

Smugglers, Secessionists, and Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier. Paul Nugent. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2002. 302 pp.

Scholars interested in the economic, political, and social consequences of contemporary Africa's juridical borders have produced a number of influential volumes in the field of African studies and related disciplines. Variance in these works' research methodology, geographical focus, scope of inquiry, and theoretical vantage has inspired a vibrant and often contentious cross-disciplinary discourse. With *Smugglers, Secessionists, and Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier*, Paul Nugent offers a carefully researched and intellectually stimulating contribution to this exchange.

Eschewing a continental survey, Nugent's monograph centers on a peculiar sliver of land once sandwiched between the British Gold Coast Colony and French Colonial Dahomey. He offers three attributes of the region that make the case suitable fodder for broader comparative borderlands theory testing and refinement. First, the Ghana-Togo border bears the fingerprint of not one or two, but three European colonial actors (Britain, France, and Germany). Second, it lacks a convenient geological barrier and therefore required intense negotiation. Lastly, the border is fairly typical of the continent in that it dissects several ethnic and cultural groups.

Nugent's investigation of the Ghana-Togo borderlands is divided into three roughly equal sections. The first section focuses on the construction of the Ghana-Togo border and covers a period chronologically prior to the other two sections. Detached from the rest of the book, the three chapters that comprise this section can be read as a history of the borderlands from the end of World War I through the beginning of World War II. Here Nugent demonstrates a vast knowledge gained through long hours in British and Ghanaian archives and offers a quite thorough reading of the borderlands' history. Taken as part of the larger text, this section sets the stage for subsequent sections. Colonial and African efforts to shape the border are examined first individually and then collectively with an exploration of the relationship between the Customs Preventive Service (CPS) and local smugglers.

Whereas the first section of Nugent's work focuses primarily on the socio-economic impact of the colonial border separating the Gold Coast Colony from the French to the east, the second section turns to an examination of the region's identity politics from its division through Ghanaian independence. After arguing that Christian conversions, migration, and British chieftaincy policy fostered incentives for a greater Ewe identity in Chapter 4, Nugent contends that together these factors were incapable of producing a solid ethno-political bloc. In the trans-Volta region, Nugent asserts, "the project of forging an ethnic consciousness was laborious, discontinuous and above all contested" (p. 146). This portion of Nugent's text is complemented by his work on Central Togo minorities and their Ewe neighbors which appears in his co-edited project titled *Ethnicity in Ghana*. Chapter 5 builds on the conclusions of Chapter 4 to demonstrate how calls for Ewe solidarity fared in the deliberations regarding Togoland's political fate.

Section three of *Smugglers, Secessionists, and Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier* pushes Nugent's analysis into Ghana's independence period. He first explores the relatively successful efforts of the Convention People's Party (CPP) to "uproot" what they viewed as potentially dangerous *Ablode* (freedom) constituencies. These efforts, Nugent argues, though they did not completely silence discussion of Togoland reunification, correspond positively with a dramatic reduction in irredentist sentiments and movements. In his final numbered chapter, Nugent revisits the issue of cross-border smuggling which he

addressed most explicitly in Chapter 3. Smugglers working across the Ghana-Togo border, Nugent maintains, not only have formed a powerful invested interest around the international border, but have exposed the differences between Ghanaians and Togolese to locals. This finding contradicts theories that depict unlawful hinterlands as direct challenges to national consciousnesses.

From the abovementioned analysis, Nugent culls four critiques of what he classifies as “the conventional wisdom about African boundaries” (p. 5). First, though European colonizers maintained a more than healthy influence with regard to the demarcation of the Ghana-Togo border, pre-colonial precedents were taken into consideration far more often than some scholars would suggest. Second, once in place the border created strong local interests whose proponents sought to maintain the status quo. Third, for the most part national identification proved far more valuable than cross-border ethnic identifications. Fourth, rather than disengaging from the state as many would predict, border communities along the Ghana-Togo border have actively sought to shape and utilize the state. To determine their theoretical robustness, these critiques require further testing by scholars interested in the Ghana-Togo border, distinct African borderlands, and/or political boundaries in general. *Smugglers, Secessionists, and Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier* is a monograph compelling enough to warrant these supplementary investigations.

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