African states. In Guinea-Bissau, ethnic determinism played no role in rural civil society's political decision-making. Rather, ethnic groups remained largely porous and non-exclusive, while inter-ethnic relations were dominated by pragmatic considerations that often led different ethnic communities to collaborate and conclude alliances in the face of Portuguese military and state violence. The most significant example of the ethnically malleable and incorporative character of Guinea-Bissau's social formations, according to the author, was the expansion of indigenous spirit forces (*irãs*), which originated in Mandjack areas but attracted tens of thousands of followers from various ethnic groups. They soon represented an alternative to the power of the colonial state, thus becoming an alternative political sphere. Forrest therefore aptly shows that more than the much emphasized African ethnic divisions, it is the extraordinary capacity of rural society to create alternative spheres of political and social authority and economic activity that explain state fragility.

Forrest's determination to study the Bissau-Guinean state's history over a long period of time gives an essential but often underestimated historical dimension to African political studies. One of the conclusions drawn from this comprehensive study is the strength of political memory and its significance for state-society relations in Guinea-Bissau. From the very beginning of the Portuguese colonial conquest, the communities to-be-conquered showed an extraordinary ability to unite and lead coherent guerrilla warfare against the undermanned Portuguese forces, often surprised by such resistance. Thanks to these first military victories, Guinea-Bissau's civil society developed a 'memory of praetorian success' that would re-emerge periodically through the colonial period, and then during the independence struggle.

Another conclusion drawn from this historical approach is the similarity in the colonial and postcolonial states' weaknesses and in their responses to civil society resistance strategies. Both the colonial and postcolonial state administrations were understaffed, generally incompetent and corrupt, both desperately resorted to the same means to try and submit civil society to the central state rule - authoritarianism and state-violence – and both experienced the limits of this strategy. Although the postcolonial state emerged out of a struggle partly supported by rural society's autonomous organizations, it was not more able to ensure the support and participation of rural society to its economic and social programmes than was its Portuguese predecessor.

The autonomy of Guinea-Bissau's rural civil society was thus never successfully challenged by the

country's successive regimes: "The combination of ethnoclastic political and social arrangements and incorporative, collaborative, interethnic social formations represent twin, reflective sources of social power in rural Guinea-Bissau, contemporarily as in the past" (p. 245).

Although Forrest wisely remains at the level of analysis without risking any policy-relevant conclusion, this raises the question of the nature of the state system, which will be able to efficiently carry out its state duties to a rural civil society mostly eager to retain its autonomy. Whatever the answer to this question, Forrest's comprehensive work underlines the necessity of a multidisciplinary approach – based on anthropological, historical and political science theories and methods - to address such issues.

Overall, this book is certainly one of the best-written and documented histories of the Bissau-Guinean state. It sheds a fascinating light on Guinea-Bissau's – and possibly Africa's - current society and politics for all social scientists. Many other lesser-known African countries could benefit from equal attention.

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BOOK REVIEW

Strategic Security Issues in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography.
Michael J. Siler. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004. 727 pp.

Michael Siler, an associate professor of Political Science at California State University-Los Angeles, has produced a massive bibliography of African strategic studies literature. Although this work will be a valuable resource and is comprehensive to a fault, its “mile wide and inch-deep” coverage may leave many readers wishing Siler had given more analysis even at the cost of reduced coverage.

This 727-page bibliography identifies books, journal and newspaper articles, governmental and NGO studies, dissertations, and theses that cover a wide range of continental, regional, and country-specific issues. After a lengthy introduction, Siler begins with a giant 194-page first chapter that serves as a broad survey of Africa strategic studies literature, with separate sections focused on continent-wide issues; American national security issues; weapons trafficking, diamonds, and commodities trading; and the role of private security firms and mercenaries. The next five chapters each cover a different region: Great Lakes/Central Africa, Southern Africa, West Africa, Northeast Africa/Horn of Africa, and Eastern Africa. Here Siler covers every African country from Angola to Zimbabwe. About sixty percent of the sources are journal articles, twenty percent are books, fifteen percent are government and NGO studies, and five percent are newspaper articles. Siler concludes with a final chapter covering dissertations, theses, dictionaries, and other bibliographies.

For those looking for literature on a wide variety of strategic studies subjects, this book will be a useful resource. Siler identifies dozens of works on the many African civil wars since the colonial era, the cold war alignment or non-alignment of the various states, the security issues raised by economic troubles throughout the continent, health concerns (especially the HIV/AIDS pandemic), foreign policy debates, civil-military relations, regional security efforts, and the impact of legal and illegal arms trading, ethnic and religious tensions, dictatorships, and corruption. Unique concerns are covered as well, including such issues as Nigeria's flirtation with a nuclear weapons program in the 1980s. Of course, neither the regions nor the individual countries are covered evenly. The chapters on Southern Africa and Western Africa—with extensive coverage of South Africa, Angola, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Liberia—are substantially larger than the others. But Siler has included sections even on a number of other states that, by his own admission, have “no strategic security literature at all” (pp xxv-xlix).

In fact, in the introduction Siler claims that the following states have no strategic security literature: Burundi, Central African Republic, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Togo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Comoro Islands, Kenya, Mauritius, Seychelles, Uganda, and Zanzibar. Despite this admission, Siler gives each of these states its own section. More surprisingly, some of these sections are pages long, as articles on seemingly unrelated topics are included. In other instances, the inclusion of articles on recent or on-going civil wars (Somalia), internal civil-military relations (Togo), the impact of military rule (Ethiopia), and international disputes (Swaziland), make the reader wonder what the author meant when he claimed these states have no strategic literature.

For a bibliography on strategic security issues, these are significant (although not fatal) shortcomings. Throughout the volume, Siler includes numerous entries whose connections to the strategic security debate are unclear at best, and in some cases hard to even fathom. For example, he includes an article on African librarians and information managers (p. 3), books on African contributions to Western religion and culture (pp. 19-20), and case studies in gender relationships (p. 69). It is possible that these pieces have some connection to a broader strategic security debate, but Siler's annotations fail to make the connection. This lack of analysis represents the other major room for improvement in this book.

In a bibliography of this size, it is probably not fair to expect more than a sentence or two on each entry, but those sentences should tell us something about the thesis or conclusion of the piece referenced. However, in most instances, Siler merely states what the article is about, and often in no more detail than the title of the entry. For example, Siler's description of David Kilroy's dissertation, entitled "Extending the American Sphere to West Africa: Dollar Diplomacy in Liberia, 1908-1926," merely adds that Kilroy "examines the U.S. use of dollar diplomacy in Liberia from 1901-1926" (p. 672). Occasionally, Siler gives us the significance or the conclusion of a given entry, but those are the exceptions. Siler includes useful lists of abbreviations and journals, as well as an index, but no map is present.

Despite these shortcomings, Siler has produced a unique and impressively comprehensive resource for those interested in educating themselves on the strategic studies literature on Africa as a whole, as well as on its different regions and states. While readers may have to wade through a lot of entries that seem to have little connection to the strategic studies debates, and will have to read the books and articles themselves to learn about those authors' basic conclusions, they can be thankful to Siler for compiling an impressive list of references that touch on a wide range of African topics.

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BOOK REVIEW

Undermining Development: The Absence of Power among Local NGOs in Africa. Sarah Michael. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004. 206 pp.

Sarah Michael's book, *Undermining Development: the Absence of Power among Local NGOs in Africa*, is a powerful in-depth analytical study of NGOs and their power structures. The Book details the importance of power in local NGOs to significantly contribute to sustainable development. Based on observations of Asian and Latin American NGOs, Michael provides a theoretical framework of elements of powerful NGOs and how they operate to sustain and advance development. The book then provides in great length a discussion of African NGOs and how their lack of power undermines development in Africa and explains how power affects NGO sustainability. It shows how a powerful African NGO can look like and identifies policies available to improve power in local NGOs and advises different elements involved with NGOs, including the NGOs themselves, how to refocus their strategies.

This book is based on a qualitative research done on case studies of Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Senegal. The fieldwork of this analysis was undertaken during 1999-2000. Overall, sixty or more local NGOs were interviewed. Across each case study country, over one hundred interviews were conducted with local NGO directors, government officials, relevant donor agencies, key international NGOs, academics, media and other relevant bodies. In addition, the author conducts an in-depth study of one Bangladeshi organization to provide a comparison.

