

# Women's Movements, Customary Law, and Land Rights in Africa: The Case of Uganda

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## ABSTRACT

Much of the literature on women and land tenure in Africa has viewed the introduction of land titling, registration, and the privatization of land under colonialism and after independence as a setback for women, leaving women in a state of even greater insecurity with poorer prospects for accessing land, and hence, obtaining a livelihood. The demise of the authority of clans and local elders has made women's land rights even more precarious. In this context women's movements in Africa have adopted a rights-based approach that challenges customary land and other practices. In doing so they have contradicted a new consensus among policymakers around the view that sees land tenure policy as building on customary systems and giving them legal recognition

This paper attempts to account for this apparent contradiction in the case of Uganda, which has gone further than most African countries in devolving land administration to the local level, while at the same time giving rise to one of the most active women's movements challenging customary land tenure practices. If women were benefiting from customary land tenure arrangements, as the development practitioners argue, one would think the preservation of customary rights or modifications in the customary systems would have been desirable goals of the movement. This paper explores this apparent divergence of approaches to women's land rights.

## INTRODUCTION

Much of the literature on women and land tenure in Africa has viewed the introduction of land titling, registration, and the privatization of land under colonialism and after independence as a setback for women, leaving women in a state of even greater insecurity with poorer prospects for accessing land and hence obtaining a livelihood. Customary land tenure systems were eroded and transformed in ways that were disadvantageous to women. Today, the prevailing policy and much of the scholarly wisdom, from perspectives as ideologically diverse as the World Bank, Oxfam, and many feminist development studies scholars, seems to have converged around the view that sees land tenure policy as building on customary systems. The convergence does not, however, rest on identical premises. The World Bank, for example, sees the reliance on customary arrangements as a simpler and less conflictual route to the eventual titling, registration, and privatization of land ownership, whereas

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Oxfam sees the reliance on customary systems as a way to strengthen and democratize local communities, and promote bottom-up grassroots initiatives.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, one of the most dramatic changes in land tenure reform today is that, for the first time since the pre-colonial period, states are giving legal recognition to existing African tenure regimes, which are being treated on par with the freehold/leasehold systems.<sup>2</sup> Unregistered customary tenure, which is the main system of land rights in Africa, is being recognized in the new policies. Ironically, at the very time that these gains are being won in the name of the rural poor, the pastoralists, women, and the landless, African women have mounted new movements to eradicate customary land tenure practices and fight for the rights of women to be able to inherit, purchase, and own land in their own name. Feminist lawyers working with these movements have argued that customary law in the present day context has been used to selectively preserve practices that subordinate women. Rather than seeing customary land practices as a basis on which to improve women's access to land, they are advocating for rights-based systems that improve women's ability to buy, own, sell, and obtain titles on land. This paper attempts to account for this apparent contradiction in the case of Uganda, which has gone further than most African countries to devolve land administration to the local level, while at the same time giving rise to one of the most active women's movements challenging customary land tenure practices. If women were benefiting from customary land tenure arrangements, one would think the preservation of customary rights or modifications in the customary systems would have been desirable goals of the movement. How then, does one account for this apparent paradox?

This paper situates the battles for individual land ownership in the context of a variety of strategies women have adopted to claim land. Because women's ties to land are mediated by their relationship to men in patrilineal societies, women's attempts to assert their rights in ways that challenge customary land tenure systems is often perceived as an attempt to disrupt gender relations, and society more generally. This explains why so much is at stake in these battles over women's rights to land, and why women's gains in this area have been so slow

The paper shows how bases of customary ownership have been eroded since the time of colonialism, making women's access to land significantly more precarious as the protections traditionally ensured by the clan system have been peeled away. In recent years, with increased commercialization of land and problems of land scarcity, local leaders have felt mounting pressures to protect the clan system, and in so doing have placed even greater constraints on women's access to land. In particular, men and groups of men, organized through their lineage, have sought to renegotiate and redefine the formal and informal relationships that in the past supported women's access to land.<sup>3</sup> However, the clan system they are seeking to preserve is no longer one that affords women the supports it is once said to have guaranteed. For this reason women, both rural and urban, have responded to the renewed interest in protecting customary laws and practices through collective strategies, which in Uganda have included a movement to ensure women's access to and ownership of land. Women have also adopted individual strategies of purchasing land and taking their land disputes to court. Purchasing land has, in effect, become a way of circumventing the traditional authorities

## **EMERGENCE OF MOVEMENTS AROUND LAND IN THE 1990s**

Women have been active in a variety of land alliances and coalitions throughout Africa, many of which have arisen in response to legislative and constitutional changes in tenure laws. New land laws were enacted in Uganda, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Mozambique, Zambia, Eritrea, Namibia, and South Africa in the 1990s. Rwanda, Malawi, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, and Swaziland adopted new land policies and Kenya is drafting a land bill. In Uganda, the reform of tenure administration has been the most extensive and decentralized of any of these countries. Newly created district land boards administer land, supported by a network of 4,500 local land committees. Tanzania similarly passed some of the most radical land laws in Africa in 1999. The laws shift land tenure administration to the elected government of each village, which is in charge of adjudication, registration, titling land, and land dispute resolution. This means that there are 9,225 discrete tenure administrations that are in charge of all but property held directly by government. By keeping control of land within the communities, the

aim is to prevent the appropriation of customary land by wealthier outsiders, often through unscrupulous means.<sup>4</sup>

Women have been at the forefront of organizations like the Uganda Land Alliance, the National Land Forum in Tanzania, the Zambia National Land Alliance, National Land Committee in South Africa, Kenya Land Alliance, Rwanda Land Alliance, and the Namibian NGO Federation (NANGOF) — all of which have fought for the land rights of women, pastoralists, the landless, and other marginalized people. Regional networks like Landnet in East Africa have also formed to network between countries. At the same time, key women's organizations have been active around land issues in all these countries and have often played a leading role in forming the broader land alliances. At the regional level in East and Southern Africa, Women and Law in Development in Africa (WILDAF) has been active since the early 1990s on land and other issues, as has Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) in seven southern African countries. These movements have been especially pronounced in the former British colonies of Eastern and Southern Africa, although one is increasingly seeing similar movement pressures for land rights in Nigeria and francophone countries like Mali, Senegal, and Madagascar, where women have formed their own organizations to ensure that any changes in land laws incorporate women's concerns

The new movements have been galvanized by mounting land pressures in some countries that are placing undue constraints on women, who do not have sufficient access to and control over land. While the focus of the women's movements has been on customary land practices, they have also been concerned with the negative effects of the privatization of land and land grabbing as governments have increasingly sought foreign investment through tourism, mining, and other businesses. Women have joined forces with pastoralists, who have often found themselves shut out of vast grazing lands in many parts of East Africa, Botswana and Namibia as a result of large land sales.<sup>5</sup> The Beijing UN Women's Conference in 1995 and the national and regional discussions leading up to the conference also heightened awareness regarding land issues and helped foster these movements

Women's movements have been particularly concerned that heightened protection of customary land tenure arrangements has taken place in a context where the customary and religious laws and practices that have been retained have selectively preserved those elements that subordinate women. These arrangements have included customary divorce and inheritance practices, keeping women as minors (e.g., Swaziland, Lesotho, Zimbabwe), bridewealth, widow inheritance (levirate), dehumanizing rituals pertaining to widows, early childhood marriage, polygamy, and female genital cutting.<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that there are a few countries where some women's organizations (e.g., Women for Change in Zambia) are fighting for women's rights by seeking to preserve and at the same time encourage traditional authorities to adopt more pro-women policies. But these are the exception not the rule

The movements have taken up a variety of concerns. For example:

- In Zimbabwe, the Women and Land Lobby, Kubatana, and women business leaders have criticized existing land legislation and the government's land reform exercise for largely excluding women, in spite of a quota of 20 percent land allocation to women. Approximately 80 percent of Zimbabwean women live in communal areas, where they make up 61 percent of all farmers. These women spend an average of 16 hours a day in cultivation, childcare, and care of the household, and over half are heads of household.<sup>7</sup> Yet only a small fraction of the women headed households were resettled in the accelerated Land Reform and Resettlement Implementation Plan dubbed the "fast track" program. Moreover, the 1998 Draft Land Policy allows married women to register land jointly as wife and husband, but in practice, when married women purchase land, they are still asked to register only their husband's names.<sup>8</sup>
- Women's efforts were dealt a major setback in a 1999 Supreme Court ruling that gave precedence to customary law in a land inheritance dispute between a brother and sister.

The ruling deemed that women were minors and that women could not be considered equal to men before the law because of African cultural norms and "the nature of African society." In this suit, Venia Magaya, a 58-year-old seamstress, sued her half brother for ownership of her deceased father's land after her brother evicted her from the home.

- Women and Law in Southern Africa, Malawi Chapter (WLSA-Malawi), along with other organizations, have been lobbying for legal reforms and policy changes. In particular they have been working on the National Gender Policy, the Land Reform Policy, and have sought to amend the Wills and Inheritance Act. They have sought legislative change, providing legal literacy to women, and pursuing cultural change through civic education.<sup>9</sup>
- Women's organizations were active in Tanzania, where they won the right to acquire, hold, use, and deal with land in the Land Act 1999 and Village Land Act 1999. These laws also ensure that women are represented in land administration and adjudication bodies. The Land Act overrides customary law if it denies women their right to use, transfer and own land. Women's rights of co-occupancy are also protected.
- In Eritrea in 1994, the government passed amendments to the Civil Code and made a new Land Proclamation that gave women the legal right to own and inherit land, along with other pro-woman reforms. It disallows any discrimination based on sex, ethnicity, or religion.<sup>10</sup> Initially, the Proclamation permitted customary laws not in contradiction with the basic principles to continue on a transitional basis. However, in spite of the extensive provisions in the Proclamation, women's activists have pointed out that in practice men are still refusing to give women land to which they are legally entitled.<sup>11</sup>
- Over 2,000 Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organisation (MYWO) members in Meru Central District appealed to the Kenyan government to include women in land tribunal boards. Women are also being circumvented by a judiciary process, which they said is so slow that many succession cases take up to 10 years to be determined.<sup>12</sup> The Widow Support Network of Kenya pressed the Constitutional Review Commission to better protect the rights of widows, their families, and property in the constitution. In particular, they objected to traditional rites such as widow cleansing; the coercion women face from their husband's families in burying their husbands; and the interference of chiefs and clans in their claims to inheritance. Women in Kenya cannot register property under their own names unless their husbands endorse it. The widows organization has demanded that family courts be mandated to deal with all matters concerning widows, widowers and their children, and that alternative dispute resolution mechanisms be established. They have also sought free legal assistance for rural women who need such help. The widows group has worked with other landless groups, including the Pokot people in the Trans Nzoia District, and the Kenya Land Alliance.
- Women's organizations in Zambia have procured the Zambian government's commitment to implement a 30 percent women land ownership policy as stipulated in the National Lands Policy. The government is negotiating with traditional rulers to get a portion of land for this purpose.

These are but a few examples of ongoing women's land struggles in various parts of Africa

## LAND RIGHTS IN UGANDA

Uganda has a vibrant women's movement that emerged after 1986, when Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Movement took over the country through guerrilla war. There has been a proliferation of independent organizations that have taken up a wide variety of issues ranging from women's representation in office, to domestic violence, rape, reproductive rights, sex education in the school curriculum, and many other concerns. One of the key issues that has galvanized the women's movement has to do with reform of customary land tenure arrangements

Four basic land tenure systems emerged in Uganda after colonialism and they have constantly been in flux: 1) Freehold tenure involves holding of registered land in which the holder has full ownership rights; 2) Leasehold tenure involves land leased for a specific period under certain conditions; 3) *Mailo* land tenure involves holding registered land in perpetuity. This system has its roots in the 1900 Buganda Agreement between Buganda and the British. In the central Ugandan region of Buganda, the clan system was undermined with introduction of the *mailo* system, but *mailo* land is still subject to clan and lineage head approval. The Land Law of 1908 gave freehold titles for large tracts of land to the king, his family, and clan chiefs. About 4,000 individuals received land in this way. As a result very few women came to own *mailo* land. Others could gain access to this land by purchasing it from the original recipients and their descendants. 4) Customary tenure means a system of land tenure regulated by customary rules often administered by clan leaders. The customary system predominates in Uganda. Within this system there can be both individual and communal land ownership, but the land is not generally titled or registered

It is within this context that women have sought to ensure women's rights to land. The women's movement was active at all stages in the process of drafting the 1995 Ugandan constitution, which had major implications for female land ownership. Women's organizations from throughout the country submitted memoranda to the Constitutional Commission pertaining to women's rights; women activist lawyers served on the constitutional commission; and 18 percent of the elected representatives to the constitutional assembly were women, many of whom were active in a non-partisan Women's Caucus that pressed for women's rights. They were able to get significant concessions in the constitution, including legal equality and protection in political, economic, social, and cultural spheres along with the prohibition of laws, cultures, customs, or traditions that violate the dignity, welfare, or interest of women.

Women activists also targeted the 1998 Land Act. The Land Act was passed to create a system of tenure, ownership, and administration of land. It was also to improve land service delivery by decentralizing land administration. Women activists made sure that key clauses were included in the Land Act to protect women. One provision in the Act requires the prior written consent of both spouses in transactions involving family holdings. The Act prohibits decisions pertaining to customary land that deny women access to, ownership of, or occupation of land. The Act requires that the Uganda Land Commission should have at least one female out of its five members, one third of the membership of the District Land Boards should be female, and land committees at the parish level should have at least one woman out of the four members. In addition, at least one-third of the Communal Land Management Association members must be women. These associations are legal entities under the Land Act that may be formed by anyone for the purpose of communal land ownership and management.

## THE STRUGGLE OVER THE CO-OWNERSHIP CLAUSE

In the period leading up to the passage of the 2000 amendments to the Land Act, women's rights activist and organizations also lobbied without success for the inclusion of a co-ownership clause into the Land Act. They networked under the rubric of the Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) and the Uganda Land Alliance (ULA) and coordinated lobbying efforts. It is the struggle over this co-ownership clause that has brought to a head the conflict women activists have confronted with

customary land practices.<sup>13</sup> Co-ownership of land between spouses and/or family members is controversial in most African countries, especially those undergoing land reforms. It is only South Africa and Tanzania that have enacted legislation requiring land co-ownership by married couples

The insistence on the co-ownership clause stems from the fact that current legislation, given customary practices, provides limited possibilities for women to own land. In patrilineal societies, which are most prevalent in Uganda, women generally do not inherit land from either their fathers or their husbands. Their fathers often do not bequeath land to their daughters because daughters marry outside the clan, and will therefore take the land with them to another clan. Husbands often do not bequeath land to their wives for the same reason: They need to ensure that the land remains in the clan because they worry that the widow might sell the land to non-clan members. In some societies in Uganda, if the husband dies, the wife and children are inherited by the husband's brother or another family member so that he may provide for them. This practice is dying out, raising fears that if a widow remarries outside the clan, the clan land she has acquired is lost

Thus under customary law, which prevails in Uganda, a woman may have jointly acquired land with her husband and may have spent her entire adult life cultivating the land, but she cannot claim ownership of the property. If he dies, the land generally goes to the sons, but may also be left to daughters. Nevertheless, he may still leave the wife with no land and therefore no source of subsistence

Land is the most important resource in Uganda because people depend on it for cultivation and therefore their livelihoods. In Uganda, as elsewhere in the world, unequal access to land is one of the most important forms of economic inequality between men and women and has consequences for women as social and political actors.<sup>14</sup> Women provide 70-80 percent of all agricultural labor and 90 percent of all labor involving food production in Uganda, yet they own only a fraction of the land. Similar patterns are found elsewhere in Africa. Women are generally responsible for providing for the household, therefore their access to land for food production is critical to the welfare of the entire household. Even women who want to get into business need land as collateral to obtain bank loans. Since women are almost completely dependent on men to access land, women who are childless, single, widowed, disabled, separated/divorced, or with only female children often have little or no recourse because they may have no access to land through a male relative.

A 2000 study of popular opinion in eight districts around the country regarding the co-ownership clause found that 80 percent of women endorsed it, as did 60 percent of men. At least 72 percent support it because it maintained harmony or mutual understanding and 42 percent felt it promoted equal rights. At least 33 percent of those opposing the clause felt that land belonged to men, 28 percent said it would lead to divorce, 16 percent thought that since women made no monetary contribution to land they should not co-own it, and 15 percent were of the opinion that they could co-own it if they contributed to the purchase of the land.<sup>15</sup>

In the course of the campaign for co-ownership, women's organizations produced educational and informational materials, including a film to educate the politicians, the press, and the public regarding the clause. The Uganda Association of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Action For Development (ACFODE), and Uganda Land Alliance conducted legal education. They lobbied members of parliament and worked with the Committee on Lands and Natural Resources in the parliament, the Women Parliamentarians Association, and the Young Parliamentarians Association. They took out advertisements, and female journalists used the media to present their case. The Ugandan Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) contacted inter-national NGOs and alerted them to the struggle. The ULA carried out a survey and conducted focus groups throughout the country to gather views on women's land rights. Activists held numerous public events and demonstrations to publicize the issues. They also held public hearings and brought in rural women to describe their plight to politicians and the public. These hearings were effective in convincing many male MPs of the issues at stake for women. The organization, UWONET, issued a people's manifesto to let parliamentary candidates in the 2002 March elections know the demands that women wanted addressed. The campaign fostered more networking between women's organizations, more coalition building with non-gender specific movements, and more aggressive lobbying of legislators.