The main focus of the book is why local African NGOs lack power and how development of their power can contribute significantly to development on the African continent. Power is defined as "The ability of a local NGO to set its own priorities, defines its own agenda, and exerts its influence on the international development community, even in the face of opposition from government, donors, international NGOs and other development actors"(p.19). Elements of NGO power are identified by the author as NGO development space, financial independence from donors, solid links to international development community and engagement in political activity in their respective fields.

Based on case studies, the author argues that African NGOs lack consistency and strength in these four elements of power. A very important illustration of this book is the identification of elements that prevented local NGOs from gaining power in Africa. Pushing past traditional understanding of weaknesses of local NGOs of organizational and programmatic shortcomings, the author takes us through historical passages of the NGO development. She then demonstrates the barriers posed by host international NGOs, local governments and donor agencies to power attainment. Lack of support and competition posed by international NGOs for development space and donor funding, intentional and unintentional government policies carried out by local governments to prevent NGO empowerment, shifting donor policies and the competition faced by local NGOs to receive funding are crucial barriers faced.

This book illustrates that NGO power is crucial to development because NGOs, due to their special status in the development field, can act as catalyst mobilizing and bringing together various groups in the field of development. The author specifies three unique methods by the NGO sector can uniquely contribute to development. First, due to its local base, local NGOs have a level of local familiarity and expertise that international NGOs do not have. Second, once again due to their "local" status, they can get involved in local political issues regarding development without seeming like outsiders intruding. And finally, due to their status local NGOs are the best group organizations to mobilize local communities to development than any other groups or organization. The author exemplifies through the book that when local NGOs are unable to play their roles due to lack of power, others take their place resulting in drastic consequences for Africa. This book further draws a strong linkage between NGO power and NGO sustainability.

The content of the book is presented in eight chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to NGO activity in sub-Saharan Africa and to their power structures. Chapter two provides a conceptual

framework of power based on experiences of several powerful local NGOs in Asia and Latin America. Chapter three through five consist of case studies of Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Senegal respectively. The sixth chapter observes why power matters to local NGOs and how absence has undermined development in Africa. Chapter seven provides a link between NGO power and sustainability. Finally, chapter eight outlines a range of strategies available to improve NGO power in Africa.

This book provides a very deep conceptual framework of NGOs and power. It is empirically grounded and illustrates very explicitly the complicated historical and existing relationships between local NGOs, international NGOs, their respective governments and donor agencies in Africa. My only concerns are about the broad generalizations made based on three case studies to African, Asia and Latin America. It is true that Michael has studied a few powerful local Asian and Latin American NGOs in-depth, however, to draw the conclusion that these continents are far ahead in NGO power is a stretch, for while these continents may have a few very powerful NGOs, the majority of them suffer from similar lack of power as African NGOs. The book also would have benefited if it had mentioned the bureaucratic barriers to development when local NGOs become too expansive and powerful. Once again, while the author provides a masterful theoretical framework of NGO power, her advice for attaining power is nothing new or too practical. The government issues discussed by the author are very complicated and do not get solved immediately for governments to provide full support to local NGOs. The donor's contributions are based on larger global priority needs and changes and INGOs operate under their own priorities.

Overall, this is a very conceptual, visionary and highly insightful book. I would highly recommend this book be read by policy makers, donors, NGOs, researchers and academics and local NGO members themselves or anybody else who is interested in working with local NGOs, not only in Africa but any other part of the developing world.

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BOOK REVIEW

White Queen: May French-Sheldon and the Imperial Origins of American Feminist Identity.
Tracey Jean Boisseau. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. 258 pp.

The little-known career of May French-Sheldon brought her to East, Central, and West Africa, launched an enduring stereotype of the sassy, unflappable female adventurer, and spawned a legion of American admirers for over three decades. French-Sheldon's unique strength was her uncanny ability to re-package and re-convey her message to the dominant trends of times at the turn of the last century. In her insightful, interdisciplinary text that is part biography, part social history, part feminist theory, Tracy Jean Boisseau illuminates how supposedly philanthropic language and goals may cover a multitude of selfish interests, and how insidiously these interests can intersect with contested meanings about race and gender. The text is a welcome blend of rich historical texture and theoretical exposition that moves the narrative beyond the social location of one privileged woman and her interactions with a marginalized, colonialized world to broader issues of feminist and post-colonial theory.

The book is divided into three chronological periods, each corresponding with an era of French-Sheldon's diverse and influential career. Part I focuses on French-Sheldon's 1891 expedition to Kilimanjaro and her "discovery" of Lake Chala. Taking very seriously her not-entirely-accurate title as "the first woman explorer of Africa," French-Sheldon relied upon an elaborate costume modeled on European royalty to craft a version of American femininity as "White Queen" in order to open doors to the hierarchical world of East African colonial society. Her courtship of local officials, including those from the Middle East, drew upon a savvy construction of gendered identity that relied upon neo-bourgeois notions of "respectability," including her status as a married woman and a Fellow of the London Royal Geographic Society. "French-Sheldon claimed to have made a significant contribution to the civilizing of Africans merely by being a perfect lady in front of them" (72), but Boisseau also mines French-Sheldon's journals and published accounts to illustrate horrifically uncomfortable encounters where the intrepid explorer bullied, extorted, and amputated Africans in order to gain access to the "gifts" she felt she deserved. Chapter 4 and 5 provide an extremely penetrating and useful analysis of the strategic rhetoric used by French-Sheldon to simultaneously amplify eroticism of Africans while emasculating African men and rendering African women to an inhuman category of pitiable victims.

French-Sheldon capitalized on her image as an intrepid and respected explorer in the second phase of her international career, chronicled in Part II. Boisseau argues that French-Sheldon worked as a double-agent for both the British press and King Leopold II of Belgium based on French-Sheldon's lack of corroboration with Protestant missionary reports of atrocities in the Congo. Despite ample evidence of French-Sheldon's cold appraisal and detached paternalistic perceptions of East Africans in the first section of the text, "this eagle-eyed overseer of the colonial condition found no atrocities to report and only a praiseworthy system of colonial overlordship in place" (116). In 1904, she parlayed her knowledge of the *concessionnaire* system gained in rubber-producing central Africa to buy 12,000 square miles of rainforest in Liberia for a shadily-funded endeavor she called Americo-Liberian Industrial Company. Intent on relocating black Americans to work the land, French-Sheldon's plans were eventually shut down by the Liberian legislature due to her underestimation of the Liberian elite and her frank insensitivity to the issue of indentured servitude among recently freed slaves. In 1921, her devotion to the Belgian court was finally rewarded when she was awarded *la Croix de Chevalier de l'Order de la Couronne*, the equivalent of a knighthood for her legacy as an explorer and humanitarian, an honor she would bank on heavily in the next phase of her career as an emerging American feminist.

Part III contextualizes the most enduring legacy of French-Sheldon's career: her impact on the shaping of American feminism and the imperialist images that surrounded and constructed French-Sheldon as a feminist heroine. While Chapters 9 and 10's specific focus on "drag," female fetishism, and the development of twentieth-century American feminist subjectivity might not be entirely appealing to all scholars of African Studies, Chapter 8 and the Conclusion effectively contextualize a story of racial

privilege, imperial power, and colonial nostalgia for a pacified Africa that endures to this day. Boisseau concentrates on how French-Sheldon herself became a “desiring subject” (205), and how this innovation of identity re-framed the emerging “lifestyle” (144) for new or modern American womanhood in the 1910s and 1920s. Adored by young women seeking adventurous American heroines during the “flapper” era, French-Sheldon forged the latter years of her career through new forms of mass media. Her deliberately crafted public persona combined a “woman’s point of view” and the exoticism of her African experiences to draw huge audiences to hear her speak on the Modern American Woman. Despite her avoidance of feminist politics in any specific sense, French-Sheldon’s used her trademark “overblown self-presentation” (148) to invent herself anew. Boisseau highlights journalist reports from this period that exaggerate the numbers of African porters under French-Sheldon’s hire for the 1891 expedition from one hundred and fifty to five hundred. According to Boisseau’s analysis, “French-Sheldon’s fantasy of herself in Africa . . . reaffirmed race and national distinctions as a way of compensating for violations of gender hierarchy” (180). Even in America, the experience of empire played a distinct role in providing a structure and language for the middle-class. An oversight of an otherwise amazing section on the emergence of a specifically American identity, within the text Boisseau only very briefly contextualizes the impacts of perpetuating these paternalistic and white-supremacist views for African-Americans living at this time and later (59, 150).

White Queen provides a fascinating study of a largely overlooked American figure that would be a useful text for graduate seminars examining the complicated nature(s) of post-colonial power dynamics. The text would also be suitable for graduate level seminars on the history of feminist thought in the United States.

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BOOK REVIEW

Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges. Marvine Howe. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. 428 pp.

Marvine Howe's objective in her book is to deal with the central question as stated in the preface: "Can an absolute Muslim monarchy embrace Western-style democracy in an era of growing confrontation between the Islamic world and the West?"

Relying chiefly on her own experience since she discovered the Moroccan kingdom in the early 1950s, the author presents a comprehensive review of Morocco, its people, past and present. In addition, her work as a freelance journalist in Morocco and then as correspondent for *The New York Times* enabled her to gather a huge and various amount of information about Morocco such as interviews with the most influential figures in Moroccan history before and after independence. When reading every passage of the book, the reader gets the impression that Marvine Howe has mastered the history and geography of Morocco even better than the average Moroccan. What makes Howe's book special is that she raises some issues that were until recently a taboo and mysterious such as "*les années de plomb*" – the years of lead in the 1970s and 1980s, the private life of the former king Hassan II, L'affaire Ben Barka in 1965 and the two serious military coups attempts which nearly succeeded in 1971 and 1972.

Still, it is worth-mentioning that the title of the book may initially give different or even misleading impressions about the content of the book. The subject matter of the book deals with more than just the Islamic awakening. This issue, despite being thoroughly treated, is only one of the aspects addressed by the author. In addition, the author occasionally deals with some incidents and topics in a simplistic way by giving interpretations not based on profound arguments. Nevertheless, Howe has succeeded in objectively addressing Moroccan history and the thorniest political and social challenges facing this modern and pro-Western kingdom.

Howe's book consists of four major parts and each part is divided into different chapters. The first part starts with introducing the new king Mohamed VI, who assumed power in 1999 as an unknown person for most people and swiftly tried to correct the violations of human rights, which took place during the 38-year reign of his father, king Hassan II. The author examines the challenges facing this enigmatic country where the gap between rich and poor is growing rapidly. The second part provides a general historical overview of Morocco. Starting with the original inhabitants of Morocco, the Berbers or Imazighen who inhabited North Africa since the second millennium B.C., Howe deals with different invaders and dynasties that ruled Morocco until the modern history. The author ends this part by shedding light on the era of king Hassan II, which is a critical and controversial period of Moroccan modern history. In the third part, Howe analyzes different factors and challenges facing a society in motion. Beginning with Islamic revival, the author concludes that Morocco can no longer tolerate and take Islamic extremism lightly, especially after the suicide bombings against targets in Casablanca on May 16, 2003. Another issue is that of women's rights movements in the sense that in modern Morocco, women are the most dynamic sector of society. Moroccan women from different social and political spectra are more determined than ever to improve their social, economic and political position. Another topic in this part is that of Moroccan identity. The Moroccan constitution states that the country is a Muslim state with Arabic as an official language and is part of the Arab nation. As a matter of fact, the Moroccan identity is far more complicated inasmuch as Moroccans are a *mélange* of Berber, Islamic, Arab, Jewish and European elements. The final part deals with the new democratic transfer led by the new king Mohamed VI. Among other things, Howe discusses the main challenges facing the monarchy especially the growing Islamic movements. Again, it is worth mentioning in this respect that the author did not entirely succeed in her analysis with regard to Islamic movements in Morocco. It seems that Howe associates all parties and associations based on Islamic ideology with violence whereas moderate Islamists themselves were the first ones who condemned all forms of violence after the attacks in Casablanca in 2003. Howe concludes in her last chapter that the Moroccan kingdom is at the crossroads.

She predicts a gloomy scenario in which the Islamic movement will massively win the parliamentary elections in 2007. Once more, in this book, all movements and associations with Islamic views are illustrated as antithesis to democratic values, which in reality is not the case.

However, in this special and comprehensive work about Morocco, Howe tried to explain why Morocco matters considering its strategic location between Africa and Europe. In addition, Morocco is recently considered by America as a cornerstone in Africa and the Arab world to promote the western liberal democracy and as a loyal ally in fighting against terrorism. Through her first-hand account and her exhaustive review of the historical, social and economic situation of Morocco, Howe has produced a valuable work that is indispensable for everyone interested in this Arab and African kingdom.

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BOOK REVIEW

San Spirituality: Roots, Expression and Social Consequences. J.D. Lewis-Williams and D.G. Pearce. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 267 pp.

San prehistoric art as well as more recent cultural practices reveal clues to the development of human symbolic, spiritual and religious consciousness. To arrive at this conclusion, Lewis-Williams and Pearce operate from a simple yet profound premise: the physical structure of the San brain is no different than anyone else's. That is, they are anatomically modern humans, therefore have the potential to experience similar states of consciousness that have been documented by modern researchers. With that in mind, the authors combine knowledge of the function of the human brain, particularly during states of consciousness, with ethnographic and material cultural studies of the San.

A particular point of focus is the Howieson's Poort Anomaly in South Africa. This period during the Middle Stone Age contains tools composed of an increased percentage of non-quartzite material and distinct crescent or trapeze shapes compared to tools made in the time periods before and after in the same region which are predominantly quartzite and of non-distinct shape. Lewis-Williams and Pearce suggest that this variation occurred because the makers or users were attracted to the quality of shine of the non-quartzite material. This quality of shine is reminiscent of the light that is reported to be seen by shamans during altered states of consciousness. Therefore, the tools indicate a perception and application of the symbolic among the San. The authors cite evidence from indigenous shamans in Australia, North America, and South America to support this observation. The shift back to the use of the previous material, quartzite, could be explained by the San finding a new way of symbolically expressing the state of altered consciousness.

Another example in which the functioning of the human brain is mirrored in Middle Stone Age art is in the use of therianthropes. These images in rock shelter paintings echo the altered state of consciousness in which shamans report actually *becoming* specific animals after merely thinking of them. In the case of the San, the shaman are able to transform into a lion to protect members of the clan against lions who threaten during the night. Conversely, a shaman can also transform into a lion and intentionally inflict harm on people. A shaman also can transform into a little bird, fly to a neighboring settlement and check on the physical condition of familial relations. The trigger mechanism to enter this state of transformation or altered consciousness is the healing or trance dance in which the entire San community participate. It is "the overwhelmingly most important San ritual....which transcends the levels of the tiered San cosmology." It is also "the hub of San life: from it, radiate spokes that penetrate into other rituals, myths, and into daily life." (82) The dance, along with its social, spiritual, and cosmological implications, exists as the principle subject of San rock paintings. Once the authors determined this, the paintings offered a wealth of new information about San spirituality. A painting of a dying eland, with zigzag lines emanating from it depicts the potency of eland which the San believe to be a source of their shamanistic power. Interestingly, one image shows the emptying of an eland's bowels, perhaps a crucial indicator that it is the energy release at the point of death not just death itself that releases this power. Lewis-Williams and Pearce claim that many of the San rock carvings depict what shamans actually perceive and experience in altered states of consciousness.

With such intriguing conclusions, Lewis-Williams and Pearce are critically and cautiously aware of the current limitations of archeological thinking which support a narrow materialistic interpretation of prehistory. However, they are committed to an interdisciplinary approach including the controversial concept of "neurotheology" which seeks to explain religious and spiritual experience in light of physical functions of the human brain. This is blended with archeological and ethnographic studies to form the evidence for their arguments.

As with any work that presents a paradigm shift or in this case arguably, a new paradigm, the evidence has to stand up against the critique of the paradigm itself before it is even applied within its new context. The authors handle this by openly stating instances where the variations in cultural

practices particularly those involving grave preparations, do not reconcile with their theoretical approach.

The tension with this research is that although it is methodologically sound and well conceived, it is ultimately trying to analyze aspects of perception that go beyond the “consciousness of rationality” coveted by Western scientists. (30) Lewis-Williams and Pearce are confident that discoveries in the study of the brain and its function will help lead the way but the tantalizing question lingers: To what extent can the “alert thinking and rational response to the environment” aspect of consciousness meaningfully comment on and engage the rest of the spectrum. As this line of research develops, we will soon have some interesting answers to ponder. Nevertheless, this work is an important step in understanding human consciousness and its relationship to expression and spirituality. For those who consider science and spirituality as being forever or innately irreconcilable, relegated to the mind bending theories of modern physics, or the airy rubric of New Age thinking, this work makes a strong case to the contrary. For those interested in the systematic study of the intersection between the material, historical, psychological, and spiritual, it is a fascinating read.