Interestingly, even the *Nabagereka* (Queen) of Buganda, Sylvia Nagginda, weighed in on the debate, in spite of the fact that the monarchy is a thoroughly clan-oriented institution.<sup>16</sup> In her International Women's Day statement for 2000, the Nabagereka criticized the gender gap in decision making at the national and community levels, and pointed out that the power balance was worse at the household level where decision making is by the man who owns and controls wealth. As she put it, "There is still much need for more advocacy work and new strategies to be designed to balance the powers." In particular, "Customary rights deprive women of ownership of property, especially land and other fixed assets; even in statutory law, in case of death of the husband, the woman is entitled to only 15% of the property," she added

The struggle over the co-ownership clause was a turning point in many ways for the women's movement. Up until this conflict, the women's movement had been enthusiastic about President Museveni and his pro-women policies (reserved seats for women in the legislature and in local councils, political appointments of women to key government posts, affirmative action policies for women in university admissions, etc.). They had seen his National Resistance Movement, more commonly known as "the Movement," as a force for change for Ugandan women. As a result of Museveni's failure to back the clause, many in the women's movement became seriously disillusioned with the government's positions regarding women's rights. In May 2003, the leading women's rights organizations held a demonstration around land rights that was led by an opposition parliamentarian from northern Uganda, Nobert Mao. The new realization forced women to rethink their strategies and allegiances. It put loyalties of key women politicians to the test and forced them to make difficult choices between support for the women's movement and a political career endorsed by the President and his Movement.

The co-ownership amendments were, in fact, passed by the parliament, but political maneuvering on the grounds of technicalities left women without the clause. Member of parliament and ethics minister Miria Matembe was about to read the amendments into the microphone for the Hansard (legislative record) when she was interrupted in mid sentence by someone who said they were finished and that she did not need to read them. Later she was told that because she had not read the clauses into the microphone, they could not be included in the Hansard and hence, into the amendments to the Land Act. As she explained in her book:

I want to make one thing clear. If this had not been an amendment to give women their due rights, if this had had to do with things that the male MPs consider important, Parliament would have found a way to bring the matter back for more review. They would have said, this is just a technicality, and the provisions would have found their way into that law.<sup>17</sup>

In February 2000 when the Minister of State for Lands brought the amendments to the Land Act before Cabinet, it was the president, by his own omission, who decided to pull out the co-ownership clause. As he explained, he foresaw a disaster and advised them to go slow or pass the clause along for consideration with the pending Domestic Relations Bill (DRB). "When I learnt that the Bill was empowering the newly-married women to share the properties of the husbands, I smelt a disaster and advised for slow and careful analysis of the property sharing issue," Museveni said.<sup>18</sup> Women activists argued that moving the clause to another bill was unconstitutional because the decision should not have been taken unilaterally by the executive, but rather it should have been put to the House. It was believed that the president's decision to shift the clause to the DRB was intended to save face so that the government would not appear anti-woman. But the effect would be to remove the issue from the agenda altogether. As the then-ULA leader Jacqueline Asiimwe explained:

The DRB is already riddled with controversy over marital rape, regulation of polygamy, declaring the payment of bride price as no longer necessary in contracting a customary marriage, even the age of marriage. . . And so we saw it as dangerous to add another clause that in essence would lock debate on the whole bill.<sup>19</sup>

Women activists were furious about the removal of the co-ownership clause from the amendments to the Land Act. They held protests and public days of mourning. In 2003, they launched one more unsuccessful initiative to pass an amendment to the Land Act giving all family members rights to family land. A coalition of land rights activists and women organizations had convinced the Parliamentary Committee on Natural Resources to include a clause requiring joint registration of family land in the names of spouses and dependent children. The clause met stiff resistance in parliament and there were strong allegations that the president had sent a directive to cabinet members and key Movement members of parliament warning them not to pass the Land Act amendments with the family land rights clause.<sup>20</sup>

## **BACKGROUND TO DEBATES ON CUSTOMARY LAND TENURE**

What has given rise to the new rights based discourse in Uganda and other parts of Africa that has placed customary practices at the center of contestation? Before exploring these new movements, it is worth briefly examining the trajectory of conventional thinking about land reform among policy makers and how the policies have affected women.

The contemporary land tenure regimes, which generally include a mix of customary, statutory, and religious legal arrangements, have their origins in the early colonial period of consolidation in which colonialists left family and community concerns such as land under the jurisdiction of "customary law" and customary courts. Colonial civil courts adjudicated criminal law. After the 1930s the customary tenure arrangements had become an obstacle to changing colonial objectives that now incorporated the promotion of economic growth through agricultural production. The new goals were predicated upon the state's fostering of the emergence of a freehold system and individual property of land ownership.<sup>21</sup>

It is often argued that with the introduction of private property systems, women lost out in these new arrangements because their rights to land through husbands, fathers, or sons diminished in importance. By titling and registering land, colonial governments eliminated the importance of secondary rights of women to access land and men increased their control over land.<sup>22</sup> Legal measures were seen as a way to diminish the importance of clan and communal control over land and instead placed individual men in ownership of land parcels. Women were in this way sidelined, without the necessary legal claims to land. Their ability to inherit land was diminished by male elders who gained in importance as legal land owners. It should be pointed out that the notion of individual rights was not a new one. Informal land sales have a long history in Africa dating at least back to the early colonial period, but the individual rights of indigenous tenure systems were not the equivalent of contemporary notions of private property, according to Bruce and Migot-Adholla.<sup>23</sup> Anthropologists like Joanne Bosworth argue that land rights have very different meanings in local contexts. For example, for the Bakiga in Uganda, land rights are embedded in concrete local practices, social relations, obligations and responsibilities and they don't have much meaning in the abstract. Land ownership as a concept similarly does not have the same meaning as we might think of when we think of individual property ownership.<sup>24</sup>

With the privatization of land, women not only lost their legal claims to land, but they also did not have control over the cash that men did in order to purchase the land. Moreover, they did not own land that would have permitted them to accumulate capital with which to purchase land. They generally did not control the additional labor to work the fields, nor the animals and farm tools, nor did they control the income from the sale of crops— all of which made it difficult for them to access capital with which to purchase land of their own. In other instances women's purchase of land was predicated upon the approval and signature of a male relative. There was also outright discrimination on the part of land administrators against the sale of land to women.<sup>25</sup>

There is literature that shows how women's rights to land were curtailed by the onset of colonialism, not just through the titling and registration of land but also through dramatically changed patterns of land use and occupancy. The emphasis on cash crop production diminished the importance of women's subsistence production, and sharpened gender segregation in the division of labor in a

way that disadvantaged women. Land scarcity and increase in land value made it even more difficult for women to access land.<sup>26</sup>

Beginning in the early 1970s, the World Bank, which has been a major influence on African macroeconomic policies as well as land policy, initially pushed for land reform with a strong emphasis on individual ownership through registered freehold titled land. The Bank funded a series of land registration and titling projects in the 1980s. Their aim was to promote development by eliminating communal tenure systems through more efficient land use and more secure land ownership. As the World Bank policies were implemented, a key study in 1994 found that security of title was not sufficient to invest in land and increase production due to other exogenous factors like land abundance, farm size, and access to credit and water. Moreover pastoralists and other seasonal users of land were losing out as land became titled and registered.<sup>27</sup> These findings led to policies that involved the more selective and gradual introduction of titling and registration. The Land Policy Division of the World Bank, for example, has sought to encourage a combination of customary and privatized land arrangements and to encourage the natural evolution of privatized land as a result of commercialization and the intensification of land pressures

This view is reflected by many other development practitioners. Alden Wiley advocates for the incorporation of customary land holding principles into statutory law allowing local communities to manage their own decision-making regarding land tenure matters.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, British NGOs like Oxfam UK and International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) — vocal critics of the World Bank emphasis on individual titling and ownership of land — have pushed for collective local administration of land affairs through their funding initiatives in Africa.

### **CONFLICT OVER CUSTOMARY ARRANGEMENTS AND WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS**

Nevertheless, there is a general difference in orientation between contemporary African women's movements and those who are seeking to secure women's rights through customary arrangements. Some of these differences can be found in two strands of gender analysis within the World Bank African Region Division.<sup>29</sup> One strand in the Bank works on issues of gender, growth, and poverty and looks at how women's lack of access to inputs and resources like land, as well as their disadvantaged bargaining position within the household, results in negative developmental outcomes. In the contemporary context, some policymakers see legal reforms regarding land as serving little purpose in the absence of women's education and economic independence. Law, according to Gita Gopal of the World Bank, can only be a catalyst to expedite a process of change, but its actual ability to bring about change, especially in the household arena, is limited; "developing countries are strewn with epitaphs of irrelevant laws that proposed norms that were unacceptable to those affected by the law."<sup>30</sup> Rather than introducing "complex foreign institutional and regulatory models," Gopal advocates a more gradual institution building approach. Legal reforms, she argues, have undermined local systems of adjudication and create a rigidity in customary laws that prevents them from being modified and used flexibly. This has the net effect of leaving women unprotected in both the formal legal system and the informal customary system. For Gopal, unwritten customary systems offer women more options than legal reforms.<sup>31</sup> Customary adjudication is not based on rules and laws in the same way that formal legal systems are structured. Customary practices are fluid because they are socially embedded and are based on evolving local social and political relations. But this can potentially help or hurt women, and at a time when the clan leaders feel under siege and land scarcity is great, women have no guarantees that their just claims will be given their full consideration.

The other approach found in the Bank, endorsed by the Gender and Law in Africa group, supports networks of feminist lawyers that have developed a rights based discourse that comes out of the "women's rights as human rights" approach of the 1990s. These views, which fit the orientation of the African women's movements, became especially evident during the preparations for the 1995 Beijing conference. They focused on legal reforms that were increasingly seen as key to women's

emancipation, and in particular, on constraints imposed by customary laws and practices and problems of implementing anti-discrimination laws.<sup>32</sup>

The divergent approaches in the Bank have parallels within some of the land alliances. In Tanzania, for example, the Land Coalition represented a merger between the Gender Land Task Force (GLTF) and the National Land Forum that formed to promote gender and progressive issues within proposed land legislation. The GLTF, however, diverged from the National Land Forum around a number of key issues. The GLTF saw the preservation of customary law as unconstitutional and at odds with women's rights because customary law had excluded women from inheriting clan lands and violated the joint property provision of the 1971 Marriage Act. Their primary concern was with joint occupancy rights, ownership, and registration of spouses. Along the same lines, a study commissioned by the Ministry of Community Development, Women's Affairs and Children, and carried out by the Tanzania Women Lawyer's Association (TWLA), found that female-headed households were largely excluded from access to land by customary arrangements. Women were poorly represented in village and district decision-making structures pertaining to land administration and were disadvantaged in dispute resolution institutions because of corruption, prejudice, and poor representation. Women surveyed were enthusiastic about titling because it allowed them the possibility for co-ownership of family land. The survey found that women preferred statutory courts over traditional courts because their decisions were binding. Women favored full land rights, including the right to bequeath land, and demanded greater education in land rights.

The GLTF was successful in getting key provisions for women into the land legislation, including the right of women to purchase and register land in their own names, the joint ownership of land by spouses, the abolition of discriminatory customary laws, and equal representation of women on decision-making and adjudication bodies pertaining to land.

However, these positions taken by the GLTF and TWLA were at odds with many of the goals of the National Land Forum, which felt some of the women's groups had been used by the state to promote a free market approach and the interests of foreign investors over local communities. The Land Forum was concerned that the issue of women's land rights would become irrelevant if whole communities were being threatened by land loss. They felt that women's rights to land would be a non-issue if the majority of men and women were threatened with landlessness through the abolition of customary land law and the introduction of market forces. While the Land Forum advocated for the evolution of customary law to incorporate women's rights, the women's rights organizations could not see any mechanism through which customary law would change, and saw instead the changes in statutory laws as a basis for advocacy and reform.<sup>33</sup>

Similar debates have been replicated throughout Africa between advocates of these divergent approaches. Thus, it has been in the context of a renewed emphasis on customary systems that a strong rights based discourse has emerged and women activists have been advocating for legal reform. Conferences were held by the Africa Division's Gender and Legal Reform Group in the late nineties, one in Addis Ababa in 1997 for East African representatives, and a second a year later in Benin for 10 Francophone countries hosted by the Association of Women Jurists of Benin.<sup>34</sup> Since then other regional conferences have been held, including one sponsored by Eastern African sub-Regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI) in 2001 with participants from East Africa and southern Africa. The thrust of these conferences and other workshops has been to target customary practices that prevent women from advancing, including practices affecting land tenure. They have identified national legislation and international legal instruments like the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to pursue women's land ownership rights through the registration of land and of usufruct rights, as well as through the recognition of collective ownership rights

The majority of African women activists and scholars have adopted a rights based approach, but they have not limited their focus simply to legal solutions. Generally, they have also highlighted other conditions that need to accompany legal reforms. Himonga and Munachonga have found that women's legal access to land was not as important as women's actual access to land, and that even when women have been able to purchase land, their plot sizes were smaller than those of men. Instead

they have advocated for the education of officials, the provision of legal education of women, credit facilities for women, the introduction of more appropriate technologies, and the recruitment and placement of more female extension workers.<sup>35</sup> Others have cautioned against extreme reliance on legal solutions, given the persistence and prevalence of customary practices and the difficulties of taking advantage of legal solutions.

## LAND RIGHTS DISCOURSES IN UGANDA

There are generally three related grounds on which feminists and women's rights activists have argued for women's land rights in Uganda and, in particular, the co-ownership clause. The first and most common type of discourse draws on rights based arguments, citing the fact that Uganda is a signatory to CEDAW, with obligations to modify social and cultural patterns of conduct to eliminate practices based on stereotyped roles for the sexes. Arguments within this approach also cite the Constitution, which contains a non-discrimination clause that stipulates that women, in effect, have the same rights to land as men.<sup>36</sup> By drawing on these and other legal instruments, the activists are arguing that women's autonomy and individuality needs to be recognized. This cuts against the grain of communally oriented ideals. As Asimwe explains:

In traditional African society, the individual is not autonomous, nor does she possess rights above and beyond those of the rest of society. An individual's place in society is fixed by a defined role or status in a greater whole, be it the family, clan, tribe, or community. The emphasis is on duties rather than rights, mutual obligations rather than individual advancement. Accordingly, when the women's movement advocates for women's rights, which are already considered Western and individualistic, it is accused of elevating women over and above family or society.<sup>37</sup>

A second type of discussion draws on development and efficiency concerns. As the coordinator of the Uganda Women's Network explained:

Achieving sustainable development requires addressing inequality between men and women in the distribution of resources such as land... Lack of ownership of land by women retards development and contributes to poverty. Because land in most families belongs to the man, many women do not have security of tenure, her tenure depend[s] on the (male) access giver.

Thus, providing women with greater land security gives them more incentive to invest and improve the land.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, there is the equity concern that has been most clearly articulated by Dora Kanabahita, one of the leading women's rights activists in Uganda. It is also a principle that Lynn Khadiagala has argued underlies many of the land claims of local women in Kigezi in western Uganda. Referred to as the "sweat argument," women believe they have the right to co-own land with their husbands as compensation for their labor in the fields, home, and caring for household members.<sup>39</sup> Similar ideas of labor "buying" tenure claims can be found in the literature on land rights in Ghana.<sup>40</sup>

Movement leaders do not see customary law and practices as nearly as neutral and malleable as have been suggested at times by scholars and policymakers. As an UWONET coordinator explained in an article in the press:

Customary rules have the effect of excluding females from the clan or communal entity, which rules then serve to exclude females from ownership. Attempts by women to control property, especially land, are considered by the community as misbehavior. A woman who buys land is seen as having "sinister" intentions either to run away

from her marital home, or use it as a place to "entertain" other men. The threat of women gaining power through property ownership makes society frown upon women who go ahead to acquire property of their own. "Proper" women are satisfied with males being the providers in their lives, and they take whatever is given to them with gratitude, and teach their daughters to do the same.<sup>41</sup>

Opponents of the common property clause argue that it will undermine clan cohesion. A focus group organized by the Uganda Land Alliance in Kapchorwa and Palissa elicited the following kinds of comments:

- "Women should not own land. Women do not own their children so how can they own land?"
- "The reason why women do not own land is because God created man first and later created woman out of the man's rib. How can women own land? The woman sinned first, so she has to bear more problems."
- "Women are weak in the head and may make wrong decisions in relation to land. Men are superior to women and women have an inferiority complex."
- "Land is for the clan."
- "Why should I give land to someone who is in transit?"
- "If female children are given land by fathers, they will not respect their husbands and will leave them at the slightest excuse."
- "Women will become prostitutes [if they own land]."
- "When a girl is given land she may become stubborn."
- "If women own land they will grow horns."
- "Women who buy land do not marry."<sup>42</sup>

During the parliamentary debates over the Land Act, which was passed 2 July 1998, the male politicians who rejected the co-ownership clause explained that they wanted to preserve clan cohesion and power. They rallied against the co-ownership clause in defense of "tradition" and "custom." Some said that with such a clause, women will start marrying old men so they can inherit land quickly. Others suggested that women would marry men and then divorce them for the sole purpose of acquiring their land; people would stop marrying to avoid co-ownership; through bride price women become property and property cannot own property; and how men treat their wives is a private matter that has nothing to do with co-ownership of land. Chibita Wa Duallo, President Museveni's Legal Advisor, argued that the co-ownership clause was an attempt to commercialize marriage and would destabilize families if passed.<sup>43</sup> The Director of Mobilization at the Movement Secretariat wrote an article in *The Monitor* saying that the country's economy had yielded to global corporate interests. Therefore, he continued, "Our women must rise beyond instigating strife between men and women" and called on elite women to cease undermining the clan system, work for the betterment of the whole society, and stop trying to pit family members against one another through the "exotic engineering of gender issues."<sup>44</sup>

The comments reflect deeply held fears that arise from the existing unease over the already transformed customary and clan based land systems. Clan owned land is diminishing and individually owned property is becoming more common.<sup>45</sup> This has undermined the power of the clan and the male control within the lineage. The next section explores these changes and their implications for women in greater depth.