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BOOK REVIEW

The Risks of Knowledge: Investigations into the Death of the Hon. Minister John Robert Ouko in Kenya, 1990. David William Cohen and E. S. Atieno-Odhiambo. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004, 344 pp.

Since political independence in 1963, Kenya has witnessed five prominent and cold-blooded murders of its political leaders. These are: Pio Gama Pinto in 1965, Tom Mboya in 1969, Josiah Mwangi Kariuki in 1975, Robert Ouko in 1990, and Crispin Odhiambo Mbai in 2003. Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo's text focuses on the political killing of Ouko "wildly regarded from the 1970s through the 1980s as Kenya's leading international spokesman and one of Africa's most effective statespersons" (ix).

The text, in my view, is the only available one that presents a panoramic and comprehensive coverage of the circumstances surrounding Ouko's death and issues that stemmed from that event. Given the towering stature of Ouko as a cabinet minister coupled with his political dexterity during the regime of Daniel arap Moi, the text can also be viewed as an exposé of Kenya's political terrain during the reign of Moi up to the late 1990s. The text assists one to decipher the trajectory of political innuendos and nuances of Kenya under Moi.

It is noteworthy that the text is not merely expository. It is not just a narrative of circumstances and events leading to the brutal demise of Ouko. The text draws the reader's attention to "the risks of knowledge" in the heady worlds of contemporary Kenya and Africa (16). The text therefore has epistemological concerns in that it is an erudite study of the social history of knowledge production employing the political assassination of Ouko as its pedestal. In its profundity, the text is not simply an attempt to offer solutions to questions such as: Who killed Ouko? How did Ouko die? Such questions are secondary or banal given the text's epistemological anchorage. The text's primary interest are the processes involved in the constitution of knowledge, how individuals and bodies come to "know", and how certain knowledge has gained authority (18).

To illustrate the epistemological concerns, it is argued that in actuality the formation of commissions of inquiry are not necessarily for the sake of remediation and reform. So, for instance, when the Moi regime constituted the Gicheru commission of inquiry to look into Ouko's disappearance and murder, the real purpose was not fact-finding and determination of the just course of action, but to come up with "truths" conveniently geared in service of the state's interests—"truths" that would assist the state in reproducing and extending its own authority and legitimacy (44).

Ouko's disappearance from his Koru farm on February 12 or 13, 1990, was followed by the government's announcement on February 16 that his mutilated and smoldering body had been found at Got Alila, about three kilometers from his farm, with a firearm and other objects supposedly belonging to him nearby. The record of Ouko's last days became dramatically crucial and preoccupied the minds of many and was given formidable space in newspapers, journals, and reports. "In death, his corpse became a text or a library in which many parties could and would prospect for different meanings. These representations would provide richness and depth to the accountings of Ouko's disappearance and death" (117). The public became consumed with the desire not only to comprehend the behavior of Ouko in his last days, and the behavior of those around him or those he interacted with, but also the behavior of those who would attempt to regulate the interpretation of his disappearance and death.

Two theories emerged regarding how Ouko met his death. These were the suicide and murder theories. For reasons well explained, the text refers to them as the gum boots and white car theories, respectively (50-51). These two theories were the interpretive divide in the investigations and inquiries on Ouko's death. Moi's government pushed for the gum boots theory, while the public believed in the veracity of the white car theory. Without engaging in any value judgments with finality, the text exhaustively and refreshingly discusses the rationales of these two theories. The text also explicates some inconsistencies in the narratives on Ouko's death. These are Hempstone's account, George Wajackoyah's story, and Shikuku's testimony. It also explores the various interpretations of where Ouko actually died;

whether he was killed elsewhere and the body dumped at Got Alila, or if he was killed at Got Alila.

Regarding the political topography of Moi's Kenya, the text leaves no doubt that its main feature was corruption, and that it was Ouko's opposition to this feature that led to his death. The text reports in detail how Moi led an oversize Kenyan delegation to a morning prayer in the US on February 1, 1990, hoping to cajole President George H. W. Bush into an official meeting with him, which Bush refused. Instead the Secretary of State, James Baker, questioned Moi about the corruption in his government and commended Ouko for his opposition to corruption.

Given the subject matter of the text, it is bound to attract a diverse range of readership. These would include: historians, political scientists, sociologists, philosophers, and the general readers whose concern hinge on social-political matters within Africa in general and Kenya in particular. Without any doubt, the text lends itself to scholarship given its profundity and the rigorous analytical skills employed. Though some persons would hardly be surprised by the revelation of corruption and extortion, the reader would surely be surprised by the highly conventionalized and naturalized or systematized practices through which men and women in power in Kenya have sought to extend their power and amass their wealth (269).

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BOOK REVIEW

Children of AIDS: Africa's Orphan Crisis (Second Edition). Emma Guest. Durban: University of Natal Press, 2003. 176 pp.

Emma Guest describes her book on children of Aids in Africa as 'un-apologetically anecdotal'. Before her arrival on the continent, she was a marriage guidance counselor in Britain with limited exposure to the appalling human, social and economic consequences of HIV / AIDS in Africa. She was privy to personal stories from her close friend, an African woman living with HIV / AIDS. Upon her arrival in Africa she began to write about AIDS in Africa. Soon she discovered that there wasn't a book on children who became orphans because of their parent's death from AIDS. The result of that discovery led to the birth of this book in which she documents the daily struggles as experienced by orphans and the heroic attempts of well meaning individuals who have tried to make a difference in their lives.

This second edition calls our attention to a number of discouraging aspects of the current fight against AIDS in South Africa. First, the fight against global terrorism has sidelined the spread of HIV as a global problem. Second, promises of free AIDS drugs have brought a new wave of hope to the millions of AIDS sufferers. But this hope may soon well be dashed as governments can no longer sustain an uninterrupted drug supply. Finally, South African leadership failed the public and set the clock back in its fight against AIDS by characterizing the international AIDS program as racially motivated. The second edition provides updated statistics. Apart from this update, the core of this book remains intact from the first edition. In general, the book offers only a limited description of the orphan crisis through statistics. However, it offers interesting qualitative descriptions of the life of orphans as the author perceives it in three different countries; South Africa, Uganda and Zambia.

The book opens with a chapter on Zambian orphans under the care of grandmothers who have very little resources to take care of themselves. The Zambian Public Assistance program is supposed to provide support to these grandmothers. The organization is cash strapped, and therefore mostly ineffective. The second chapter is the story of a woman who took under her care six orphans who lost their parents to AIDS. Child fostering is popular in Uganda as in many parts of Africa. In the age of the AIDS crisis, fostering extends beyond fostering children from blood relatives. The next three chapters provide vivid descriptions of the challenges faced by social groups: foster parents, child care committees, and cluster fostering homes where a group of mutually supportive fostering mothers live in close proximity to each other. Chapter six attempts to examine the orphanage as one of the solutions to the orphan crisis. New orphanages are expensive and many of them depend upon foreign donations and volunteers. Chapter seven highlights the characteristics of the Ugandan success story of HIV / AIDS prevention. Schools in Uganda provide factual information on HIV / AIDS and institutional assistance is often made in kind rather than in cash in order to avoid corruption. Chapter eight discusses the role played by international agencies such as UNAIDS. Here again, the author tells the story of an inspiring UN bureaucrat who has made a difference in the life of Zambian orphans. The last two chapters dwell on stories of children who live alone. In chapter nine we are told of children who have taken on adult family roles in a desperate attempt to stay together. The last chapter is a case study of a very unique individual, a caregiver to street children who are constantly exposed to street violence, sex and drugs.

Through skillful use of case studies, the author examines the role of state agencies, community level initiatives and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in providing solutions to the orphan crisis in Africa. These orphans will face high level mortality, morbidity and malnourishment as they grow up. As families collapse, agents of primary socialization disappear. As a result, crime and lawlessness are likely to enervate the strength of civil societies.

The crisis deepens as state agencies and community level initiatives fail to co-ordinate their efforts. As a result, a large bulk of orphan care is left to a few committed individuals in isolated communities and NGOs. Social workers employed by state agencies are constrained by rules and regulations which appear to be culturally insensitive to the African concept of child fostering. Consequently, social workers have

limited ability to advocate for an expanded model which accommodates unrelated foster children within the African context of child fostering. The author focuses on “stigma” as a major problem limiting the solutions to the orphan crisis. She believes that politicians can play a major role in alleviating stigma through skillful use of mass media. The suggestions she offers are limited. The problem of stigma has to be resolved through programs and policies at the micro and macro levels.