## CHANGES IN LAND TENURE AND WOMEN'S CHANGING INTERESTS

Why has the women's movement attacked customary systems of land tenure and pushed for the titling of land? The reasons are complex and vary from region to region. It is clear that women are strategizing amidst rapid changes in land ownership patterns to secure land through both personal and collective means.

Partially commercialized agricultural production, the privatization of land, land scarcity, urbanization, increased commercialization, and the expansion of non-agricultural incomes have lessened dependency on clan-controlled land. These changes have put pressures on the kinship-based systems of land ownership and production. As April Gordon has observed in Kenya, the patriarchal tendencies of the lineage system have become even more pronounced as competition over shrinking land and other resources has intensified.<sup>46</sup>

It should be noted that not all parts of Uganda have been affected by these pressures in the same way. The clan system is relatively stronger in the northern parts of Uganda, in Nebbi, Arua, Moyo, Kitgum, Gulu, Lira, and Apac, where population pressures are not as great, and land is more plentiful than in the east or west. Clans allocate land to those who want it for occupation or cultivation<sup>47</sup>. Among some groups, like the Iteso and Lugbara, land is communally owned and women are excluded from any formal decision making in the clan or community regarding property, which is inherited only by males.<sup>48</sup>

But in other parts of Uganda, population pressures, the growth of the market economy, and migration are creating land scarcity and pushing up land prices. This has galvanized clan leaders and various groups to seek to hold on to land more actively and guard against threats to clan land. One sees this especially in districts where there are immigrants who have moved as a result of population pressures. Clan leaders have become more protective of their land and are more reluctant to allow women access to land. Land pressures have also created a vicious cycle. In Kigezi, Kigula argues, women often have more children in order to produce more sons which would improve their access to land. This results in even higher population pressures and intra-familial land disputes.<sup>49</sup> The family has also undergone changes in Kigezi. Bosworth claims that in this region production has become more concentrated at the level of nuclear family unit and perceptions of social responsibilities have become more heavily associated with the nuclear family rather than extended family. At the same time, control over resources has not been relocated to the nuclear family and still involves wider kin groups, creating additional societal pressures

One gauge of the increasing land pressures is the level of conflict over land. Kigezi in the west and Mbale in the east, where the land scarcity is felt most intensely, have among the highest rates of land disputes, and the highest numbers of disputes are intra-familial involving women. The land conflicts have been mainly over succession rights by customary tenants on public land.<sup>50</sup>

A 2002 study on Land, Gender and Poverty commissioned by the Ministry of Lands, Water and Environment found that women's land rights disputes had become the primary concern of district gender offices, and that the co-ownership issue was paramount for women. The study found that customary protections for women were weakening, and that unequal land tenure relations between men and women were contributing to conflict within families. Over 90 percent of cases brought to one District Gender office between 1999-2002 were intra-familial conflicts over women's land rights. At least 70 percent of these cases involved women who were threatened with eviction from their homes.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, in 1999, the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Programme (UPPAP) assessment studies in 11 districts showed that women's lack of inheritance rights, their inability to prevent land sales by men, the disincentive to develop the land they occupy (but did not control or own), and disinheritance of widows were among the major concerns in poverty reduction and improving women's livelihoods.

## WOMEN'S STRATEGIES TO CLAIM LAND

Women in Uganda have adopted both collective and individual strategies to assert their claims to land, ranging from participation in the struggles around the Land Act amendments to taking their claims to court and purchasing land of their own. Many scholars have found elsewhere in Africa that, in reality, women's claims to land in customary arrangements are much stronger than suggested by many studies because of their embedment in social relations. They use local level associations and manipulate customary arrangements to access land, sometimes allowing them new rights.<sup>52</sup> There is often considerable overlap between the customary and formal legal systems, and women draw on arguments from both systems in making their claims, using those arguments which best suit their purposes.<sup>53</sup> In customary arrangements women have found ways to claim land through a wide variety of mechanisms: through inheritance, gift, purchase, pledge, loan, lease, and share cropping, as well as through their husbands and other male relatives.<sup>54</sup> In Uganda, one form of resistance and assertion of rights is women's use of the courts. Increasing numbers of women are taking their claims to magistrate's courts, especially in areas where land pressures are great. Lynn Khadiagala found that although Kigezi women could take their disputes to locally elected courts of the Local Councils (LC), they tend to prefer the magistrates courts that are stationed at county and subcounty levels. Women prefer these courts because they are often cheaper than LCs, where officials often extract excessive unofficial payments. Women also often perceive the LC courts to be biased against them. Because marriages are patrilocal, with the wife living with the family of her husband, if she takes a marital land dispute to an LC court, it is likely to be filled with male relatives and friends of her husband.<sup>55</sup>

Another strategy for obtaining land is through purchase. Recent studies have shown that women are increasingly seeking ownership of land, regardless of class.<sup>56</sup> Some who opposed the co-ownership clause argued that this was mainly a crusade by urban wealthy women. However, as Sebina-Zziwa et al. have pointed out: "While there is some truth in this argument, rural women have also used the market to purchase and regain their land rights." Women of all classes have been buyers and sellers in formal land markets, suggesting a need for more far reaching land ownership rights for women. Several studies by Makerere Institute for Social Research, carried out in 1995 and 2000 in Lira, Mpigi, Mbale, Kamuli, Mbarara, Nebbi, Mubende, and Kabarole districts show that between 15-20 percent of women own land in these districts that are located throughout Uganda. A study of Mukono in 2002 showed that 45 percent of women owned land. Women's main concern in all these studies was difficulty in accessing land, which means that relying on their husbands was not a reliable strategy.<sup>57</sup> In the 1995 study of four districts, 63 percent gave "security in case of divorce" as their reason for wanting to own individual land, 28 percent wanted financial independence, and 9 percent wanted to "bequeath it without restrictions."

Women in Buganda are more likely to purchase land than women in other regions of Uganda. There are historic precedents to this pattern. Some see the decline of the clan in Uganda as going back to the refusal by the protectorate government to recognize clans' practice of customary land rights.<sup>58</sup> Women's status changed with the introduction of the mailo system in Buganda. It was not traditionally customary for women to inherit land, but increasing numbers of women did. Between 1950 and 1964, West found that 42 percent of the heirs were women and their numbers were rising at the time.

By the 1990s, Troutt found in her study of Buganda that 60 percent of male heads of household inherited land, while 39 percent of female heads of household had inherited land. Troutt also found that 30 percent of female heads of households had bought land compared with 32 percent of male-headed households. However, women inherited smaller portions of land than men.<sup>59</sup> By the 1990s, female-headed households were more likely than male-headed households to purchase their land holdings. They also purchased a larger share of their holdings than male-headed households. Moreover, in those areas that had the most active land markets, women's holdings most closely resembled those of men, suggesting that stronger land markets improved land access for female

headed households. Thus, customary land markets, Troutt concluded, provide a way out for the landless to acquire land.<sup>60</sup>

Today, women have greater access to capital as they have become increasingly involved in income generating projects, small businesses, and in some instances even large businesses. With new capital, they have sought to access one of the most valuable commodities in Uganda: land.<sup>61</sup>

Yet another strategy employed by women is obtaining legal title to their land. The legal burden of written evidence of ownership has led women to get their names on land documents. In Kigezi, as elsewhere in Uganda, the majority of land is held under customary tenure. Only a few people can afford to register their land with the government. The informal documents produced at a point of sale are, nevertheless, witnessed by community members or local officials and stand up in a court of law as legal proof of ownership. Women who successfully used this strategy tended to be in their twenties and thirties and living in communities in eastern Kabale District, where land availability sustains a higher incidence of polygamous households.<sup>62</sup>

Beyond these more obvious challenges to customary practices are the daily individual acts of resistance that often elude notice. In one dramatic incident of this kind, a recently widowed woman, Noerina Mubiru, of Mubende, was confronted by her husband's relatives one Sunday morning before she left for church. They had come to grab her properties, a customary practice in some patrilineal Ugandan societies. The 10 relatives presented the widow with a list of things they intended to take back to their village. In desperation, the widow stripped naked and walked into the living room where the relatives had assembled. She stood in front of them, pointing to her private parts, saying: "You see, this was one of the properties my late husband loved most." She patted her behind and said, "This was the second item he loved. If anybody wants to remove his property, he will have to start with these and then I can show you the rest," she declared. The father-in-law fainted and the relatives fled as fast as they could.<sup>63</sup> These kinds of daily acts of resistance rarely receive recognition in the media or by scholars, yet they represent an important way in which women are attempting to resist the oppressions that affect them most directly as individuals

## CONCLUSIONS

Women's purchase of land, obtaining titles to land, taking claims to courts, and organized collective protest around legislation, together with daily acts of resistance, demonstrate that the movement to resist customary practices is not only one of urban elite women. Feminist lawyers and women's rights activists espouse a rights-based discourse around land, which also resonates deeply with the most basic concerns of rural women. They, and a smaller majority of men, have overwhelmingly supported the controversial co-ownership clause. Women have won some significant battles around land rights in Uganda, but they still do not have the necessary political leverage to win certain key rights. What women have not been able to do through legislative change, they are tackling in concrete ways by exercising existing rights to purchase land and defending their rights in court.

Although economic and political changes have diminished the power of the clans in Uganda since the nineteenth century, they are still a vital part of society. Ugandan society is undergoing fundamental changes with respect to land tenure, clan cohesion and gender relations, all of which are related. The women's movement is articulating a vision of land tenure and gender relations that challenge the fantasy that customary arrangements can adequately protect the welfare of women in the way that they are once said to have done. This is no longer the reality for many women, who are trying to find more secure and less arbitrary means of building their lives. The movement is responding to changes that have already occurred, both in undermining women's status and in women's efforts to find new economic strategies of survival. These patterns can be increasingly found in other parts of Africa.

The women's movements challenges to customary arrangements are implicitly a challenge to the World Bank's new emphasis on localizing land administration. They show how the issue of where

to locate land administration is intensely political. As Angelique Haugerud admonished the World Bank's 2003 report on land policy:

Although community institutions ideally could improve accountability and efficiency of land law systems, the report's rhetoric about empowering local institutions to administer 'customary' land law risks romanticizing or essentializing 'community' and 'customary' law, assuming the internal politics and hierarchies in communities to be benign, and overlooking potentially inflammatory identity politics and the sometimes deeply conservative or even reactionary tendencies local communities may contain.<sup>64</sup>

Whether the women's movements will ultimately be successful pursuing a rights-based strategy in attaining their goals remains to be seen. Inasmuch as customary land arrangements are politicized and based on social and gender stratification, reliance on markets poses similar dilemmas because markets are also embedded in social relations that are fraught with inequalities and power dynamics. Women activists are seemingly going against the new direction adopted by mainstream development practitioners and agencies regarding customary land practices. The fact that the women's movements have bravely opted to challenge customary practices and rules that are discriminatory against women, shows how seriously they regard these systems as impediments to their advancement.

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## NOTES

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2. Wily 2000.
3. Gray and Kevane 1999.
4. Wily 2000.
5. Palmer 1998.
6. Ewelukwa 2002; Hodgson 2002.
7. "Zimbabwe Women Left Behind in Land Allocation," *The Financial Gazette*, 12 December 2002.
8. "Women and Gender; Women Sidelined in Land Reform Exercise," *The Daily News*, 8 November 2002; "Women and Gender; Consultant Slams Sidelining of Women in Land Allocation," *The Daily News*, 1 November 2002; "Zimbabwe Women Still Discriminated in Land Distribution," *The Daily News*, 29 May 2002.
9. Semu 2002.
10. Tekle 2002, 107, 109.
11. Tekle 2002, 112.
12. "Kenya: Include Women In Land Boards, Says Mywo," *The East African Standard*, 20 April 20 2002.
13. Actually there were four clauses that were being contested. These included: 1) an individual bringing land into the marriage can continue to own that land after marriage; 2) in monogamous marriages, home and land used for sustenance by the couple are to be co-owned.; 3) in polygamous marriage where each wife has a separate home, each woman would co-own with her husband her home and the piece of land that sustains her and her children; 4) wives living in the same house with their husband would co-own the single home and land together with the women.
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15. Sebina-Zziwa 2002a, 108-109.
16. Olupot 2000.
17. Matembe 2002.
18. "Share Parent's Property, Museveni Tells Women," *New Vision*, 10 May 2000.

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23. 1994, 6.
24. Bosworth 1995.
25. Lastarria-Cornhiel 1997.
26. Davison 1988, 15.
27. Bruce and Mighot-Adholla 1994.
28. Quoted in Palmer.
29. Whitehead and Tsikata 2003.
30. Gopal 1999, 39.
31. Gopal 1999.
32. Whitehead and Tsikata 2003, 83-85.
33. Tsikata 2003.
34. Whitehead and Tsikata 2003.
35. Himonga and Munachonga 1991, 70-71 cited in Whitehead and Tsikata 2003, 92.
36. Asimwe 2001a, 179.
37. Asimwe 2002.
38. Asimwe and Nyakoojo 2001b.
39. Asimwe 2001a; Khadiagala 2002.
40. Okali 1983; Mikell 1989.
41. "Our Laws Do Not Help Women On Land," *The Monitor*, 6 May 2003.
42. Asimwe and Nyakoojo 2001, 24-25, 36.
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46. Gordon 1995.
47. Kigula 1992.
48. Okumu Wengi 1996.
49. Kigula 1992, 46, 50.
50. Kigula 1992, 71.
51. "Women Looking for 'Lost' Clause in Land Act," *New Vision*, 12 October 2002; Nakazibwe 2003.
52. Gray and Kevane 2002, Rose 2002, Whitehead and Tsikata 2003, 88.
53. Stewart 1996.
54. Feder and Noronha 1987.
55. Khadiagala 2001.
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57. Sebina-Zziwa, Kibombo et al. 2002b.
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# The Languages of Childhood: The Discursive Construction of Childhood and Colonial Policy in French West Africa

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In spite of the deceptive familiarity of the terrain, childhood, that stage of life that we are all supposed to experience, resists easy definition.<sup>1</sup> Our fascination with childhood experiences has created an international boom in autobiographies and children's literature, as well as in self-help manuals and in discourses, programs and policies concerning child abuse and child crime.<sup>2</sup> The images of children as "victims," "rebels" or "the hope of the future" that appear and reappear in these discourses suggest that we actually construct childhood as an object of concern, and that these constructions are products of a particular period and a particular cultural framework. These "languages of childhood," however, are usually foreign to children and to childhood taken as a phenomenological experience, for they are produced by adults attempting to understand their own or others' childhood. The difficulties involved in attempting to understand children and their history have also become a source of debate about the social sciences as disciplines. As Mary Galbraith writes:

[W]hat is really called into question by childhood studies, what is raised to visibility that was previously taken for granted as given, is the meaning of *adulthood* in relation to childhood. The crisis of legitimacy in all areas of authority in the last half of the twentieth century is particularly urgent with respect to the category *adults*. In fact, it may be that it is only by consciously reentering a childhood perspective on adulthood that we can find our way through some of the most difficult moral and intellectual challenges of our era.<sup>3</sup>

In undertaking an exploration of key questions in the history of childhood in French West Africa, with a special focus on Upper Volta, I hope to address the issues Galbraith raises in a double movement. Although we cannot speak for children, it is possible to enter their world as visitors. A brief discussion of Mossi children's games and their own views about their social roles is included in order to nuance the discussion of adult discourses about childhood that in fact reflected assumptions and policies related to adults in colonial West Africa. Moreover, gender roles are particularly important, just as they were during the colonial period. French colonizers' attempts to regulate indigenous sexualities through education and medical care were directly related to attempts to control childbirth and childcare in the colonies in order to swell the ranks of taxpayers and workers.

## POWER PLAYS

The ambivalence with which adults regard children can be explained in many ways. Although we might examine the psychological issues behind this ambivalence, the most obvious reason for it seems to be the power differential. Adults control children, or try to; ordinarily, adult society legitimates such control in

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spite of obvious cases of child abuse or neglect. Adult control of children thus needs no justification. This explains why African children were central to many of the discourses of French colonialism: all Africans were re-defined as children to justify the *mission civilisatrice* (the French equivalent of “the white man’s burden”). William Cohen has noted that it was common for the French colonizer to describe Africans as “peuples enfants” [infant peoples].<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the France of the Third Republic consistently defined itself in terms of its mastery of physical and technological problems. “A conflation of civilization with mastery was thus a defining and permanent characteristic of French rhetoric.”<sup>5</sup>

The very pervasiveness of this theme of mastery may blind observers to other, related discourses of childhood that were common during the colonial period. If all Africans were recast as children, then the task of defining the category to which the younger members of the community belonged must have seemed less important. Raymond Gervais has argued for this reason that the difficulties that we encounter in establishing the lines of demarcation between childhood and adulthood during the colonial period do not originate in the cultural dissonance between African and European definitions of childhood, but in the simple neglect of such distinctions. Census agents simply failed to count children, or failed to distinguish between adult and child members of the population.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, school and medical records show that administrators attempted to give statistics about children. Unfortunately, they only saw a tiny minority of the child population, making these statistics less useful for purposes of demographic history.