In general the book is well written. It provides a journalistic account of the social, human and economic miseries suffered by African orphans. It alerts us to the formidable task of rebuilding Africa as millions of orphans born to HIV infected parents come of age. The book is a compassionate account of the orphan crisis in Africa to those who want to become familiar with issues of AIDS and orphans in Africa. In addition, this book also offers a critical view of selected initiatives of orphan care, all of which are small, diverse and vulnerable. The author provides very few suggestions on programs and policies to care for African orphans. I recommend this book without reservation to undergraduates, social workers, and any one interested in understanding the African orphan crisis.

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BOOK REVIEW

Food, Culture, and Survival in an African City. Karen Coen Flynn. New York: Palgrave, 2005. 254 pp.

The study of food in Africa is entering a brilliant new phase. Along with the long-awaited publication of works examining food consumption by Lisa Cliggett and Elias Mandala, the arrival of Karen Coen Flynn's book is good news for those interested in hunger, poverty, and the critical role of food in everyday life. She offers an intriguing and provocative analysis of hunger and food supply in Mwanza, a Tanzanian city located on the shore of Lake Victoria. The careful treatment she provides to the ways diverse communities within Mwanza obtain food is crucial for scholars and policymakers who wish to understand how poor people develop strategies to obtain sustenance in cities. Her theoretical contributions build on the foundation of entitlement theory set by Amartya Sen over two decades ago while adding important nuances, especially on the role of charitable gifts.

One of the major strengths of this study is Flynn's willingness to enter into dialogue with previous work on urban food supply while noting how Mwanza offers a different context than the rural regions and capital cities that usually furnish the settings for scholarly work on hunger and food. The context is brought out by over 200 interviews taken in the early 1990s. Her analysis of food market organization and periurban agriculture fits with previous studies. However, Flynn's research on food consumption in Mwanza is quite innovative. From detailed reviews of the changing popularity of different staple cereals to revealing the challenges that state authorities, market people, and consumers have in buying and selling food in Mwanza, the author's ethnographic approach is quite effective. The evolution of taste reveals much about the evolution of Tanzania from the late colonial period through *ujamaa* socialism to the present. Flynn has documented the growth of more processed foods, especially certain types of corn and rice, which one often sees in daily life in many African cities.

Another aspect of food consumption in Mwanza highlighted in this monograph is how people buy and prepare food. Chapter Four and Five's consideration of food consumption across the social divides of Mwanza is fascinating. The detailed survey of food preparation patterns and the shifting composition of families seeking to obtain entitlements to food shows how access to food marks social distinctions. Foodways will be quite different between street children and well-off African and Asian families, obviously, but it is rare to see such an approach to urban food consumption so informed by detailed sociological analysis and the mundane details of daily urban life.

Furthermore, the need to commit time and resources to other obligations besides food proves a central challenge for Mwanza people who need to develop an array of resources to feed themselves. Choices by individuals to straddle urban and rural connections to obtain and sell food commonly occur in any African city in the same ways one sees in Mwanza. As economic conditions in the city grew worse in the 1980s and early 1990s, previous strategies to juggle ways to raise income and connections needed to acquire food proved less effective. The image of "balancing on one foot" is a very apt one for how individuals can prove unable to pull together the variety of demands of time and money many city residents face.

Another aspect of eating in Mwanza that Flynn surveys is the daily struggle different groups of destitute children and adults have in obtaining food. This moves beyond other studies more concerned with market organization and agriculture. AIDS, family difficulties, and disabilities led many of the homeless of Mwanza to the city. For many women, "survival sex" was a key way for women to obtain food as gifts or payment. As some women failed to establish a stable residence from where they could turn to sex work, they had to rely on sexual encounters as a form of food scrounging. Street women desperate for food had little ability to resist the demands of their clients or counter male unwillingness to use condoms. Government camps designed to house and employ the very poor often could provide food, but the constraints placed upon their residents (often placed in the camps by police roundups) led many homeless to avoid this kind of living. Street men often appear to have better access to kin and other

networks they could turn to for food, especially through begging. They escaped the stigma placed on street women, who many city residents view as lazy or in violation of gendered norms of women as food providers and members of established family networks. Gendered differences also can be noted among street children: while girls have the dangerous but often unavoidable choice to obtain money and sustenance through sex work, this is not a common option of boys.

All in all, this excellent book would make for a great textbook in undergraduate courses on modern Africa and for courses on food studies. The wealth of detail combined with an eye to uncovering the diversity of challenges in African cities makes for good reading. While theoretical discussions are important, they do not detract at all from the readability of the book. Especially for instructors seeking to provide a human face to master narratives of problems within contemporary Africa, I recommend this text.

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BOOK REVIEW

Wole Soyinka: Politics, Poetics and Postcolonialism. Biodun Jeyifo. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 322 pp.

Just when one began to wonder if Soyinka criticism had exhausted itself and if anything new could be said about Africa's most complex and prodigious talents, comes a revisionist study from one of the members of the now moribund 'Ibadan Ife group' that offers a novel approach to reading Soyinka by examining the relationship between Soyinka's literary writings and his political activism. Filling up the hiatus since 1993, when some of the major studies on Soyinka had appeared, Biodun Jeyifo not only brings Soyinka criticism up to date by systematically integrating the different phases of Soyinka criticism, but also provides one of the most exhaustive and insightful analysis of Soyinka's fictional and non-fictional works constructing a post-colonial, even a postmodern Soyinka.

The tendency in Soyinka criticism is to view the activist writer's aesthetic and political radicalism in isolation or even to see them as oppositional. Jeyifo's correlation between the writer's proclivity for 'political risktaking' with 'artistic gambles' helps him to resolve one of the most troubling contradictions observed in Soyinka by his critics.⁽¹⁴⁾ He accomplishes this formidable task by making the Nigerian Nobel Laureate's titanic personality the focal point for examining his literary corpus, thus introducing 'subjectivity' not only to Soyinka and African studies but also into literary criticism. Yet Jeyifo's is not an exercise in sophisticated biographical criticism but a post-structural inquiry into the self-making process in relation to the maverick Nigerian writer's life and creative corpus. His emphasis on the textual construction of Soyinka's personality enables Jeyifo to eschew 'the metaphysics of presence' without having to pronounce 'the death of the subject' as he calls attention to the process of self-making through which Soyinka came to be central to the construction of the 'highly gendered postcolonial national masculinist tradition' in African writing, which is currently under a crisis.

After stating his central argument in the Preface, Jeyifo proceeds to examine Soyinka's works in different genres in separate chapters while showing, at the same time, the impossibility of maintaining generic divisions in a body of work that reveals an enormous amount of intertextuality and cross-referencing. The book is remarkable in its sustained intertextual reading that makes the discussion of any particular genre meaningful only in relation to the exploration of the same themes in other genres.

Jeyifo begins by looking at one of the neglected areas in Soyinka studies, namely Soyinka's three books and essays that have been highly influential in shaping African criticism. Splitting Soyinka's critical writings into the anti-negritudist, neo-negritudist, and neo-cosmopolitan phases, he shows that in place of a decisive rupture one should view Soyinka's critical works as 'a body of postcolonial discourse which neither avoids nor reifies the dichotomies of local and metropolitan'. Considering that 'the tragic mythopoesis', which Jeyifo places at the centre of Soyinka's aesthetic philosophy, has increasingly been interrogated by the post independence generation, the continuing relevance of Soyinkan aesthetics needs to be engaged more critically.

Drama being the genre Soyinka excels in is devoted two chapters, one exclusively to an unraveling of 'the ritual problematic' in 'the weightier plays'. Jeyifo subjects Soyinka's conversion of ritual formalism into a vigorous theatrical expression to a rigorous critical examination. By showing that Soyinka's use of the most autochthonous, pristine ritual form and idioms coexists with a view of ritual as emancipatory, Jeyifo attempts to balance Soyinka's strong faith in the interface between drama and ritual with 'what one may call 'anti-ritual', that is, his interrogation of the values of the rituals he himself employs in his plays. Emphasizing that Soyinka's drama must be understood first and foremost as theatre, Jeyifo extends the notion of 'the ritual problematic' from Soyinka to African dramaturgy and African aesthetics as a whole.