This penury is counterbalanced by other sources of information. Works by travelers and literati during the colonial period frequently included effusive and pitiful descriptions of the “misery” in which African children lived, as Janós Riesz has shown in an article on colonial literature from 1919-1930. These observers expressed the need for French involvement in children’s lives. “L’avenir des enfants, comme l’avenir tout court, est toujours du côté du Blanc, du colonisateur” [The future of the children, like the future itself, is always on the side of the White man, the colonizer] in the novels Riesz examines.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, the administration’s attitude towards African children was quite different. Colonial administrators did not foresee problems that could arise if they attempted to force the French family code on Africans, nor did they see a need for changing the status of the child. Describing West Africans’ attitudes toward children in a 1935 report to the Minister of the Colonies, Governor General Brévié explained that:

Le tout jeune enfant noir a une telle place dans la famille que beaucoup d’observateurs en sont restés étonnés: on cède à tous ses caprices, on est arrêté devant le petit esprit qui s’éveille, cet esprit de l’enfant qui recèle une si grande part d’inconnu et qui, pour le noir comme pour beaucoup d’autres, mais pour tous nos noirs, provoque une admiration un peu inquiète. Il y a là une mystique de l’enfance qui rend presque inutile, pour le moment au moins, toute protection du petit noir en bas âge contre ses parents. Mais ceux-ci, pauvres trop souvent, mal éclairés sur les soins à administrer doivent être secondés, secourus, par nos oeuvres sociales d’assistance et de prévoyance.<sup>8</sup>

[The very young black child has such an importance in the family that many observers remain surprised by it: one gives in to all of his caprices, arrested by the little personality that is awakening, this spirit of the child that so contains so much of the unfamiliar and which, for the black as for many others, but for all of our blacks, provokes an admiration that is a bit troubled. Here there is a mystique of the child that, for the moment at least, makes any protection from his parents almost useless for the little black of tender years. But the parents, too often poor, poorly informed about the care they should give, should be seconded, aided, by our social works for assistance and provision.]

Recent ethnographic and historiographical accounts corroborate the importance of children in African households, *sans* racist, colonialist comments. In Richard Roberts' succinct discussion of children's status in the Sudan from 1905-1912:

Children were clearly a source of joy, a means of reproducing the community, and a source of labor to assist both the male household head...and the women of the household in their domestic duties. But children, especially girls, were also a source of wealth precisely in terms of their potential to secure goods, cash, and services in the form of bridewealth payments.<sup>9</sup>

Since children were a source of joy as well as wealth, it is easy to understand why the French administrators had few worries about children's status at this time.

Later attempts to "protect" children through legislation appear to have been aimed at urban areas, just as most of the other attempts to improve living standards affected urban areas first and foremost. Indeed, French attempts to win over their subjects by improving health conditions were often directed primarily at reducing infant mortality.<sup>10</sup> Many of the attempts at *assainissement* affecting the African population concerned neo-natal and natal care. Other attempts to assist children seem to have been voluntary, rather than obligatory, at least on the face of it. Volunteer members of *Le berceau africain*, and the *Gouttes de lait* set up by the *Dames Françaises*, organizations run by the European spouses of French colonial officials, contributed baby clothes, blankets, and foodstuffs to African mothers. Although these were volunteer organizations, the administration apparently expected its employees' spouses to play this kind of role.<sup>11</sup> In effect, colonial spouses were unpaid employees of the administration.

The clear demarcation of gender roles among the French themselves in the French colonial society in sub-Saharan Africa has received remarkably little attention, although films and novels about the issues of sex and gender in the colonies abound.<sup>12</sup> Given this relative paucity of material about Frenchwomen in the colonies who were active as volunteers, and indeed obligated to work as volunteers, it is useful to turn again to children and to the different criteria used to define childhood in French West Africa for a better understanding of what these volunteers were doing and saying. Their work clearly influenced the sentimental descriptions of African children in the colonies published during this time.

Children took center stage in many of the policies related to the *mission civilisatrice*, for they were to be the repositories of French culture, the agents of change who would anchor the French empire. Africans resisted colonial rule in many ways, as previous researchers have observed. In Burkina Faso, these acts of resistance ranged from armed revolts (particularly during World War I, when Africans resisted forced conscription) to the passive resistance of people who disappeared or refused to name all household members during censuses intended to swell the head-count for taxation purposes.<sup>13</sup> In addition, parents refused to send children to colonial schools, whenever possible. In response, school recruitment, according to Y. D. Maïga, was brutal: the interpreter and the police (*gardes de cercle*) combed the countryside for children who appeared to be of school age. Parents hid children in rolled-up mats and in granaries, but they were not always successful in protecting their children from enrollment in French schools.<sup>14</sup> Maïga gives the example of "Ali," who arrived at the market in Aribinda with a bundle of wood, only to meet colonial authorities who ordered him to go to the school in Ouahigouya, 110 kilometers distant. He was given only two weeks to make the trip.<sup>15</sup> Students who were enrolled often fled as soon as possible, leaving some classrooms empty. Whenever possible, soldiers rounded up these truants. Military action during colonization thus redefined children as hostages of French schools. Nevertheless, Africans slowly began to enter French schools and even fight for their children's admission to colonial schools when over-enrollment became a problem in urban areas.

In colonial discourse, French was indubitably superior to any other language, just as French culture was the only culture worthy of the valorization that comes with the term civilization. The *mission*

*civilisatrice* provided ample justification for colonization in the eyes of these isolated and anxious colonizers, yet it also distorted European discourses of liberty and equality, as Homi Bhabha notes.<sup>16</sup> The ultimate justification that proponents of the day used to promote assimilation was that it was non-racist: people of all races could become culturally French, and thus win French citizenship through merit. Of course, we know that in practice, very few *évolués* gained citizenship, and the French changed the requirements for *évolué* status based on local circumstances (Algerians, for instance, were forced to give up their religion after World War I, a new requirement for *évolué* status) and the likelihood of large numbers of subjects becoming citizens.<sup>17</sup> In any case, the policy was based on a form of cultural ethnocide that could hardly be called non-racist. The discourse of assimilation thus swallowed whole French notions of French identity based on republican virtues.<sup>18</sup>

## LEGAL LIES

In spite of some efforts to move towards a policy of association that implied respect for African family arrangements and a reluctance to adjudicate civil cases, the question of children's legal status became a pressing issue for the French administration in the early 1920's and late 1930's. First, because of efforts to apply French legislation regarding children to the colonies, later because of pressure from the League of Nations, and later still, in the early 1950's, because of the United Nations' plans to extend programs designed for child protection in post-war Europe to the colonies.<sup>19</sup>

Policies and legislation involving children took on unexpected political importance, for they threw into question the entire colonial system regulating legal status. By the 1920's, the tripartite structure of subjects, *évolués*, and citizens seemed fairly solid, yet the apparently innocuous legislation designed to protect children seemed, at least to administrators, to hold the power to rock that structure. Administrators posted to Africa did not always see things as politicians in Paris. Senegalese politicians had succeeded in persuading the French Parliament to pass legislation that granted French citizenship to residents of Senegal's Four Communes and to their descendants, in part because the French Parliament did not understand the repercussions such legislation would have on French control over the colonies, according to Alice Conklin.<sup>20</sup>

Administrators in the colonies clearly felt that the same was true of those who made efforts to extend French legislation to children in French West Africa. Correspondence between the Ministry of the Colonies and the Governor General in the 1920's demonstrates yet again this difference of perspective. In a letter dated 3 January 1924, the Minister of Colonies responded to Governor General Carde's project to extend the 1921 French legislation protecting "des enfants maltraités ou moralement abandonnés" [mistreated or morally abandoned children] in modified form by arguing that:

On ne saurait envisager, en effet, deux catégories de citoyens français: les uns soumis aux lois françaises, les autres régis par un statut particulier et relevant de juridictions spéciales. Les décrets qui ont assuré à certains indigènes musulmans le bénéfice d'une juridiction d'exception s'appliquaient uniquement à des sujets...Il est entendu que, dans ces conditions, la mesure dont il s'agit doit s'appliquer aux seuls citoyens français et à tous les citoyens français<sup>21</sup>

[One could not in fact imagine two categories of French citizens: some subject to French law, the others governed by a particular status and answerable to special jurisdictions. The decrees which assured certain Muslim natives of the benefit of a juridical exception applied only to subjects...It is understood that, in these conditions, the measure in question must apply to French citizens alone and to all French citizens.]

In defending the unitary nature of French citizenship, the Minister chose to ignore the use of an elaborate system defining different types of civil status the colonies. Quite clearly, the Ministry was subject to public opinion in France, and could not, or would not, accept the Governor General's efforts to protect the colonial order that represented an important means of controlling colonial populations.

In the dual legal system in French West Africa, African "sujets" brought civil and family cases to the customary tribunal, rather than to the French court. Customary tribunals therefore most often heard cases concerning children, which frequently were custody disputes. Although French officials played a role in these proceedings, they were not to overturn or influence a judge's decisions unless customary law was in conflict with the stated principles of "French civilization" during the early part of the century. This was a key part of Governor General Ponty's "politique des races," an attempt to season assimilation with association, based on the theory that European colonization could control Africans and also show some respect for their cultures.<sup>22</sup>

French administrators sometimes contravened Ponty's *politique des races* and played a role in child custody because the local laws grated upon their own sensibilities, according to Richard Roberts' study of the issue of marital instability and children in the French Sudan. The many changes in the nineteenth century in French codes concerning children were designed to protect child workers, but also "established the principle that the state had a right to protect the interests of children," probably making it easier for French administrators to justify using "changes in French metropolitan laws as cognitive templates regarding the rights of children."<sup>23</sup>

Certainly, administrators were concerned to prove to metropolitan audiences that they were improving living conditions for Africans, particularly for children. The Colonial Exposition of 1931 put pressure on administrators to present their colonies in glowing terms, as did the need to organize and exposition on the colonies for the International Congress on Childhood.<sup>24</sup> Louis Rollin, Minister of the Colonies in 1934, sent a circular (no. 29-4/S) out on 7 November 1934 expressing his delight that the Colonial Section at the Congrès International de l'Enfance in 1933 had "montré la grandeur de l'effort patiemment poursuivi dans les colonies françaises pour la protection de la maternité et de l'enfance" [shown the extent of the efforts for the protection of motherhood and childhood patiently pursued in the French colonies].<sup>25</sup>

This Congress seems to have inspired renewed interest in children, at least at the level of the Ministry of Colonies. Administrators in the colonies, however, resisted all efforts to apply French legislation for the protection of children to African children. They argued that it was impossible to apply laws that specified age as a criterion. Some of the issues included minimum working age, child delinquency and criminality (age of legal responsibility), and child head tax. The head tax was applied at various ages—in some French colonies, it was applied at age 8, in others at age 10 or 16. Students in French schools were dispensed from the head tax, an obvious incentive for enrollments.<sup>26</sup> In a 1935 note, the Director of Economic Services rejected the notion of a minimum working age of 16, saying that it would be too difficult to determine children's age.<sup>27</sup> In any case, France's own policies had contributed to an increased reliance on child labor, at least in Upper Volta. Dennis Cordell and Joel Gregory argue persuasively that in addition to military conscription, the demand for adult male labor in plantations in Côte d'Ivoire and in the Gold Coast meant that, women, children, and the elderly shouldered the work that men would otherwise have performed.<sup>28</sup> Administrative resistance to the extension of French legislation continued through the 1930's, and can be linked to administrators' resistance to the *évolués*' demands, as well as to labor migration patterns.

## CHILD'S PLAY

The problems involved in defining childhood by age may have persisted to the present, but most current definitions of childhood continue to rely on the western criterion of age. This is sometimes true even of African scholars such as Oger Kaboré, known for his work on Mossi children, as well as of western researchers. But as is well known, most West African societies did not use age, but social criteria for distinguishing children from adults. Rather than using age to define social status, then, social status defined age. An uninitiated person would remain a child in the eyes of society regardless of his or her age. Adulthood also meant and means successfully passing through stages such as marriage and parenthood.<sup>29</sup>

The anthropologist Amadé Badini writes that among the Mossi, one cannot really consider a baby a child until after it has been weaned. Until that time, the child is considered a stranger who might leave at any time, that is, he/she may die. Children, then, constitute a group of people that have been weaned, but not yet initiated.<sup>30</sup> Jacques Sanou concurs that this definition of childhood is also applicable to Bobo communities in western Burkina Faso, and adds a detailed description of the different ceremonies that usher the child into human status as a member of a community.<sup>31</sup> These conceptions of infancy and childhood are widespread across West Africa, according to Alma Gottlieb, whose research shows that most West African communities view infants as important members of society.<sup>32</sup> Although Gottlieb insists on the importance of distinctions between infancy and childhood, these concepts of infancy do affect the construction of childhood, if only because the fear that infants will choose to regain the spirit world, making surviving children all the more precious.

However, these, too, are adult perspectives on childhood. How do children define childhood? In some of the most innovative work on childhood being done in Burkina Faso, we learn that they consider themselves to be free, in contrast to adults, who are burdened by work and other responsibilities. In his work, Oger Kaboré demonstrates that girls learn to cherish their childhood. In a song he recorded near Koupéla, the girls sing:

La jeune fille se rit (se moque) de la femme mariée (ayant accouché)  
 Un jour la route se fermera (elle n'aura plus la liberté d'aller où elle veut)  
 Il suffit de trois ans pour qu'elle devienne tordue comme du coton filé (fil de trame)<sup>33</sup>

[The young girl laughs (mocks) at the married woman (who has given birth)  
 One day the road will close (she will no longer have the freedom to go where she wishes)  
 Three years are enough for her to become twisted like spun cotton thread (thread for weaving)]

Kaboré comments that although young girls aspire to marriage, they also fear it, because they observe and learn from their elders that the condition of a married woman is not always enviable.<sup>34</sup>

In the *zaka*, or minimal kinship unit of Mossi society, women hold an uncertain status at best, according to Marta Rohatynskyj.<sup>35</sup> “Small girls, as soon as they are able, take on simple domestic tasks within the natal *zaka*. By the time of adolescence, they are able to fulfill the complement of what is defined as women’s work.”<sup>36</sup> As young brides, they must work to prove that they are of value to the new family unit, and deserve a small plot of their own. Even elderly women “strive not to appear inactive; the relatively undemanding activity of spinning cotton thread is used to justify the existence of the infirm.”<sup>37</sup> In contrast, boys “spend a relatively carefree childhood.”<sup>38</sup> This contrast plays a role in advancing Rohatynskyj’s larger goal: she argues that Meillassoux’s theories ignore women’s productivity, reducing women to their reproductive role (perhaps she overstates the hardship of Mossi women’s lives; I leave this question to the judgment of the reader). In any case, Rohatynskyj’s overall presentation of the Mossi

*zaka* provides invaluable information on the context of the song Kaboré recorded and for my own argument that the social experiences of children are gendered in Mossi society.

Evidence confirms that boys, too, are aware of the power structure and express it in their songs. Young boys seem to express themselves more often in the festival called *Dodo* than in the ring songs girls prefer. Although Hausa traders and immigrants brought the *Dodo* to Burkina, as Priscilla Baird Hinckley, among others, has argued, it has become rooted there in urban culture. Although it has a greater following in Ouagadougou than elsewhere, the national competitions are televised, and other cities also boast of *Dodo* troupes. The festival takes place during Ramadan. In the evening, the boys traditionally costumed themselves (now the costumes have grown more and more elaborate) and went to different courtyards, singing and performing in order to gain small gifts or sums of money.<sup>39</sup>

Although I have not been able to conduct research in Burkina during Ramadan, one well-known *Dodo* performer who has performed in both Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso shared an opening song with me when I interviewed him in Bobo-Dioulasso in August, 1997.

Ayoo! Salam Aleykoumyaa!	Ayoo! Salam Aleykoum yaa!
Chorus: Abaabe!	Ababe!
Woto yaa no loera kinga laa!	Now it's the month of fasting!
Ababe!	
Tiwoto yaa no loera kinga laa!	Can the stranger receive something?
Ababe!	
Saan ye kon paana bumb laa?	In order to refresh himself?
Ababe!	
N ti kwili n ti lodge nor laa?	I tell you that the ancestors will be refreshed...
Ababe! <sup>40</sup>	

This fragment of a song from the festival shows that age has less to do with the singer's perception of his role in this children's festival than his relationship to others—as a stranger or in relation to the ancestors. Although a single song cannot tell us much about boys' perceptions of childhood, perhaps the comparison of the two songs confirms Badini's conclusion that sex, rather than age, determines children's experiences in large part.<sup>41</sup> The key denominator is the link to the ancestors; the singers stress this tie in the song, implying that those who offer gifts (refreshment) will be repaid by the ancestors' favor.

Ties to the ancestors are gendered, just as social status is defined in gendered terms. Male children will remain in the *zaka* of their patrilineal group, and will always “belong” to the unit, unlike girls, who marry into another *zaka*. According to Rohatynskyj, elderly men “have built up a store of claims which places them in the enviable position of owing nothing to any living being, their authority linked to the ancestors.”<sup>42</sup> Although the adult male and female roles that children are trained to aspire to change over time, the gendered differences seem to be a fairly constant aspect in the construction of childhood as a social category. The existence of separate initiation rites for boys and girls in Mossi society corroborates this construction.

To children, then, sex appears to define power and mastery as much, if not more, than age. Young girls are freer than their elders, and are instructed by women to enjoy the freedom of youth; on the other hand, boys are initiated into the greater responsibilities and power of adult male status. Although neither group escapes adult control, neither seems to believe that adults control children completely. Indeed, the

fact that Burkinabe parents, like many others across the world, cajole recalcitrant children, suggests that children, too, have some power over adults.

## CULTURE AND REPRODUCTION

Sex also mattered to the French administration. A multitude of studies have shown that European colonizers shaped or tried to shape gender relations between Africans in ways that fit their own conceptions, in order to regulate African societies and increase the numbers of colonized taxpayers and workers. Frenchmen and Frenchwomen were to model gender roles in the colonies, as the obligatory volunteer roles associating Frenchwomen with childcare indicate. Women were educated in domestic skills, hygiene and midwifery—all skills that were supposed to decrease the infant mortality rate and improve African children's health and well-being. Early novels and texts such as the midwife and political militant Aoua Kéïta's autobiography, offer information about French attempts to regulate childcare, but also reflect the tension between colonizer and colonized as they relate to children's status and care.

African *évolués* wanted their wives and daughters to help them achieve a higher status through the assimilation of French mores. Education was vital in that sense. Although the history of women's education in French West Africa has received extensive treatment, most current research has focused on the twentieth century. However, nineteenth-century African girls did receive education through various mission schools in Senegal, as Denise Bouche writes in her exhaustive thesis on education in the *Afrique Occidentale Française* (AOF).<sup>43</sup> Although education for girls was not widespread and African parents had reservations about it, by the twentieth century, the number of *évolué* fathers who wanted their daughters to receive some education had grown, making the establishment of girls' schools more important. At the same time, men wanted their daughters to fill gender-specific roles that did not conflict with either colonial gender relations or the current mix of African gender relations in the urban areas.<sup>44</sup>

In 1918, the French established a school for African midwives in Dakar, and later, in 1938, normal schools for female teachers were founded in Rufisque (Senegal) and Katibougou (Côte d'Ivoire). According to Jane Turriffin, "Colonial midwives were the most educated women in the AOF until 1938."<sup>45</sup> Ironically, the education that was meant to allow African women to serve the Empire by assisting in the birth of more laborers in the AOF also led to women's participation in the fight for the birth of new nations in the aftermath of decolonization. Turriffin's account encourages a turn toward Aoua Kéïta, one of the first female authors of an autobiography in francophone Africa, for information about women's roles and midwives' roles in the AOF. Kéïta was a midwife, but she was also an active member of the trade unionist movement and of the *Rassemblement démocratique africain* (RDA), and the first woman member of the party's central committee. After independence, she became a member of Mali's national assembly in 1960, and headed the women's branch of the party *Union nationale des femmes du Mali*.<sup>46</sup> Yet Kéïta concurs with Badini that for most women in the AOF, during the colonial period the social construction of women relied in large part on their reproductive role. Her description of women's role as mothers is telling:

The eternal refrain is the following: women do not participate in battle, nor in hunting parties, nor do they fish...The field of battle is childbirth, whose pain they must support with courage and dignity...For them, it is an ordeal which must be supported in honor. They have only the right to invoke the name of God.<sup>47</sup>

Childbirth not only defined women in the eyes of the colonizer, eager to increase the number of laborers, but also in the eyes of Africans who treasured children and often defined gender relations within marriage in large part on the basis of reproductive roles. Paradoxically, these parents were also children in the eyes of the Empire.

Responses to this situation varied across the Empire; however, traces remain, even in contemporary social interaction. According to Susan Rasmussen, contemporary Tuareg (Kal Ewey) society in Niger reflects this colonial past quite directly. This is apparent in local interactions with the ethnographer (a representative of the outsider who is associated with colonialism, in her opinion). Children become mediators between foreigners and adults in postcolonial spaces, just as they served as mediators during the colonial period.

For children, as adult representatives, may also become part of a local adult response to colonial and postcolonial encounters. Among Tuareg, this occurs in two ways. Local adults and children covertly resist authorities' frequent treatment of them as 'children,' and subtly comment upon the outside ethnographer's position as 'childlike' in Tuareg culture. The mediators in this dialogue are local children.<sup>48</sup>

This development simply reflects the earlier history of assimilation, for French colonialism was inscribed on the bodies and minds of African children attending colonial schools. Women, seen as "adult children" from the perspective of colonial authorities, were the initial targets for regulative education related to childcare, yet cultivating "black Frenchmen" through education was the ultimate goal.

## CONCLUSION

We must ask how an analysis of the colonial metaphor suggesting that all Africans were children, can help us better understand both, colonial and gendered, inter-generational relationships among Africans today. The comparison serves us here in that it stresses the difficulty of defining childhood, just as it highlights the complexities of describing the condition of the colonized. Whether we view childhood from an African or European perspective, from an adult or a child's vantage point, we cannot escape the social nature of childhood.<sup>49</sup> Ironically, French colonial administrators attempted to do so by defining childhood through biological criteria such as age. But this forced them to deal with the problems of applying French laws on African minors whose age was often difficult to discern and whose societies defined their status quite differently. Moreover, attempts to justify colonization as beneficial to children actually threw the entire colonial order into question by revealing the legal inconsistencies in the structure determining Africans' civil status.

Indeed, an examination of the assimilationist policies regarding children reveals the gap between the essentially military purpose of assimilation as a policy for "pacifying the natives" and the more overtly paternalistic motives behind child welfare and educational policies.<sup>50</sup> The military project of redefining children's horizons was never far from sight. Even after progressive instructors such as Georges Hardy insisted on African content in the texts, colonial education purveyed a French vision of the world and encouraged students to imitate the French in every way possible.<sup>51</sup> The scene of black African children claiming that their ancestors were blond and blue-eyed marked a site of double alienation. Not only did it mark the site of Africans' alienation, as Frantz Fanon claims in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), but also the alienation of French teachers and administrators who, fearing difference, attempted to appropriate the African Other through assimilationist discourse, as well as through discursive infantilization of all Africans.

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## NOTES

1. My thanks to Queen's University for an Arts & Sciences Research Fund (1998) that made archival work in Dakar, Senegal as well as preliminary interviews and archival work in Burkina Faso possible. My gratitude to WARA as well for funding a preliminary research trip to Burkina Faso in 1997. Special thanks to my research assistant and translator, Emmanuel Compaoré, and Adolphe Sanon, who greatly facilitated my research.

2. This is true in Africa as in the West, where educators and publishers have promoted children's materials that speak to their experiences. According to Adama Coulibaly of the Direction du Livre in Ouagadougou (personal communication, 1997), the government of Burkina Faso considers children's literature a vital concern. In addition to pioneers like Nancy Schmidt, other scholars are now paying more attention to children's literatures in Africa. See *Children and Literature in Africa*, eds. Chidi Ikonne, Emelia Oko, Peter Onwudingo (Calabar, Nigeria: Heinemann Nigeria, 1992); Konaté, Sié. *La littérature d'enfance et de jeunesse en Afrique noire francophone: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire et Sénégal: L'impérialisme culturel à travers la production et la distribution du livre pour enfants* (Ph.D thesis, Université Laval, 1993), and *Matatu: Preserving the Landscape of Imagination: Children's Literature in Africa* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997).

3. Mary Galbraith, "Hear My Cry: A Manifesto for an Emancipatory Childhood Studies Approach to Children's Literature," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 25.2 (2001): 190. Susan J. Rasmussen argues along similar lines in "The Poetics of Childhood and Politics of Resistance in Tuareg Society: Some Thoughts on Studying the 'Other' and Adult-Child Relationships," *Ethos* 22.3 (1994): 343-372.

4. Quote from François Piétri (1937) in William Cohen, "The Colonized as Child: British and French Colonial Rule," *African Historical Studies* 3.2 (1970): 427. It is important to note that he, like other scholars, focuses primarily on the upper classes and the colonial administrative class. In practice, class issues that he and others do not broach would have had an impact on the implementation of these policies.

5. Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997): 6.

6. "Dans bien des cas, les enfants furent oubliés par les agents recenseurs--et comme il n'y avait pas de contrôle technique, les erreurs mettaient bien des mois ou années à être décelées." Raymond Gervais, "Etat colonial et savoir démographique en A.O.F., 1904-1960," *A.O.F.: Réalités et héritages: Sociétés ouest-africaines et ordre colonial, 1895-1960* (Dakar: Direction des Archives du Sénégal, 1997): 969.

7. Janós Riesz, "La jeunesse en Afrique et l'avenir du continent africain dans la littérature coloniale de langue française, 1919-1939," *Les jeunes en Afrique: Evolution et rôle (XIXe au Xxe siècles)*, eds. Hélène d'Almeida-Topor, Cathérine Coquery-Vidrovitch, Odile Goerg, Françoise Guitart (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992. Vol. 1): 57.

8. Gouverneur-Général Brévié, letter to the Director of Political Affairs at the Ministry of the Colonies, 25 June 1935. Archives du Sénégal, 2H13 (26).

9. Richard Roberts, "Marital Instability, Child Custody Disputes, and Social Change in the French Soudan, 1905-1912," unpublished paper presented at the Symposium on Law, Colonialism, and Control Over Children (16 May 1997, Stanford University): 15. For information about the recent history of the customary tribunal, see Bohmer, Carol. "Community Values, Domestic Tranquility and Customary Law in Upper Volta," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 16 (1978): 295-310 and "Modernization, Divorce and the Status of Women: Le Tribunal Coutumier in Bobo Dioulasso," *African Studies Review* 23/2 (1980): 81-90.

10. See the extensive records in the Archives de l'A.O.F. in Dakar: Série H Santé, 1H 102/163 Protection maternelle et infantile; 1H103 (163) Protection maternelle et infantile, and 2H 13 (26) Protection de l'enfance.

11. See also Jane Turriffin, "Colonial Midwives and Modernizing Childbirth in French West Africa," *Women in African Colonial Histories*, eds. Jean Allman, Susan Geiger and Nakanyike Musisi (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2002): 71-94. Turriffin's article focuses on African midwives and their education.

12. In contrast, the role[s] of Frenchwomen in North Africa in general, and in colonial Algeria in particular have received extended attention in the literature, probably because Algeria was a settler colony. See for example Patricia Lorcin, "Sex, Gender and Race in the Colonial Novels of Elissa Rhais and Lucienne Favre," *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*. Ed. Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall (Durham: Duke UP, 2003: 108-130), and, for an overview, Sakina Messaadi, *Les romancières coloniales et la femme colonisée. Contribution à une étude de la littérature coloniale en Algérie dans la première moitié du Xxe siècle* (Algiers: Entreprise nationale du livre 1990). I believe that extended research on the diaries and novels written by French women about their colonial experiences in French West Africa would be fruitful.

13. Cordell and Gregory mention this form of passive resistance as the most widespread tactic in Upper Volta 1914-1939. See Cordell and Gregory, "Labour Reservoirs and Population: French Colonial Policy in Koudougou, Upper Volta, 1914-1939," *Journal of African History* 23.2 (1982): 220. The most comprehensive study of overt resistance in the region is that of Mahir Saul, *West African Challenge to Empire: Culture and History in the Volta-Bani Anti-Colonial War* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2001).

14. Amalie Sanon, Bobo-Dioulasso July 1998, personal communication.

15. Y. Désiré Maïga, "L'enseignement colonial en Haute-Volta de 1920 à 1932" (Mémoire de maîtrise, Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, 1972): 41. See also Malidoma Somé's autobiography, *Of Water and the Spirit* (New York: Putnam, 1994). For an overview of education in French colonies that focuses on the curriculum, see Gail Kelly, "The Presentation of Indigenous Society in the Schools of French West Africa and Indochina, 1918-1938," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26.3 (1984): 523-542.

16. Bhabha, Homi, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*, eds. Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh (London: Edward Arnold, 1989): 234-241.

17. For details on the elites' position see Bonnie Campbell, "Social Change and Class Formation in a French West African State," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 8.2 (1974): 285-306. She writes of Vichy policy, "Now even those who had become naturalized were treated as common African subjects" (299). At the time, Upper Volta no longer existed as a colony; its territories were parceled out to the colonies of Côte d'Ivoire, Niger and Soudan 1933-1947 (Upper Volta was reassembled in 1947).

18. For one famous French approach to this colonialist irony, see Jean-Paul Sartre's preface to Frantz Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: Maspéro, 1961).

19. See Charles Ward, "United Nations Work in Africa," *African Affairs* 54.216 (1955): 213.

20. Conklin 155.

21. Letter from Minister Sarraut to Governor General Carde, 3 January 1924. Archives du Sénégal, Série 2H13 (26).

22.. For a discussion of the see-sawing between association and assimilation, see François Manchuelle, "Assimilés ou patriotes africains ? Naissance du nationalisme culturel en Afrique française (1853-1931)," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 138.139 (1995) : 333-368.

23. Richard Roberts, "Marital Instability, Child Custody Disputes, and Social Change in the French Soudan, 1905-1912," (Unpublished paper presented at the Symposium on Law, Colonialism, and Control

Over Children, 16 May 1997, Stanford University): 21. See also *Les jeunes en Afrique: Evolution et rôle (XIXe au XXe siècles)*, eds. Hélène d'Alméida-Topor, Cathérine Coquéry-Vidrovitch, Odile Goerg, & Françoise Guitart (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992) for descriptions of that "cognitive template."

24. *Exposition coloniale internationale de 1931. La Haute Volta*. Paris: Société d'Éditions Géographiques, Maritimes et Coloniales, 1931.

25. 2G51 (78), Circular no. 29, 4/S from Louis Rollin to the Governors General of the Colonies.

26. Cordell and Gregory (209-210) discuss the issue of child head tax, remarking that the data on children are particularly unreliable. No note is made of the issue of schooling, or of age determination. See Gervais and archival material for a more complete discussion of these issues.

27. 2G51 (78), Note no. 986SE/9, Dakar 21 May 1935.

28. Cordell and Gregory, 223-224.

29. See Ki-Zerbo, Joseph. "Statuts et conditions de vie de l'enfant à travers l'histoire africaine," Séminaire sous-régional sur la convention des droits de l'enfant (Dakar, 1988) and Riesman, Paul. "The Person and the Life Cycle in African Social Life and Thought," *African Studies Review* 29.2 (1986).

30. Amadé Badini, *Naître et grandir chez les Moosé traditionnels*, Découvertes du Burkina (Paris: Sépia-ADDB, 1994).

31. Sanou, Jacques. *Importance des pratiques traditionnelles de socialisation et d'enculturation de la jeunesse rurale en Haute-Volta. Exemple des jeunes Bobo-fing dans le département des Hauts-Bassins, 1960-1982*, Mémoire de Diplôme des Hautes Etudes Pratiques Sociales (Lyon, 1983).

32. Alma Gottlieb, "Where Have All the Babies Gone? Toward an Anthropology of Infants and Their Caretakers," *Anthropological Quarterly* 73.3 (2000): 121-132.

33. Oger Kaboré, "Les chansons d'enfants Moose: signification socio-culturelle d'un mode d'expression des jeunes filles en milieu rural," *Cultures sonores d'Afrique*, ed. Junzo Kawada (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo U of Foreign Studies, 1997): 144.

34. Ibid 131.

35. For an extended analysis of the *zaka*, see Marta Rohatynskyj, "Women's Virtue and the Structure of the Mossi Zaka," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 22.3 (1988): 528-551.

36. Rohatynskyj 535.

37. Rohatynskyj 536-537.

38. Rohatynskyj 537.

39. Hinckley, Priscilla Baird. "The Dodo Masquerade of Burkina Faso," *African Arts* 19/2 (1986): 74-77.

40. Compaoré 1997.

41. Badini, 34. Badini goes so far as to say of women that they have a "unique raison de vivre: procréer" [a single reason for living: to procreate]. Certainly, this is only one person's interpretation of Mossi cultural values; however, the fact that he underlines the importance of women's reproductive role in this way indicates that sex does indeed determine childhood experiences to a great degree, perhaps as much as age.

42. Rohatynskyj, 547.

43. Denise Bouche, *L'enseignement dans les territoires français de l'Afrique occidentale de 1817 à 1920: Mission civilisatrice ou formation d'une élite?* Ph.D thesis, U of Paris I (Lille: U of Lille P, 1974).

44. Diane Barthel, "Women's Educational Experience Under Colonialism: Toward a Diachronic Model," *Signs* 7.1 (1985): 137-154. See Gertrude Mianda, "Colonialism, Education, and Gender Relations in the Belgian Congo: The *Évolué* Case," *Women in African Colonial Histories*, ed. Jean

Allman, Susan Geiger & Nakanyikie Musisi (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2002): 144-163 for a discussion of Belgian policies similar to those of the French.

45. Turriffin 72.

46. Turriffin 72.

47. Quoted in Turriffin 78. See Aoua Kéïta, *Femme d'Afrique* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1975) for the full text.

48. Rasmussen 347.

49. I agree with Philippe Ariès' thesis in *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Seuil, 1973) that childhood is a socio-historical construct.

50. Governor Angoulvant wrote, in his *La pacification de la Côte d'Ivoire*, that "il faudra que nos sujets viennent au progrès malgré eux, comme certains enfants acquièrent l'éducation en dépit de leur répugnance au travail. Nous devons jouer vis-à-vis de l'indigène le rôle de parents jeunes et volontaires et c'est à l'autorité à obtenir ce qui serait refusé par les persuasions." Cited in Kambou-Ferrand, Jeanne-Marie, *Peuples voltaïques et conquête coloniale, 1885-1914. Burkina Faso* (Paris: ACCT/L'Harmattan, 1993): 392.

51. For information about codes and laws concerning the use of French, see Turcotte, Denis and Hélène Aubé, *Lois règlements et textes administratifs sur l'usage des langues en Afrique Occidentale Française (1826-1959). Répertoire chronologique annoté* (Laval: Presses de l'Université de Laval, 1983).

# The Cultural Identity of Africa and the Global Tasks of Africana Studies

KWASI KONADU

## ABSTRACT

**This essay is concerned with the cultural identity of Africa and the appropriate study of Africa(ns). It is a direct response to the notion of conceptually and pragmatically situating Africa, in all its scope and dimensions, back into Africana Studies. The paper raises a fundamental question: whether the vocation of ‘African Studies’ is really about the study of Africa(ns) and proposes that Africana studies is better suited to project a consummate cultural identity and approach to the study of Africa(ns). Toward that end, the paper distinguishes ‘African studies’ from ‘Africana studies’ which is perhaps the first step in confronting the challenges faced by both enterprises, as well as how the latter can become an appropriate intellectual enterprise that would substantively contribute to African life and practice.**

## INTRODUCTION

Ancient cultures are being transformed through globalized social reengineering into an electronic, legal, linguistic and moral parking lot that blankets the earth in an undifferentiated paved uniformity. Both the lot and access to it are Indo-European (including clones and associates) owned and managed. Upon the certification of their postmodern Euro-American cultural reorientation, formerly distinct nationalities, states, clans, [ethnicities] are provided with bar-coded entrance keys and assigned parking spaces (fixed economic roles/status) to facilitate the rapid production, transfer and consumption of goods and services. Ownership and control of the means of production, rulemaking agencies, financial centers and the global telecommunications that facilitate the transactions are securely in the hands of the American, European, and Japanese business elite... This is the current face of an old monster that feverishly reinvents itself. This is a wolf pack that changes clothes between slaughters. This is the rapacious and insatiable Indo-European expansionism.<sup>1</sup>

The ‘parking lot’ analogy is both purposeful and instructive. For our purpose, the analogy contextualizes the discussion that follows, elucidating some of the current global and local truisms of the condition of African people. This essay is concerned with the cultural identity of Africa and the ways in which the study of Africa(ns) is approached. It is also a direct response to a statement by Oyekan Owomoyeka: “...perhaps the surest way of getting Africa back into African Studies is to get African Studies back to Africa... But, even if we cannot return African Studies to Africa in geographical terms, we could do so at least epistemologically and paradigmatically.”<sup>2</sup> Owomoyeka’s statement is principally a conceptual claim premised on the anchoring and ownership of the study of Africa(ns) by Africans. It

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raises the fundamental question of whether the vocation of ‘African Studies’ is really about what it purports to be. Does African Studies contribute to African life and practice in substantive ways?