While considering prose as the most uneven of Soyinka's works, Jeyifo considers prose as singularly important in bringing closer Soyinka's writing and his activism. The reason he gives for this is that prose is a genre in which Soyinka places his greatest faith in his project of self-constitution as a

visionary artist and radical public intellectual. Lauding *The Interpreters* as a contribution to the genre of fiction, he dismisses *The Season of Anomy* as a dramatic failure for the simple reason that *The Man Died*, which deals with the same themes, offers one of the finest examples of testamentary writing, notwithstanding its flaws. But it is through his close analysis of the three autobiographical exercises, the bildungsroman *Ake*, the exile's book *Ibadan* and the tribute *Isara*, that he guides us through the self-making of one of the most fascinating figures in contemporary writing.

The Chapter on poetry offers Jeyifo a convenient point for steering the debate on Soyinka's alleged 'obscurity' and 'complexity' away from the routine polarized approach. He rejects the thesis as a criterion for evaluating Soyinka's achievement as a poet because, according to him, Soyinka's works take us beyond complexity to the 'complex evanescent experience of considerable lyrical forces'. Instead, he suggests that one should take as a point of departure the distinction between poetry and versification in the assessment of the nature of the poet's output. According to Jeyifo, Soyinka is both a poet and versifier but his critics are preoccupied with versification to the detriment of poetry. While Jeyifo commends the first two volumes for their articulation of personal and public pain with consistently exquisite and polished expression, he marks in the third volume Soyinka's returns race to the African discourse along with the notion of 'race men'. While agreeing that Soyinka creates the Promethean hero with great power, Jeyifo interrogates the negritudist strains of the totemic poet speaking for or on behalf of his people.

The concluding section neatly ties up the issues that Jeyifo set out to examine in the preceding chapters, the 'obscurity' charges, the burden of representation, the place of violence, the Ogunian archetype, Soyinka's literary avant-gardism and his political and ideological radicalism, and, finally, Soyinka's contribution to the constitution of an African and postcolonial discourse. Yet Jeyifo's voice, while pointing out the grand flaws in the big man, remains that of the celebrant. Coming from one who has been one of Soyinka's harshest critics, this is a tribute indeed.

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BOOK REVIEW

A Sacred Trust: The League of Nations and Africa, 1929-1946. Michael D. Callahan. Portland, Oregon: Sussex Academic Press, 2004. 318 pp.

From the third quarter of the 19th century, the different European powers began their scramble for Africa. The 1884-85 Berlin Conference between the different colonial powers formalised this brutal process. By the time the First World War broke out in 1914, almost all of Africa—save Liberia and Ethiopia—had been occupied by the different European powers, including France, Britain and Germany. Defeated in the war, the 1919 Treaty of Versailles knocked Germany out of Africa and the victorious powers insisted on it being deprived of its occupied African territories. The Treaty of Versailles also led to the formation of the League of Nations. These territories were thus to be administered by Britain and France as a “sacred trust” under the mandates system of the League of Nations.

How did the mandates system work from 1929 to the end of the Second World War? Not being the same as pure colonialism according to the mandates provisions, what impact did it have on European colonialism? Since both Germany, which was deprived its colonies, and Italy, which never got any mandated territory, later joined the League, what effect did this have on the system? How did the two main mandatory powers differ in their respect of the legal and humanitarian provisions of the mandates system? These are some of the critical questions that Michael D. Callahan attempts to answer in *A Sacred Trust*, and does it quite brilliantly.

The author begins by highlighting the moral contradictions of European colonialism in Africa and elsewhere in what is now known as the Third World. Having discussed the racist underpinnings of colonialism, he enquires into the impact of the mandates system on European perceptions of race, development and civilization. He does this particularly in relation to the status and nationals of the two independent African states, Ethiopia and Liberia, both of whom were members of the League and whose nationals were by the virtue of the mandates system allowed to travel within and live in any mandated territory enjoying all the rights that nationals of any other member state of the League, including the mandatory power, were accorded.

Most Africans do not see much difference between colonialism and the mandates system as far as their philosophical underpinnings are concerned. Both derived from the illusory conviction that Africans were not civilized and could not govern themselves and thus had to be governed by white people. There is no better illustration of this than entrusting the German South West Africa (now Namibia) to the Union of South Africa with its despicable white supremacist regime. Pretoria was to administer Namibia on behalf of Britain. This issue does not elude the author and he provides many quotations and public and private statements by the different European officials of the League supporting this. While acknowledging some breaches of some provisions of the mandates system, especially in French mandatory territories, the author argues that the system was by and large respected by the mandatory powers. He points out, however, that this was mainly because Germany and Italy were pressing for it and failure to do so would have deprived France and Britain of their argument for continuing refusal to return Germany's former African colonies.

Since Germany, Italy, and also the United States (although not a member of the League), insisted on the full respect of the provisions of the mandates system, the mandatory powers had no choice but to play by the rules though grudgingly at times. This apparently gave more influence to Geneva. There were also some European liberals who joined their voices with those of Germany and Italy, though with different motives, for a strict respect of the mandates system. This too gave some weight to public opinion in London and Paris. The author was therefore expected to take account of the views and activities of all these forces and assess their impact on the mandates system in Africa. Yet not only did he succeed in providing the reader with a detailed account of how life went on in the mandated territories between their African inhabitants and the mandatory powers; but he also looks at how these powers dealt with the system in London and Paris on the one hand, and how both Britain and France acted in

concert vis-à-vis Germany and Italy and the wider League membership. In the book's seven chapters, the author succeeds in providing a truly comprehensive study of the labyrinthine subject that was the mandates system, as it related to Africa.

One could have passed judgment on the book's frequent reproduction of quite long quotations and statements without an equally rigorous analytical study of these statements or quotations. However, looking at the book quite critically, it becomes apparent that the author could not have done differently and still produce such an outstanding history book. Contrary to the preferred approach of most modern scholars of the League of Nations who tend to concentrate on the organization's wider political problems, Michael D. Callahan delimitates the purview of his study to the specific case of the mandates system as it relates to Africa. In the volume under review, he further narrows down the scope to the period between 1929 and 1946. I believe this allows the book to have a much focused scope than it may have had otherwise.

In my opinion, *A Sacred Trust* is extremely interesting and well researched. Written in most parts from rare primary sources, Callahan's book can truly be considered a classical book and one that many historians of the League of Nations' relationship with Africa and European colonialism in the interwar period would find useful to consult. It should be an essential reference for any researcher on these subjects.

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BOOK REVIEW

Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving 'Port' 1727-1892. Robin Law. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004. 308 pp.

This book provides a welcome addition to the Western African Studies series published by the Ohio University Press, several of which have been previously reviewed in this journal. It is important in two ways. First, with the pre-colonial focus on West African history, the author clearly demonstrates that while sources may be problematic or incomplete, much can be understood of the differing African motivations in the slave trade. Second, using Ouidah (Bénin) as an example, the author provides a detailed account of the complex development and decline of one of West Africa's premier mercantile towns during the height of the Atlantic slave trade, and consequently the uneven shift to 'legitimate' trade in the nineteenth century. While much historical and archaeological work has focused on the pre-colonial capitals of African states in Bénin and elsewhere in West Africa, coastal hinterland towns such as Ouidah provide a unique window into the interaction between African and foreign traders and the structuring of the Atlantic trade away from the administrative centers. This work provides an interesting counterpoint to other recent studies of coastal communities in West Africa, in that while the town of Ouidah was part of the Heuda and later the Dahomian Kingdoms, European influence at the 'port' was limited, their presence non-military and the trade not monopolized by a single company or European nation.

The author's primary aim is to provide as detailed a history as possible on the 'port' town of Ouidah – from prior to European contact to the beginning of the colonial period. This marks a shift in focus, where the emphasis is not necessarily on the elites in the capital (the area of much of the author's previous research), but on the lives of the principal traders on the periphery of the Kingdom's borders at one of the more important provincial centers. To this end, the book is roughly divided into three parts, the first dealing with the origins of the town, when Ouidah was part of the Heuda Kingdom. This brief introduction is then followed by the initial Dahomian conquest over Heuda in 1727, and the period covering the height of the slave trade. Finally, the author deals with the shift to 'legitimate' trade in nineteenth century and the continuing illegal slave trade, until the imposition of French colonial rule in 1892. It is this middle portion, and the role of the town and its inhabitants in the Atlantic slave trade while under Dahomian rule, which forms the strongest part of the work. In part this is due to the availability of sources used, which although composed primarily of European accounts, also include oral traditions and local histories. While much archaeological work has been undertaken in Savi (the Heuda capital), only limited work has been carried out in Ouidah itself.

The town of Ouidah was not a port in the traditional sense, in that it lay 4 kilometers inland. The ocean, while of religious importance, had little commercial significance prior to the arrival of Portuguese vessels in the Bight of Benin beginning in 1472. Though it is difficult to precisely date the foundations of the town without archaeological data from the oldest portions of the settlement, they probably lay in an agricultural community that made use of lagoon resources, rather than a strong maritime economy. Initially the French West Indies Company (1671), then the English and Portuguese (1670s) and the Dutch (1690s) set up factories or forts in, or near, the expanding town. These forts served as warehouses for goods and slaves, but did not exercise military power and were subject to strict indigenous control from Savi, the capital of the Heuda Kingdom through which all international trade was conducted. By 1720, it was estimated that the town was divided into at least 4 quarters, and had a population of approximately 2000. The author suggests that Ouidah's success as a 'port' was partially due to the Heuda Kingdom's desire to keep the port neutral, and taxes on trade lower than elsewhere on the coast.

In 1727, Dahomey conquered Heuda, and Ouidah is brought under the administrative control of the former, though this political control is undertaken, it would initially seem, by officials not resident in the town itself. One of the more interesting elements of the book is the discussion of how this conquest also altered the ethnic composition of the town, with the introduction of new settlers, including those

from Dahomey itself, slaves from further inland, traders and canoemen from the then Gold Coast and, to a limited extent, Europeans. Dahomian commercial and political control in the town was formalized with the position of Yovogan ('chief of the whites') from 1745, though earlier individuals may have performed similar roles. The Yovogan was responsible to the Mehu, one of two chiefs who reported directly to the king in Abomey. This marked an important change in focus, where under Heuda rule, trade was organized from Savi, whereas under Dahomian rule, the business-side of trade was now organized in Ouidah itself. What becomes increasingly clear, however, is that the international slave economy of Dahomey was integrally tied to the local market in several ways, the most obvious being the rise of independent slave traders in the town of Ouidah who worked outside of the Royal market. The most famous of these, who operated during the illegal trade of the nineteenth century, was the Brazilian-born Francisco Felix de Souza.

This well written and researched work, clearly showing the author's familiarity and mastery over a wide range of disparate material, will be of great interest to those studying the transatlantic slave trade and the various roles Africans played in it, both in terms of its political economy and its legacy. The author critically, yet seamlessly, integrates varying strands of data to present a complex picture of the slave and legitimate trade from the perspective of the traders, administrators and to some extent the enslaved themselves, all of whom passed through the 'port' town of Ouidah.

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BOOK REVIEW

Shea Butter Republic: State Power, Global Markets and the Making of an Indigenous Commodity. Brenda Chalfin. New York: Routledge, 2004. 295 pp.

Shea butter, produced from the fruit of the shea tree, has long been a staple of the domestic economy in the West African savanna. It has many household uses and was also prominent as a long-distance, luxury trade good in the pre-colonial era. First identified by the colonial administration as a useful tropical export, it is now also a global commodity. Until recently, however, it was very much a 'hidden' product, incorporated into chocolate as an unidentified cocoa butter substitute or used as a cheap, industrial raw material. In the past ten years it has risen to public notice as an ingredient in high end cosmetics, where it is touted for its 'natural properties.'

In this book Chalfin traces the variable commodity paths of shea butter and highlights the interplay between local rural production and shifts in the global economy. She seeks to demonstrate that the way tropical commodities are drawn into the world market is by no means an automatic process in which global demand determines the participation of suppliers. Chalfin argues that shea is uniquely suited to answer these questions precisely because it is not typical of tropical commodities as a whole. Unlike cocoa, it is indigenous to West Africa and remains central to the local rural economy, while its consumption patterns differ markedly from coffee and sugar. Also, it is not a plantation crop but is derived from the fruit of a wild tree. Supply is thus dependent on a network of procurers. The author draws on a wide range of sources in constructing her 'economic biography' of shea. These include: documents pertaining to the colonial era in northern Ghana; months of interviews and participant observation in shea butter-producing communities in and around Bawku in Ghana's Upper East Region; as well as copious reference to macro-economic data, internet sources, marketing materials and trade policy documents.

Over six chapters Chalfin provides a fascinating account of the ins and outs of shea production and trade as seen against the background of the various economic transformations – colonialism, liberalization, privatisation – that Ghana experienced in the twentieth century. She demonstrates the centrality of shea to the domestic economy and its continuing role as a local commodity despite its fluctuating fortunes on the international market. Also examined is the degree to which global demand impacts on the access that local producers have to their required raw material as they enter into competition with buyers for the export market.

This book also serves as a useful study of the gendered nature of production in West Africa and the place of women in the rural economy. Since her study encompasses shea production in both rural and town settings, it examines the different levels of shea production, whether for home use or sale in the market. Chalfin highlights the strategies used by women to gain access to the labor and capital required for bulk shea butter production, including the formation of cooperative work groups, negotiation with female kin and the use of credit arrangements. The most important point that Chalfin raises here, is that contrary to the prevailing perception, rural women's labor is not solely at the beck and call of their male relatives. Notably it is women who collect, process and sell shea for their own profit, even though the land the trees stand on 'belongs' to the men in their families. These gender relations have changed along with the new pressures of the export market as many men also seek to take advantage of the new opportunities. They find themselves, however, dependent on female expertise in entering this economic realm.

This book also contains an in-depth discussion about the wider economic and political contexts that have a bearing on shea. This discussion highlights the degree to which these 'out of the way' rural markets are in fact implicated within global economic processes. What links the two in this case is the machinations of the Ghanaian state in promoting and regulating international trade. In the 1980s shea featured as a key product in the Ghanaian government's negotiation of market reforms promoted by international financial bodies, and in their attempts to involve their northern constituency as economic

citizens. The trade was opened up to private buyers in the 1990s as the state first withdrew and then re-entered the shea market. Chalfin discusses the implications of these changes in economic policy for local producers and examines the manner in which governments can negotiate IMF-induced market reforms.

Where Chalfin is most skillful is in highlighting the contradictions of the globalized world in which we live and the implications for the people at the beginning of the supply chain. She explores this through a discussion of consumer trends in the modern world and the degree to which modern states can exploit global directives to serve their own interests. This is seen most clearly in the relationship between cocoa and shea, both key Ghanaian exports and both products that have been affected by global consumption trends that favor 'natural commodities', whether chocolate or cosmetics. It is still an open question as to what these global economic trends hold for the continued importance of shea in the local economy.

In short, Brenda Chalfin's book is a masterful treatise on globalization, the movement and marketing of commodities, and the interaction of local and global economies. This book will appeal to anthropologists, historians, economists, political scientists, historical archaeologists and anyone who is interested in how commodities become globalized. Those teaching a class on consumption, globalization, work, gender or rural economies would find Chalfin's work a welcome addition to the reading list.

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BOOK REVIEW

Shadows of War: Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century. Carolyn Nordstrom. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. 293 pp.

Carolyn Nordstrom is one of the academics who has led the way in conflict zone ethnography and has conducted detailed fieldwork in spaces riven by war. In doing so, she has opened up interesting insights into the nature of contemporary conflict in Africa and, as she phrases it, has entered into the shadows war. These shadows, very often clandestine and “illegal”, stake out the bulk of Africa’s wars, although perhaps not recognizable at first glance. Yet they are surely there and as “real”, if not more so, than “normal” war. Indeed, the types of economies being established in the shadows of conflicts link up well-placed individuals and groups within Africa to outside interests, creating a milieu where a wide variety of networking involving states, mafias, private armies, “businessmen” and assorted state elites from both within and outside Africa has developed. These linkages may start locally, then regionally and finally encompass international connections or, they may develop in a variety of combinations. Nordstrom’s volume is excellent in exposing these networks and connections.

Crucially, the forms of shadow networking, based essentially on a form of kleptocratic political economy, not only undermine coherent developmental projects but also radically destabilize the prospects for peace and stability. As Nordstrom quotes an Angolan youth, “Peace? Forget it, there’s too much money being made here” (191). And in her various discussions of Angola, Nordstrom quite convincingly throws into sharp relief the involvement of international interests in helping perpetuate the continent’s disorder. Meanwhile, influential voices, ignoring such roles, throw up their hands at the “hopeless continent”.