If the study of Africa has been and continues to be driven by paradigms and theories established by non-African scholars, then African studies is an invention of academia, which ultimately serves its own interests and those of non-Africans. Here, I am merely stating the obvious. The problem that Owomoyeka poses is significant not so much for the field of African studies, but for the study of Africa(ns). By the study of Africa(ns), I mean an African centered approach that conceptualizes reality and situates Africans within their cosmological, symbolic, and pragmatic universe. Such an unambiguous approach not only affirms African agency and serves their best interests, but also authenticates the notion of an African cultural-historical continuum that predates African studies and would continue even if the academic field ceased to exist. The discussion that follows seeks to address why the situation Owomoyeka describes came into being and how it is possible for the study of Africa(ns) to conceptually and pragmatically become anchored in the reality of Africa, in all its scope and comprehensible dimensions.

### **ANCHORING AND OWNERSHIP IN THE STUDY OF AFRICA(NS)**

The situation that Owomoyeka describes has its origins in the inception and development of African studies in the academy. Given the academic character of African studies in the U.S. and its geographical and cultural construction outside of Africa, it is evident that the ‘founding’ of the field lies ostensibly in anthropology and through agents of the European colonial enterprise. Essentially, the colonial enterprise’s “physical occupation and its maintenance (pacification, exploitation [of Africa]) made research possible, research freed of the constraints of maintaining order and *its own security*.”<sup>3</sup> The unrestricted access to research ‘objects’ bolstered the efforts of anthropology, which in turn, provided the knowledge base for much of the other academic disciplines, including colonial planners, whose policies of (in)direct governance mandated ‘ethnographic’ data for establishing and perpetuating an effective hegemony (even without their physical presence). The academic study of Africa emerged out of this political and cultural context. I say the ‘academic study of Africa,’ that is, African studies, to distinguish the efforts of non-Africans studying Africa from Africans studying themselves and the world they existed in. The latter, of course, originates in the organic processes of African culture development.

Despite efforts by notable scholars such as Leo Hansberry, who designed the first African studies course at Howard University in the 1920s, the development of African studies has been dominated outside of the African world and largely through non-Africans. In American institutions, primarily historically white institutions, between 1953 and 1961 ten African studies programs and/or departments were established. By 1970, there were approximately seventy-eight African studies programs and/or departments in the United States. Furthermore, the non-African controlled Ford Foundation has been and continues to be a prime financier of African studies. Conceptual evidence for African studies being an invention by and created to serve the interests of non-Africans can be found in the parameters of African studies. African studies focused on the geographical entity of Africa rather than the movement and development of its people, thus suggesting that Africans who were forcibly brought to the United States and elsewhere stopped being Africans. The claim is a cultural and political stance which rejects the reality of African cultural-historical continuity, and conforms to a worldview and theoretical construct that also holds the principal unit of analysis to be the ‘tribe.’<sup>4</sup> In this regard, it becomes clear not only that the “institutions of European society [have provided]... the categories of western (or European) social science,” but also the unstated thrust in African Studies that non-European culture(s) either conform or exist in opposition to this authoritative model of social organization and knowledge production.<sup>5</sup> The implication is that “African cultures are held as the primary obstacles to [their own] development.”<sup>6</sup>

The development and expansion of the African and its cultural and societal order is intimately linked to the notion of Africana studies, rather than African studies. African studies and its development is akin to African “political independence and development [which]... have been illusionary.”<sup>7</sup> Africana studies, in contrast, is an insurgent movement originating in the 1960s that ‘shifted the center,’ brought about new ways of knowing and constructing knowledge, and challenged the established socio-political order. Africana studies critiqued the established order within the academy. This insurgent posture emphasized an alternative perspective related to liberation that eventually led to a rupture within the African Studies Association and the creation of the African Heritage Studies Association in the late 1960s.

In addition to the posture and foci of Africana studies, its motto of ‘commitment, connectedness, and consciousness’ expresses the necessity of having substantive links with communities of the African world outside academia and its mainstream discourse or knowledge project, and Western racialized and genderized epistemology. The reason historically white institutions can point to diversity in their schools is due to the insurgence of people of the African world in the 1960s. The large majority of students and instructors of the African world, in these institutions, owe their presence to the Black (Africana) studies movement of that same period. This movement has raised the most challenges about the production of knowledge and affirmed the notion of African cultural-historical continuity by way of its focus on the African world—that is, Africa, the Americas, Europe and elsewhere. African studies becomes a moot point for any African who is located within his/her conceptual universe and is culturally oriented to proclaim and express the pragmatism and philosophy of this universe without ambiguity. This is not to indict any African who feels that he or she exemplifies these decisive factors, but if a scholar, African or non-African, works for a non-African or African institution and is not primarily engaged in the study of Africa(ns), as described in this essay, he or she is merely an agent of non-African interests. There is no fence or gray area to sit on.

The study of Africa(ns) and African cultural continuity is best represented by what African-centered scholars in North America characterize as ‘Africana studies.’ It should be made clear that “Africana studies is not a recent development.”<sup>8</sup> Africana studies is a knowledge enterprise that explores, records, interprets and builds upon experiences of a global African community. As a tradition of intellectual inquiry and study, it contributes to the development of theoretical constructs and research methods for and through the aforementioned tasks. Africana studies transcends the disciplinary boundaries held by academia and seeks a holistic mode that represents the comprehensible dimensions of the temporal-spiritual continuum of life itself. In this continuum, the expression of truth is culture bound, since all human endeavors occur in the context of culture, and is neither esoteric nor mystical, but rather a communal entity. Africana studies properly situates the seemingly elusive concept of culture by recognizing African cultural continuity in the study of Africa(ns). Culture is a composite of the ideational, spiritual, and material realities, and if African scholars do not thoroughly engage these realities, they are neither dealing with African culture(s) or reality itself. In this context, the design of Africana studies as a teaching and research enterprise that is located within the academy suffers from challenges similar to African studies. The quandary for both African studies and Africana studies is that they cannot or have not effectively addressed the issues of culture and therefore confront African reality in its most comprehensible totality. African and Africana studies are not independent of white-controlled institutions or financing and historically Black colleges in the United States and universities on the African continent, which have African or Africana studies programs, also suffer from this dilemma.<sup>9</sup>

The debate whether African or Africana studies is a field or discipline highlights the ideational dilemma, which is apparent by the conceptual dependency and use of non-African paradigms and theories. It is said that a discipline is marked by a) clearly established intellectual parameters with apparent theoretical configuration; and b) ideational and analytical ‘meanings’

that must be delineated (i.e., what specifically characterizes what ‘we’ do as different in the social construction of knowledge). By these standards, both African and Africana studies lack a consummate theory of the study of Africa(ns). Indeed, the source of what these enterprises need (but lack) can be found in “[t]he conceptions of culture, history, and spirituality [that] have not always been presented in a coherent fashion.”<sup>10</sup> African and Africana studies are also deficient in engaging questions of spiritual existence, the parent of the ideational and material dimensions of reality. The deficiency is due to (a) the location of both enterprises of inquiry in the academy (whether in Africa or elsewhere) and (b) ‘intellectuals’ who perceive reality primarily through rationalism and are thus impotent in their spiritual receptivity.<sup>11</sup>

### **TOWARD THE STUDY OF AFRICA(NS)**

It is unmistakable that Oyekan Owomoyeka’s statement speaks not to the question of possibility, but the necessity of the study of Africa(ns) being located conceptually, symbolically, and culturally in Africa. In this context, Africa should be viewed as a geographic, cultural, conceptual, socio-political, and spiritual entity. In fact, a concept of culture that would suffice is one in which Africa is the expression of culture, that is, the physical (land and people), ideational (philosophy and thought), and spiritual (temporal manifestation). In essence, Africa and its indigenous peoples are living entities bound in symbiotic relationships. And by extension, the African who is situated within his/her conceptual universe and is culturally orientated to proclaim and express the pragmatism and philosophy of this universe without ambiguity is Africa!

The implication for African and Africana studies then is to either move in the concerted and necessary direction, as described below, or suffer the eminent fate of outmoded ideologies. Though both African and Africana studies face similar challenges, it is my contention that Africana studies—due to its scope and design, and it being the product of an insurgent movement which sought to establish an African-centered intellectual enterprise in higher education—is more suitable to accomplish the global tasks of the study of Africa(ns). Yet, for Africana studies to move forward as the authentic study of Africa(ns) it must address the following issues forthrightly and unambiguously:

Firstly, Africana studies must define itself as the study, learning, and living of Africa(ns) and then view itself as a discourse. When Africana studies becomes a discourse “it [must be] systematic and rule governed via its alignment with a particular episteme and paradigm. It [must be] ‘honest’ in that it is an accurate representation of the ‘truth’ as defined and experienced by the people who are ‘subject’ and have ‘agency’ with the lived experience of that truth.”<sup>12</sup> The African episteme must answer the epistemological concerns of (a) what is the nature of reality, (b) how truth is defined, (c) what is the relationship between the knower and the known, (d) what can be known, and (e) what should/could be done in response to the known.<sup>13</sup>

If epistemology is preoccupied with the nature of knowledge and science is the means by which we validate what we know, then it would follow that all methods of inquiry are scientific methods (i.e., they confirm what we know). Yet, science must be understood as a cultural science that is anchored in the Africans’ understanding of the dynamism of their culture and their ideas about the organization of reality. Otherwise, what is the use (for the African) of critical examination and empirical verification if these processes are not consistent with the African conceptual universe and cultural orientation? Thus, theoretical definitions and characteristic explanations and description of its methodology must be addressed within the collective ‘circle’ of those Africans who are committed to the endeavor of Africana studies.<sup>14</sup> Once this need is satisfied, Africans can actually begin to concretely, through communication and consensus, address the historiography of the African experience beyond the currency of mainstream

historical knowledge and criticisms of ‘revisionist history.’<sup>15</sup> The fact is all history is revisionist. This, in part, explains why the task of addressing the historiography of the African experience is a serious one, perhaps, the most dynamic task of them all.

Secondly, Africana studies must resolve the central question of ‘to be African or not.’ That is, Africans ‘must realize their indisputable connection to their African origin and that which brought [them] into existence.’<sup>16</sup> The question of being African or not is one of authenticity or mimicry. Let me illustrate: “A mole will perceive the world in terms of tunnels and tunneling. Similarly, an ant or bee will understand reality as an expression of the collective... The imposition of the mole’s conception of reality on the bee can only result in a confused and self-destructive bee.”<sup>17</sup> In this illustration, the African is analogous to the ‘bee’ and the non-African is to the ‘mole.’

The African must be like the sun, which contributes greatly to human life, but does not proselytize; in all humility, it shines brilliantly each day and simply does what a sun does. The sun (as we know it) does not attempt to be the moon or another star, because that is not its nature. An African proverb summarizes my point best: ‘A piece of wood may stay in water for ten years, but it will never become a crocodile.’

Thirdly, Africana studies must exercise caution with comparative methodologies or postures that are polemical in nature (e.g., African discourses that are preoccupied or even consumed by non-African concerns). Comparative hypotheses and methodologies represent inferences based on incomplete evidence characteristic of European thought and behavior as the referenced universe. Conceptual dependency or incarceration would have one believe that comparing African reality to that of non-Africans, as the referenced universe, is sensible. European epistemology is fundamentally concerned with the creation or invention of the ‘object’ (e.g., the thing, the other). When Africans assume the posture of comparative methodologies or polemical preoccupation, the totality of what is European or non-African becomes the reference and Africans therefore create ‘masters’ out of a function of fear, a fear that is ostensibly transferred through European epistemology and cultural hegemony. The appropriate posture is that the collective wisdom and sensibilities of African people must be asserted and affirmed through collective intelligence and not through the individual intellect. It is a process, not a step-by-step procedure, of cultural rediscovery and reclamation, and by extension, personal transformation. Again, all answers can and will be found in the ‘circle’ (collective).

Lastly, Africana studies must acknowledge and move beyond the fact that the African’s psychic and institutional spaces are contested and congested areas. They are contested in the sense that many Africans do not control and independently operate institutions, and produce thinking outside non-African spheres of influence and hegemony. The African’s psychic and institutional spaces are congested mentally as a result of cultural confusion and ambiguity, and institutionally as a result of replicating European schooling and, upholding the primacy of Western culture more than Westerners themselves. It is only within this psychic and institutional arrangement, for instance, that one can be an ‘expert’ in African or Africana studies and not know an African language. This is unheard of in any field of study, teaching, and learning. In addition, the issue of psychic and institutional space that Africans identify as theirs is closely related to the direction of Africana studies outside the academy (i.e., independent of non-African funding, theories and paradigms, learning structures). It is clear, at numerous levels, that Africans worldwide are dependent upon the non-African socio-political and economic order.

The key question is to what extent is proximity (to that order) an indication of compromise, at best, or surrender at worst? History informs us that the closer Africans get to ‘things’ non-African, whether they be liquor, money, or gadgets (technology), the more these Africans became dependent, mystified, and lose their sense of cultural being (including their cultural and materials resources). The point here is not that liquor, money or gadgets are exclusively of non-African origin but rather, these entities cannot be divorced from the cultural context from which they are derived. Africana studies must therefore be an

intergenerational transmission process and an institution of cultural knowledge to ensure continuity. It should develop leadership competence in community and culture. Such a process and institution may have associations with non-African learning structures, but should be relatively self-sufficient and located in physical and psychic spaces that Africans identify and defend as theirs. To develop leadership competence in community and culture is a centrifugal movement which would demystify foreign ideologies embodied in 'things' non-African and a simultaneous shift centripetally to an African reality in terms of living, learning, and studying.

## CONCLUSION

In spite of its challenges, Africana studies is better equipped and well-suited to address the study of Africa(ns) in a substantive way as well as contribute to African life and practice. My position is certainly not the same as Gavin Kitching as expressed in his piece, "Why I gave up African studies", but his sentiments do underscore if not confirm some of my observations and conclusions about African studies (*African Studies Review & Newsletter*, vol. XXII, 1 (June 2000), pp. 21-26). Essentially, Kitching found African studies depressing as a result of his optimism and hope (in and about Africa) being replaced by pessimism and cynicism. This was compounded by dichotomist factions that either favored 'internalist' or 'externalist' explanations within African studies for Africa's problems. Kitching concluded that until the legacy of imperialism is 'killed,' 'neither Africa nor African studies will be able to make real progress.' His conclusions, though, seem to put faith (albeit misguided) in the 'state' and 'elites.' Kitching argues, "The prime responsibility for making a decent future for Africa's people lies... on the shoulders of the continent's own governing elites." This, however, has not worked, particularly, from the perspective of the majority of the people in African societies. African 'states' are both artificial and truncated entities that have no real meaning in people's lives (though their lives are, unfortunately, affected by their policies, decisions and instruments that protect the vested interests of those 'elites,' or often the American, European, and Japanese business elites that operate through the clones and associates we call 'African elites.')

The fact of the matter is that we cannot and should not be so inclined to start from the 'problems of Africa(ns)' but rather from what has worked in the best interests of Africa(ns) and what will contribute to the genuine self-sufficiency, ideational clarity, and physiological health of Africa(ns). In the realm of research, study, and teaching, the notion of Africana studies can substantively contribute to that reality as it addresses those challenges expressed in this essay. The Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell University and the African World Studies Institute at Fort Valley State University, for example, offer a combined starting point or model to emulate. The faculty, students and curricula foci are grounded in the realities of the African world. Most faculty and students are not just serious 'academics' but also activists that plan and participate in activities that affect the lives of Africans. It is one thing to talk, attend conferences, and debate at conferences, but the key question, in my mind, is what are African scholars building? Africana studies is in a position to develop scholars who are engaged in research, teaching, and studying African reality as well as contributing, in real ways, to the African life and practice.

The last 30 years in Africana studies has not been so much about building—institutions, families, villages, and African personhood—in the African world but more so to clarify exactly what Africana studies is and should be about. Until recently, most, if not all, African scholars were trained in non-African traditions of inquiry or disciplines and then 'came over' to African or Africana studies. Today, however, we have older and young scholars, such as myself, who have had ten or more concentrated years of training in Africana studies and are now in a position to build from a consummate foundation and with a clearer vision. That vision is expressed in this essay. A people without a sense of history are visionless and so, with vision, those who are committed to the enterprise of Africana studies have to do the work

that is necessary and not be distracted by illusionary debates or events that do not contribute to African life and practice in any real way.

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## NOTES

1. Akoto and Akoto, pp. 5-6.
2. Owomoyela, pp. 96-97.
3. Copans, p. 21.
4. Onoge, p. 35.
5. MacGaffey, p. 42.
6. Onoge, p. 39.
7. Onoge, p. 40.
8. According to James Turner, *Africana studies*' "... recent emergence as an academic field is much more related to the endeavors of Black intellectuals during the past [seventy] years... but it was during [the 1930s] that the idea of Black Studies as a separate academic field began to emerge" (pp. xv – xvi).
9. July, p. 182.
10. Akoto, p. vi.
11. Spiritual receptivity should not be confused with religious orientation or convictions. The nature of African spirituality requires a much lengthier discussion, which will not be provided here.
12. Nobles, p. 187.
13. Nobles, p. 189.
14. Turner, p. xvii. Here, I am using the word 'circle' purposely to invoke the African philosophical assumption that all answers can and will be found in the circle made by those who create and complete it.
15. Neale, p. 112.
16. Nobles, p. 192.
17. Akoto and Akoto, p. 31.