Nordstrom’s work bolsters the existing literature on the real political economy of Africa, the political, private, social, ecological, and informal/illegal aspects, *alongside* the formal institutional (or what remains of it) and economic realms. These combinations of political, economic and socio-cultural forces are linked to the international and transactional. In many respects, the actors involved share an inter-subjective understanding of their own roles and norms of exchange and alliances. Nordstrom’s book is valuable because it reinforces the need to transcend the traditional boundaries taken for granted by African Studies, which invariably see state boundaries as frontiers of knowledge, converting geographic frontiers into epistemological ones. The dynamics that have driven the shadow networks are not confined to Africa. Indeed, what is intriguing about these networks is the way that they are not restricted by notions of state or continental boundaries, but are regional, continental and global: the continent’s boundaries are now truly transnational in scope.

In this light, Nordstrom’s book examines the forms of networks that are currently reconfiguring various spaces in Africa and aspects of the global political economy. How and in what way can international interests be understood to have contributed to the current malaise in the continent? How have international business networks worked to make things worse in Africa? Obviously, this is not to suggest that the continent is simply acted upon by “imperialism” or broad outside interests. Clearly, all the actors within the continent possess varying degrees of agency. How and in what ways in which there are varying convergence of interests between outsiders and internal actors is absolutely key to understanding how global forces may be thought of as contributing to the scenarios that we may observe in today and which Nordstrom draws out.

The recognition that violence and power in Africa are multi-layered and can and do involve transnational networks that may or may not be legal, or that reflect the “criminalization of the state” is fundamental. Such networks involve the participation of a multitude of actors, both “state” (whatever that may actually mean) and non-state players. This is essential, particularly in Africa, as much of the social and economic interconnectedness remain at the nexus of formal/informal, legal/illegal, national/global etc. In such a milieu, formal activities, quantifiable through orthodox analyses, only tell one part of the story, if at all—there is a conceptual gap that does not allow us to analyze the informality

of networks that are typical of much of Africa's political economy, for instance. Linking this to international profiteering, as Nordstrom notes, is crucial.

Indeed, outside involvement has stimulated a set of structures that now criss-cross Africa, some new but many with a decidedly older pedigree. Working hand-in-hand with global networks of extraction, local big men have openly advertised the economic motivations underlying their participation in conflict and war. Such activity has built up a series of inter-linking connections in collaboration with outside, i.e. extra-African forces, that have constructed what may be seen as a set of transnational networks centered in Kinshasa or Luanda and extending outwardly to Geneva, Brussels, Lisbon, Paris, Washington, etc. These shadow the type of networking and linkages that already exist "from below" vis-à-vis the trading interactions between central Africa and Europe.

Such developments are not necessarily new per se— international forces have helped mould and influence domestic outcomes in Africa for a very long time. What is new in the contemporary post-Cold War era however is that the emerging shadow networks are managing to develop their own links and ties to the international arena, often on their own terms. While we should not overly exaggerate this agency, it has increased the space available to the type of shadowy manipulators and elites involved in the process and in tandem with diverse international actors. During the immediate post-independence period aid relationships granted donors a degree of latitude and influence over the receiving elites, but in an era where Africa continues to be "marginalized" and aid is rolled back in favor of (elusive?) "trade", this patron-client linkage is dissipating. In addition, in a liberalizing world, the ability of the dominant powers to manipulate the global market has somewhat declined, granting even greater agency to those actors involved in such networking. Such involvement in war-ridden spaces reflects the internationalization of African conflicts, not only through "normal" state-to-state (or rather "state"-to-state) relations e.g. Paris with Kinshasa, but also through global business networks. These mesh outside interests with local elites' stakes. Making sense of these complicated systems of accumulation and profit is needed now more than ever. Nordstrom's book is an excellent advance in this field and is enthusiastically recommended to all interested in conflict and security in Africa.

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BOOK REVIEW

Dilemmas of Culture in African Schools: Youth, Nationalism, and the Transformation of Knowledge. Cati Coe. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005. 241 pp.

In this book Cati Coe sets out to understand the role that schools play in propagating and/or creating a national culture. She does this historically and ethnographically by looking primarily at the primary, junior secondary, and secondary schools in the Akuapem region of Ghana. By examining culture via the roles of various actors such as the church, the state, the schools, and local elders, as well as how these roles have changed over time, Coe gives a perspective that is informative and intriguing. She avoids simplifying the culture debate to a modernity versus tradition perspective, but rather problematizes such simplistic views and shows the complex ways in which culture and modernity are viewed, and used, via discourses which may coincide, overlap, or be in opposition to one another.

The book is divided in two sections. The intention of the first is to show historically how "culture became the property of the state." From the work of early missionaries in Ghana, who also, not incidentally, were the first to start western-type schools, we see the initial conflict of traditional culture and a new cultural discourse from the church. Coe then shows the ways in which the state, especially in the immediate post-colonial era of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, sought to capitalize on Ghanaian culture as a tool for developing nationalism among the youth in schools. According to Coe, some of these state efforts, as opposed to more recent efforts, were relatively successful because the state provided a cultural discourse that was in line with what the people desired.

The second section, which is the bulk of the book, examines "how culture is reclaimed by its citizens." Although it could be argued that culture per se was never out of the citizens control at all, but rather that the state was more or less successful in matching the cultural desires of the people at various points in time, the point is nevertheless well made that a new cultural tension between the state, the people, and the church has arisen in more recent times. Coe exposes these tensions by exposing a number of cultural discourses: culture as nationalism, as Christianity (or as anti-Christian), as a way of life, as "drumming and dancing," as national development, as inheritance, as ideological, or as hegemonic. Each of these discourses is interesting in its own right, but the complex interactions of these discourses is where the real story is told. For example, the state has created cultural competitions for students, whereby the state intends to be seen as the provider and the judge of national culture. However, a Christian discourse does not approve of some parts of traditional culture, and so a new form of cultural expression emerges in the form of drama-dances. Students perform on themes that are in the interests of national development (state discourse) but which are also morally appropriate for Christians (church discourse), such as teenage pregnancy or drug abuse.

This example is at the core of two main questions in the text: where is culture located and how is the meaning of culture defined? In teasing out answers to these questions, the author touches on several other broad themes: the appropriation of social spaces, appropriate school pedagogies, local participation, social reproduction, the role of power, the changing relationship of youth and elders and/or teachers and students, the role of globalization, and how top-down policies are actually put into practice at the local level. Each of these themes could be a book of its own, but they all successfully inform this study of culture in Ghanaian schools.

The text is at its best when it uses such themes to not only show conflicts between cultural discourses, but also to show the paradoxical nature within some of these discourses, such as the simultaneous rejection and appropriation of traditional culture in an effort to change the meaning of culture. For example, early missionaries and current charismatic Christians both rejected many of traditional cultural practices. However, they each also sought to use select parts of the traditional culture to give themselves legitimacy. Missionaries sought to use local language as a tool for teaching God's word. Modern African Christians may attempt to use drumming as a method for praising God, though that same drumming at traditional festivals may be rejected. The state's actions often also result in

paradoxes. The state seeks to use schools as the vehicle through which to teach a national, standardized view of culture. However, due to teachers' lack of experience or cultural knowledge, this often means that the view of culture as a possession of the local elders is actually strengthened and the view of culture as a state commodity is not ultimately successful.

Some might say that, at the edges, the book sweeps a bit broadly. In studying one region of Ghana, Coe states that she hopes to generalize to Ghana in general. However, the title of the book refers to African rather than Ghanaian schools, and in the conclusion she stretches the findings to multicultural education in the United States. However, since she stops short of drawing any definitive conclusions for these wider groups, I feel that the themes uncovered here most certainly can inform issues of schooling and culture beyond Ghana and even beyond Africa.

Coe also gives limited attention to some of the themes mentioned above. For example, educators would be interested in a deeper discussion of the effect that various pedagogies have on cultural transmission. The way in which globalization seeps through all aspects of culture could also be examined much more deeply. Although it leaves me wanting more, or perhaps because it leaves me wanting more, her approach works for me. Though I would like to see many of the universal themes mentioned above drawn out further, attempting to do so here would have bogged down an intriguing glimpse at school life and cultural traditions in Ghana—a glimpse that shows the complexity of cultural dynamics in our modern world.

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