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# Transforming African and African-American Sociopolitical and Educational Realities: Possibilities Or Pipe Dreams?

BEVERLY LINDSAY

*Apartheid No More*. Reitumetse Obakeng Mabokela and Kimberly Lenease King, eds. Westport, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey, 2001. 173 pp.

*When Race Becomes Real*. Bernestine Singley, ed. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2002. 335 pp.

*Education in a Globalized World: The Connectivity of Economic Power, Technology, and Knowledge*. Nelly P. Stromquist. Lanham, Md: Roman & Littlefield, 2002. 240 pp.

During recent periods the African continent has been visible on the American radar screen via the media presentations of President George W. Bush's trip to the continent, the allocation of \$15 billion for the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the alleged and later proven false reports of Iraq's plans to purchase uranium from Niger, and unfortunately, the bloody civil conflicts in Congo, Liberia, Burundi, and Rwanda. Simultaneously, in the United States African immigrants and African-Americans are debating means to influence American corporate and foreign policy toward Africa. The media presentations and the discussions among groups highlight issues for debate within the scholarly and public policy communities regarding some fundamental phenomena affecting Africa and African-Americans *and* the positing of salient sociopolitical and educational policies to address the challenges.

In the three volumes by Mabokela and King, Singley, and Stromquist, we can comprehend the interconnectivity among individual, institutional, and global challenges as altered and/or new factors manifest themselves in contemporary milieus. The volumes provide foundations for exploring poignant questions: Although universities in the new South Africa have become open to all students, what are the subtle means that impede the progress of African students and faculty? How do national financial resource allocations alter the effectiveness of social and educational institutions when the machinations of political realities continually appear? Does the effect of racism in America lessen or increase the ability of African-Americans and European-Americans to fully comprehend ethnic and racial conflicts on the African continent? To what extent do the pervasive effects of globalization and its various manifestations necessitate that we posit new models to examine on-going and emerging problems of economic power, technology, and new knowledge? In essence, can meaningful sociopolitical and institutional transformations occur so that the individual and collective lives of people will be enhanced?

Too often there is a tendency among sophisticated lay audiences to view education as merely teacher education and pedagogy. Mabokela's and King's volume, *Apartheid No More*, quickly moves beyond that perspective and instead attempts to portray the nexus between the elimination of political apartheid in South Africa and Namibia *and* apartheid's extant remnants in universities. In *Apartheid No More*, scholars representing the fields of sociology, intercultural studies, history, philosophy, and educational policy studies and higher education explicate and analyze the post-1948 elections that were pivotal in

enacting several repressive laws of apartheid.<sup>1</sup> The contributors to the volume examine these laws in the light of the laws and measures of the 1990s and beyond which were designed to eliminate apartheid. All chapters in the volume maintain that sociopolitical and economic forces are integrally linked to educational policies and programs, the psychological reactions of university students in intergroup and interracial relations, and subtle lingering measures that prevent the recruitment and retention of black African faculty.

The authors examine the necessity for and means of structural and policy transformation by discussing the historically marginalized positions of black universities which was comparable to the peripheral positions of other societal institutions such as hospitals, social welfare agencies, and labor organizations. Although whites comprised well under 30% of the population, ten historically white universities were created between 1829 and the 1960s compared to only five for black, colored, and Indian students.

Sociocultural and linguistic features were visible in six of the Afrikaans-language universities and four of the English-medium sites. Similar divisions existed for Indians (University of Durban, Westville), University of Western Cape (for Colored students), University of North (for Sotho-Venda-Tsongan-speaking individuals), the University of Zululand (for Zulu-speakers), and the University of Fort Hare (the oldest Black university designed for Xhosa-speaking Africans). Historical sociolinguistic divisions or cleavages were used to separate groups which lessened the possibilities for creating inter-group solidarity. The languages of instruction, the social studies curriculum, and the composition of the faculty also limited cross-cultural interactions. The Extension of University Act (1959), in some regards, had a similar effect at the university level as the Bantu Education Act had had for primary and secondary education. Both established and/or further solidified postsecondary education along ethnic lines. The nexus between sociopolitical and public educational policies, thus again, becomes evident. Due to politically-charged enactments by the South African Parliament, the segregated universities provided only substandard instruction.

Prior to the 1990s, the national government established and then justified differential university funding formulas based upon the number of student matriculants, the percentage of students who were successful in their academic studies (certainly influenced by their level of preparation in segregated secondary institutions), enrollments in scientific fields in contrast to the humanities, and graduate student enrollment. Hence, as Mabokela and King portray, the University of Cape Town (an English-medium white site) garnered 71% of its budget from the government compared to 46% by the University of the Western Cape (an English-speaking Colored university situated in the same metropolitan area). The repercussions of these policies are discussed in case studies, which highlight inadequate infrastructures, different academic credentials for white, black, Colored, and Indian faculty, and limited instructional and curricular material.

The case studies in *Apartheid No More* also discuss contemporary issues that have emerged since the early 1990s with the advent of democratic government. Anne Austin, for example, in her chapter “Transformation through Negotiation,” discusses the University of Port Elizabeth Strategic Master Plan, which stated that “negotiated transformation is a process in which the systemic features of the institutions are modified...which include structural, cultural, and interactional dimensions,” (pp. 5-7). Equally important for universities are the cultural transformations, which refer to the ideals, ideologies, knowledge, and values for the university and their transmission to graduates who, in turn, can effect transformations in their careers *and* in provincial and national policymaking.

Doria Daniel’s chapter, “Crossing the Divide: Black Academics at the Rand Afrikaans University” discusses transformation in terms of reorientation of individuals and groups. Rodney K. Hopson’s chapter, “Higher Education Transformation in Namibia” offers insight on the impediments to

transforming the nature of higher education due to the lingering roles of “of cultural hegemony [as] the process where ruling classes are able to exert general predominance over subordinate classes,” (pp. 124-125). Collectively, the constructs offered by Austin, Daniel, and Hopson provide perspectives of transformation after apartheid. The challenging task then becomes one of combining the various elements of transformation into concrete policies and programs that reflect the new post-apartheid constitutional provisions. The new South African constitution stipulates non-racial and non-sexist conditions and requires affirmative action. The question remains: How will postsecondary institutions implement such comprehensive transformation?

Mabokela’s chapter, “Selective Inclusion” portrays how faculty at the University of Stellenbosch struggle with language since Afrikaans is not adequately understood by many blacks to enable them to participate fully in university life. In essence, a transformation in language policy is necessary to incorporate non-racial policies in universities. In “Oh Sorry, I’m a Racist: Black Student Experiences at the University of Witwatersrand,” Rochelle Woods describes how sometimes the questions of black students are dismissed or ridiculed by white faculty, how white students avoid blacks outside formal classroom interactions, and how perceptions exist that white students (and some faculty) are afraid or feel intimidated by blacks. In one instance, a white male student sent an e-mail to a student asking her if she would like to talk. The woman student replied that she is black whereupon the white male replied, “Oh, sorry, I’m a racist,” (p. 101). Such interpersonal attitudes portray blacks in transformational processes.

Professionals and faculty at the postsecondary level are aware of government and university plans to initiate affirmative action so that more blacks and women will be represented in the faculty and professional ranks. Identifying promising undergraduate and graduate students and young faculty is one method of “growing one’s own” to join the professional ranks. However, Daniels points out that when such promising blacks or women join the professional cadre, many report that white faculty still believe they were appointed simply because of affirmative action and not because of their academic qualifications and experiences. Several chapters conclude that limited progress is being made in the transformation process due to such individual attitudes. However, there is irony at play because many historically white institutions now have a majority black student body which itself is a major indicator of positive social and educational transformation.

While Mabokela’s and King’s volume contained a few chapters concentrating on individual experiences with and perceptions of racism, Bernestine Singley has assembled an impressive array of scholars and professionals ranging from a twelve-year old to an eighty-year old former executive editor of the *USA Today* newspaper. The twenty plus essays is comparable to reading a biography or novel. *When Race Becomes Real* articulates the many manifestations of racism in the United States in range of disciplines (including communication and journalism, economics, engineering, sociology, psychology, history, and literature). The essays are organized into three main sections: Genesis, Fear and Longing, and Exodus.

Within the Genesis section, world-renowned journalists, Leonard Pitts, Jr., John Seigenthaler, Sr., and Jim Schutze write from their personal and professional perspectives. In an appropriately titled essay, Pitts argues that it is the constant forms of racism that makes blacks and other American minorities “Crazy Sometimes.” Jim Schutze explains how, as a European-American six-year old, he burglarized the church collection boxes along with African-American first-graders. His misadventures, however, were viewed vastly different from his African-American peers who were sanctioned. John Seigenthaler, Sr. recounts his early life in the American south during the first third of the 20th century. He recalls how laws, customs, and white preference meant that his hometown was racially partitioned just like South Africa.

How journalists and other professionals move beyond the experiences of what Woods refers to as “everyday racism,” in the Mabokela and King volume, is the constant challenge.

Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient and child psychiatrist, Robert Coles, recalls his first conscious remembrances of racism as a six-year old in the Boston metropolitan area. Additional chapters in the Genesis section portray how African-American and white teenagers struggle with racism in their personal lives. In some instances, it is not vastly different from thoughts voiced by South African university students. “Talking White,” written by Kimberly Springer narrates how other African American youth and even her father sometimes ridicule her for “talking white,” as if she were relinquishing some of her cultural and psychological identity to succeed. From another perspective, Lucy Gibson, in “It all Started with My Parents” describes her extreme discomfort as her father continually voiced derogatory comments toward African-Americans and sometimes women. In essence, while individual psychological proclivity may have existed, structural sociopolitical conditions reinforced her father’s individual perceptions and actions. In all the essays within the Genesis section, we observe the constant interplay between individual perspectives and sociocultural structures, laws, and norms.

In the Fear and Longing section, some of the essays are written by academicians and scholars who encounter racism within the halls of Ivy League institutions, on the lecture circuit, and within various social institutions. For example, in “To Make Them Stand in Fear,” historian David Bradley examines lynchings in the 1800s and first half of the 1900s and raises the penetrating question of whether lynchings still occur today. A lynching, according to Bradley, is a murder committed by a conspiracy of private citizens, with malice and expectations of impunity. Bradley maintains that lynching is a form of terrorism to instill fear and intimidation in blacks so they would not compete with European Americans in economic, social, or political spheres. Notably, he asserts that while the violent lynchings of a century ago are not often observable (a notable exception was the brutal vehicular dragging and dismemberment of an African American man in Jasper, Texas in 1998), newer forms of intimidation are occurring. Contemporary racial profiling, not uncommon for African-American and other minorities, often leads to use of unnecessary physical force and arrests by police.

In Singley’s final section titled Exodus, essays by Beverly Daniel Tatum, Noel Ignatiev, and Michael Patrick MacDonald warrant attention as they address “white privilege” and civil rights in Boston, Ireland, and South Africa. Tatum and Ignatiev’s essays explicate the social construction of white privilege. Individuals of primarily European descent have particular rights, liberties, and entitlements based upon their physical appearance of being white. As psychologist Tatum observes in “Choosing to Be Black – The Ultimate White Privilege?” often ongoing sociocultural life means that European-Americans do not have to think about their being white and the benefits it accrues. While social class may be salient factors for European-Americans in the United States, there are privileges (regardless of social strata)– based upon being visibly white --such as not being the victims of racial profiling, or assumptions that a student selection is based on merit. Such conditions are not generic to African-Americans. Subsequently, Ignatiev’s “One Summer Evening” recounts why and how he began publishing *Race Traitor*, a journal premised upon the idea that “treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity,” (295). The overarching goal of the journal is to help society understand that the white race is a peculiar social formation and continues based upon ongoing conformity to social institutions and behavior patterns that perpetuate white privileges.

In an intriguing essay, “All Souls: Civil Rights from Southie to Soweto and Back,” MacDonald discusses his impoverished white background in South Boston where 85% of the residents were welfare recipients and 73% were headed by single women. Despite their disadvantaged backgrounds, these residents were the most resistant to school integration via busing in the 1970s and 1980s. As an adult,

MacDonald traveled to Northern Ireland, where he was exposed to an area known as Soweto because the residents maintained that they were treated like blacks in Soweto, South Africa.

The final book in this review, Nelly P. Stromquist's volume, *Education in a Globalized World: The Connectivity of Economic Power, Technology, and Knowledge*, delineates revised sociopolitical and economic paradigms for comprehending global phenomena especially as they affect minorities in the United States and people of Africa and other developing nations. A senior professor of international development, Stromquist seeks to move beyond existing paradigms associated with dependency, neocolonialism, and post-modern theories. The volume begins with the premise that globalization compels a multidisciplinary examination.

To elaborate on the effects of globalization, Stromquist cites economic statistics from the United States and other settings affected by an international labor market where each year about 500,000 Americans are displaced by imports and about one-third of these will be re-employed with no substantial decrease in lifetime earning. About 33% will experience severe reductions. However, labor conditions and compensation in developing nations means meager existence, including malnourishment, in the very countries, which export goods to the United States and other North or developed nations. Further income distribution levels are widening, rather than narrowing, with increased globalization. So, ratio discrepancies between developed and developing nations rose from 30 to one in 1960, 60 to one in the early 1990s, and then 71 to one by the late 1990s.

Globalization is a multidimensional and multilevel phenomenon initiated by industrialized countries and pursued via formal and informal structures. Stromquist further posits that the G-8 countries have set in motion and sustain economic conditions (including international trade, labor, and intellectual property rights) that affect all sectors of individual societies and international relations. Furthermore, the influences or roles of transnational corporations (TNCs) and the media are critical to the process. The media, according to Stromquist, convey messages and symbols about business products and commodities that promote economic exchanges. She explains how the interactive effect of TNCs and the media are perpetuating "new knowledge" which is created by collaborations between TNCs and universities. The new knowledge is usually not developed in emerging nations of Africa and elsewhere. Indeed, the dissolution or eradication of indigenous knowledge common to African ethnic groups prevents the maintenance of their positive sociocultural practices and modes of learning. Simultaneously, in developed countries, knowledge creation (in a range of fields) is protected by western intellectual property law. To what extent should knowledge production and intellectual property be available to all, and under what conditions, with new forms of dissemination via the internet and other technological modes? After all, if indigenous knowledge is dissolved and African universities are not integrally involved in the intellectual property equation, then African citizens are not equal beneficiaries of globalization.

Herein lies the crux of Stromquist's arguments regarding globalization: there is a convergence, rather than a divergence, of economic, sociocultural, political, and educational accruals to northern nations. Even when there are some benefits for developing nations, it is usually to select societal sectors and in most cases, globalization has deleterious effects on minorities including African-Americans. For example, when technological positions are transferred overseas —instead of preparing black and Hispanic Americans for such positions—they are often transferred to select Asian nations and are acquired by individuals who have spent time or undertaken training in western nations (Auchard, 2003).

Identifying the means to transform these structural economic and sociocultural conditions within developed nations so that globalization reaps benefits for all, especially in African and developing nations is a daunting endeavor. For Stromquist, non-government organizations (NGOs) can lead the resistance to the status quo. Although they vary in their altruistic goals, Stromquist maintains that the majority of NGOs pursue the public's good by seeking the social inclusion of marginalized people and drawing

attention to harmful market patterns and government structural policies which are not beneficial. In her final analysis, she suggests that resistance to adverse effects of globalization (such as labor displacement, low salaries, mean work conditions, and environmental degradation) must take into account the interconnected components of economic power, technology, and new knowledge. In addition, individuals, labor unions, women's organizations, university students and faculty, and the United Nations should buttress resistance.

Together, the three volumes provide a comprehensive framework for reshaping the future. The three books advocate the alteration or creation of intellectual and disciplinary paradigms that can help professionals in the social sciences, humanities, technology, and sciences address pressing global and domestic issues, so that alternative sociopolitical, cultural and educational policies are posited and implemented. As this successfully occurs, various public educational and social entities will benefit.

In conclusion, we should note the salient piece by the late Nobel Laureate Dr. Ralph J. Bunche, who, over 60 sixty years ago, maintained that universities are part of the public good and must prepare students and faculty to address concrete problems and pose solutions.<sup>2</sup> In conjunction with other active groups and organizations, universities can create multidisciplinary intellectual knowledge that can assist in promoting positive sociopolitical and cultural transformation.

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## NOTES

1. Notable among such laws are the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949); the Population Registration Act (1950) requiring a pass which limited physical mobility; the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (1950) obligating specific residential locales for the races; and the Bantu Education Act (1953) which restricted the types and levels of educational access and attainment. Hence the rights of Black and Colored people were severely curtailed by solidifying public and educational policies of apartheid throughout South Africa and the former South West Africa, now Namibia.

2. Bunche, 1940.

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*Issues in the Contemporary Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa: The Dynamics of Struggle and Resistance.* Graham Harrison. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2002. 208 pp.

In this book, Harrison grapples with the tendency of analysts to homogenize African realities, “make grand generalizations about an ‘African malaise’ or even a dark continent”, and approach Africa as a singular and diseased entity, rather than an amalgam of cultures and entities with diverse experiences, apparent problems and innate promises (p. 14). Owing to this practice, Africans have become passive, helpless and incompetent beings who are subsisting in a violent and poverty-laden milieu, and essentially are unable to wrest themselves from those presumably responsible for their dire conditions.

Harrison’s political-economy approach is dynamic and informed by struggle. He rejects a structural approach, which does not imbue Africans with agency and which ignores (or dismisses) Africans’ novel resistance to and transformation of myriad sources of oppression. He highlights the inauspicious legacies of colonialism, which resulted in corruption, authoritarianism and extra-economic coercion, and which engendered “contradictions between accumulation and political power...as factions fought over patronage, and states extracted such high rent from their citizenry that peasants, traders and others bypassed the state altogether” (pp. 9-10). Harrison concretizes the notion of struggle within the context of the tenuous interplay between ‘peasants’ and the state, and discards the idea that ‘peasants’ are primitive, “isolated or backward, [and far removed] from the intrinsic dynamism of modernity” (p. 25).

In the second chapter, Harrison maintains that “the most rewarding pathway in analyzing peasant politics is to concentrate on the ongoing dynamics of interaction between peasants and other social groups, and pay attention to the ongoing battles within peasant society concerning the control of wealth, capital and power” (p. 40). Nevertheless, we are cautioned not to idealize peasants as ‘virtuous’ individuals engaged in a just war with ‘vicious’ states, as the former routinely “avoid[ed] and bypass[ed] the state, subvert[ed] the effects and purpose of state action, captured the state at the local level and selectively engag[ed] with it where it [wa]s advantageous to do so” (p.48).

Thereafter, Harrison describes how resistance featured in the “politics of debt and social struggle”, democratization and the formation of new political identities. He focuses on the contours of the debt crisis vis-à-vis the state and civil society organizations (CSOs), and analyses the negative effects of the structural adjustment program (SAP) on wage laborers and the vulnerable, its divergent impacts on the peasantry and others, and CSOs’ vociferous reactions to this reality.

For its part, the struggle for democratization stemmed from the unrelenting demand for economic justice that typified the SAP debate, which not only radicalized many African CSOs but precipitated clamors for political liberalization. Furthermore, international financial institutions (IFIs) and other donors, by tying their aid to improved governance, created openings in erstwhile-closed regimes. Consequently, the typical debt-ridden African regime found itself caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place, and was forced to adopt ‘democratic’ policies that favored “multipartyism, new constitutions, watchdog agencies [and] articulation [of] some form of moral repentance for their previously undemocratic ways” (p. 79). It is the extent and repercussions of this putative shift in political attitudes that the author takes as his starting point in this section of the text. Probing the extent to which democratization [has] “been implemented in [an] undemocratic fashion through concentrations of power”, Harrison describes if and how the state embarked upon political liberalization, and the responses of various stakeholders to this development (p. 78). Overall, Harrison believes that a holistic discussion of

identity, class and struggle demonstrates their inter-relatedness, reveals how they undergird liberation, and exposes the fact that Africans possess the innate wherewithal to challenge hostile structures. The sixth chapter develops these themes in the Mozambican, Nigerian and Burkinabe contexts.

In describing 'African struggle', the author ignores the global emergence of radical movements and terrorism. Secondly, although Harrison rightly critiques the problematic manner in which Africa was created and is treated in contemporary discourses, he partitions Africa into three regions: North Africa, 'sub-Saharan' Africa and South Africa; the latter supposedly is exceptional, despite the fact that Algeria also connotes deprivation, liberation, struggle and resistance *par excellence*. Nonetheless, the author does not adhere to his artificial division for too long, as he frequently references examples from North Africa and South Africa to buttress his assertions. This confusion is all the more peculiar given the author's insightful comments regarding analysts' tendency to scrutinize the Continent through parochial lenses and select the worst scenarios as embodiments of the 'African' experience.

Thirdly, the author's concern with 'peasants', their resistance to the state or withdrawal into symbolic enclaves is neither fully developed nor original. Although one could take issue with Africa's 'peasantization', which overlooks its urbanization, and the constant interchange between rural, peri-urban and urban areas, to 'freeze' small-scale farmers in a milieu where broad generalizations could be made concerning their supposed ignorance of SAP perhaps is more stifling than the forces that reportedly impede their advancement.

Even though Harrison presents a fairly informed account of 'peasant' life, with all its contradictions, the obsession with the 'rural' seems outdated. His assertion that African Studies should commence with the peasantry is, at the very least, misguided because of the presence of a large number of the urban poor and landless, whose conditions vis-à-vis their 'peasant' brethren are more precarious. Additionally, urban organizations are more threatening to governments because they often can undertake violent actions commensurate with their vitriolic rhetoric. As such, if one were seriously interested in understanding struggle and resistance, one would not always begin with the increasingly shrinking number of citizens residing in rural areas, who arguably are better off than the urban poor. Whilst Harrison suggests that only a few scholars emphasize the centrality of struggle, it is, has been and always will be at the heart of political, economic and societal realities in Africa and elsewhere.

Generally, we are treated to a largely superficial account of the 'peasant' experience: We are somewhat enlightened concerning the nuances of the 'peasantry' argument but learn very little regarding how they have manifested themselves within the three countries under review, which are, oddly enough, banished to the sixth chapter. We also scarcely, if ever, comprehend the far-reaching manner in which 'peasants' reacted to and were affected by seminal economic and political developments. Conversely, Harrison's prototypical African state seems emasculated, devoid of any measurable agency, and unable to circumvent, ignore or undermine contentious IFI policies. In the final analysis, the text's core purpose appears muddled, and the treatment of democratization and other important variables is impeded by an excessively normative stance.

In closing, the Harrison volume is lucid, compact and should prove useful to undergraduate students and others with a limited knowledge of African economic, political and social realities. The 'further reading' section at the end of the first six chapters also is very helpful. Yet, the work would have been strengthened by field research in rural areas to ascertain what 'peasants' know regarding democratization, SAP, struggle and liberation, rather than the author's preference to speak on their behalf.

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*Performing Africa*. Paula Ebron. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002. 272 pp.

*Performing Africa* is an intriguing ethnography that explores *jali* performers and performances within the small West African nation of the Gambia and in the United States. *Jali* are hereditary groups of Mandinka-speaking praise singers (griots in French), consisting of both men and women, whose songs not only provide an oral history of the region, but also affect the public reputations of their patrons. This ethnography is based on more than a year of field and archival research with *jali* from all over the Gambia, from urban, suburban, and rural settings. Ebron writes in a self-reflexive, accessible, and engaging manner, illuminating her position not only as an ethnographer from the United States, but also as a woman of the African Diaspora on the African continent.

Ebron is very interested in the circulation and production of ideas of “Africa.” The major themes of the book are performance, representation, and cultural commodities. These are utilized as the central analytic frames in *Performing Africa*, examining the ways in which concepts of Africa are produced through performance, the performance of Africa becomes its representation, and performances of Africa are circulated as commodities.

The book is divided into three sections. The first section looks at the idea of representation and performance. Here, Ebron notes that most studies of representation are based on written texts, and thus directs her study to fill the gap by looking at performance, embodied and oral, as representation. She also seeks to extend studies of performance, which are often criticized as being too local and even individual in perspective. Ebron makes a valuable contribution in both of these areas. In chapter one Ebron examines the ways in which the category of “African music” was created, defined as communal and rhythmic, and placed in opposition to that of individualistic, complex, Western music. “African music” became a category signifying difference, which in turn represents Africa as a whole. Chapter two looks at several performance events of *jali*, both in the Gambia and the United States, as ways to access conceptions of Africa that are performed by the *jali* as well as audience members.

The second section of the book looks at the role of *jali* in national history, their “personalistic economy,” and their individual performances during interviewing sessions. Chapter three examines *jali* and the contestations and negotiations surrounding a government-sponsored oral history as part of nation-building in post-independence Gambia. Chapter four explores the importance of interpersonal communication in the patron-client relationship as the basis of *jali* livelihood, as well as the performatives of *jali* in creating public power for their patrons with their spoken words. Ebron recounts the performance of self by individual *jali* in chapter five based on her interview encounters.

The third section of the book moves to the sphere of tourism in which *jali*, although present and performing, are not the only Gambians involved. Chapter six examines the sexual tourism of Western women traveling to the Gambia to find young, male partners. This is a situation in which ideas of gender are reconfigured, so that Gambian men are “feminized” based on the power and status of these Western travelers. Chapter seven focuses on African-Americans going to the Gambia as “pilgrims” returning on a homeland tour (sponsored by McDonald’s interestingly enough), and explores their imagined Africa and the cultural misunderstandings and miscommunications that occur. Many of the issues raised in this chapter are similar to those discussed by Edward Bruner in his article on the conflicting interpretations

and meanings of Elmina Castle in Ghana between Ghanaians and the people of the African Diaspora visiting there (Bruner 1996).

An overarching goal of the book is to directly confront the challenge presented to anthropologists to examine the local, while still tying it in to larger national and global issues and perspectives. Ebron draws upon the ideas of global flow of Arjun Appadurai (1996), and does an excellent job of showing connections between *jali*, Gambia, and the broader world. For example, in chapter four, Ebron demonstrates that *jali* make interpersonal connections locally, on the national level, and abroad as a way to secure opportunities for performances, generating income for themselves at many levels. Similarly, in the third chapter Ebron examines the place of post-independence Gambia on the world stage, the role that the oral histories of the *jali* played in solidifying its status as a nation with its own history apart from the colonial past, and the significance of development funding to support such projects. Moreover, in her discussion of sexual tourism involving Western women in Gambia, Ebron explores the motivations, aspirations, and power differentials in these relationships, reexamining “a critical, transnational aspect of the social construction of gender” (170). Although Ebron includes a global perspective at most points, a slight drawback of the book is the loss of the “local,” in that there is not much sense of any particular locale as the setting of the ethnography, as it is an amalgam of many different places. However, in an age in which multi-sited ethnography is becoming more common, Ebron’s work fits in well.

*Performing Africa* is a well written ethnography that presents many challenging questions that will be of interest to Africanists, anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, and scholars of both cultural and performance studies alike.

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*The African State: Reconsiderations*. Abdi Ismail Samatar and Ahmed I. Samatar, eds. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002. 286 pp.

This collection of essays on the state in Africa is an important contribution to political science on Africa, despite several conceptual weaknesses discussed below. Comprised of an introduction followed by seven case studies – South Africa, Ghana, Libya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia – it captures the wide gamut of state experiences in Africa, and will doubtless be a useful addition to undergraduate curricula and library holdings.

Many of the chapters provide strong historical accounts of the experiences of state formation, sometimes coupled with critiques of earlier attempts to examine the state. This works better in some cases than others. Raufu Mustapha's historical examination of the Nigerian state usefully identifies 'critical constitutive elements' that have shaped the Nigerian state under successive regimes, seeing continuity as much as change (169). Kidane Mengistaeb's Ethiopian case study, in contrast, analyzes the efforts and failures of early state-building projects, before focussing on the post-1991 'ethnic federalism'. Mengistaeb provides readers with an excellent, critical account of contemporary Ethiopian state-building. Similarly, Eboe Hutchful deftly links together the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial state formation experiences of Ghana. His inclusion of gender, class and youth as variables affecting and being affected by the state is an ideal model for the study of other states.

Other contributions, however, seem lacking in analytical focus. Ahmed Samatar's study of Somalia is near poetic in its reflections on the diasporic community, and countless peace conferences. Yet, the chapter's potentially most interesting discussions – the state-building experiences in Somaliland, and Puntland, and peace efforts in the South – give too little detail for those unversed in post-1991 Somali politics. The author is perhaps rightly sceptical about these efforts, but glosses over them with little empirical detail. Despite some interesting introductory points, Ahmad Sikainga largely rehashes a standard account of early Sudanese state formation, with surprisingly little reference to primary or secondary sources. Similarly, while Ali Abdulatif Ahmida's account of the origins of the modern Libyan state is informative and analytical, the 1980s and 1990s are scarcely described. Indeed, even Mengistaeb's most useful and critical analysis of the post 1991 state-reforms in Ethiopia might be better substantiated by the inclusion of interviews or on-the-ground observation.

Few of these contributions succeed in describing how society views the state or present much in the way of new research – the best emphasize the need for new perspectives. Perhaps this relative empirical poverty is a problem inherent to the topic – how does one 'research' the state? Moreover the authors do not provide much in the way of innovative methodology or case studies of particular aspects of the state. In contrast to much of the literature on South Africa, Yvonne Muthien and Gregory Houston attempt to link state and society-centered approaches, but the final result is heavy on policy prescription, and reveals little about the experience of living under the 'new' South African state.

The vagueness of the state in these contributions seems to be a function of the over-broad definitions and conceptualization of the state advanced in the introductory essay. The authors suggest that "the state might be conceptualized as a concatenation of four frames: leader, regime, administration, and commonwealth" (7). As a student, this writer was taught to differentiate clearly between the regime "rules, principles, norms and modes of interaction;" the state "the organization of people and resources and the establishment of policy outlines...institutions of power"; and the government "the specific

occupants of public office” (Chazan et al., *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa*, 1992,39). Going back to this classic African politics textbook, I am struck by the continued good sense of their analysis “state, regime and government may or may not overlap empirically. In concept, however, they are quite distinct” (Chazan et al., 39). However, the authors in *The African State* do not engage with these issues. Their conceptual framework presumes a conceptual as well as empirical overlap between leader (government), regime, and state. Even if this can be justified analytically, it leads to confusion over what we mean by ‘the state’.

A further significant weakness of the study is that no reference is made to the substantial political science and sociological literature on state-formation. In addition to well-known European studies, there is an extensive literature on the Middle East, Latin America, and also on South Africa, all of which might have been useful in this work. Another body of literature that might have been drawn on, or at least critiqued, is the newly expanding IR-related literature on states and state-systems in Africa.

The contributions therefore suffer from an overly broad definition of the state, a failure to engage with existing literature on the state, and a lack of descriptive detail. Put together, these criticisms suggest that the collection’s weakness is more theoretical than empirical. But it also suggests that a stronger theoretical base might lead to more interesting empirical research. Here then is the first step of an important research agenda: to ‘bring the state back in’ without replicating European-centric theories, or relying too heavily on their assumptions; to build a new theoretical framework for studying the state in Africa, starting from a firm empirical basis.

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*Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart: A Casebook*. Isidore Okpewho, ed. Oxford: University Press, 2003. 275 pp.

The novel, *Things Fall Apart*, is central not only in African literature, but also in postcolonial literary and cultural discourses. The reason, according to Isidore Okpewho, is precisely “because it inaugurated a long and continuing tradition of inquiry into the problematic relations between the West and the nations of the Third World” (p.3). This justifies his new collection of essays, some of which are more than two decades old. In a splendid introduction, he poses a crucial question, which is perhaps more relevant to our age than it could have been for the people of Umuofia: What fell apart (p.36)? The essays explore this question using different approaches.

The first two essays establish the ethnographic and the lingua-politico backdrop against which the novel can be understood. In his essay, Achebe does not deny the “importance of the world language which history has forced down our throats” (60). And since Africans have found themselves in that framework, they have to make the best out of it. The result has, at best, a hybrid spirit, a postcolonial-postmodernist identity that exists in Homi Bhabha’s renowned “fissures.”

Exploring the “egalitarian and democratic” nature of the Igbo society, Clement Okafor highlights the importance of “destiny” in Igbo cosmology. The Igbo, nevertheless, believe in the human agency and “that hard work results in a better life” (68-71). Are we then better equipped to understand Okonkwo’s motivation?

Okonkwo’s character is a conundrum. What kinds of motivations were behind his actions? Why, in Goodness’ name, did he kill the boy who called him father? Damian Opata sees nothing wrong in Okonkwo’s killing of Ikemefuna. In his essay, he executes a tightly knit inner-textual analysis of the story to expose the cultural forces that prompted Okonkwo to act the way he did. “If Okonkwo is to be held guilty of any offense,” he concludes, “it is not that of killing Ikemefuna (i.e., carrying out the wish of the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves) but that of taking an uncanny pride in his action” (93). Okonkwo therefore merely obeyed the law, and, if there is any problem it is to be sought in the system.

But Harold Scheub does not seem to find any problem with the system. Hence he believes that Okonkwo failed alone. Through analysis of Okonkwo’s character (which might find interesting corollaries in some African nations), Scheub concludes that there is no evidence of destruction of Igbo society; Okonkwo merely grabbed those elements in his society that will guarantee his prestige and ascendancy.

Perhaps neither Okonkwo nor his society fell apart, as Neil ten Kortenaar would argue. In his strictly structuralist take on the novel, he systematically deconstructs the layers of the story to arrive at how Achebe strove to create a “non-existent” African history, which is the problem with the story (132). Obviously you cannot use fiction to establish an area of non-fiction. That attempt would reduce the characters in the fiction to representative roles (139). Ten Kortenaar does not dismiss Africa in a Hegelian fashion; he rather believes that Achebe has achieved one thing: he inspired Africans to make history.

Clayton G. Mackenzie rereads the novel in a somewhat reader-response way and establishes that Christianity is responsible for weakening the bonds of the society, while Rhonda Cobham, interested in showing how the feminine was ignored, makes use of Jauss’ *Rezeptionsästhetik* – loosely understood as the history of reception – to draw attention to the fact that “Okonkwo and his creator are concerned with the construction of a [...] masculine, identity (169). Biodun Jeyifo would even conclude that this identity

was what fell apart in the world of Umuofia. He highlights that the very point when things began to fall apart was when Okonkwo ignored “the mother’s creative role in the formation of his personhood, his sensibility” (185).

Bu-Buakei Jabbi is more interested in the poetics of the novel than in its perceived ethno-cultural importance. For him, the recurrent use of a primal element, fire, underscores Achebe’s central theme of the inevitability of change, and how one man who refused to be changed “fell apart.” Also considering the novel as a literary text, Ato Quayson revisits the different ways it has been interpreted, noting that many critics were like hawks that would never appreciate the beauty of hens’ dances. Art is based on a skillful manipulation of reality as the novel has just done, thus every critique should pay attention both to the reality being manipulated and the technique used (232).

Isidore Okpewho has been particularly successful in the careful selection of these essays which make the novel as relevant as it ever has been. What is most satisfying is not only the high quality of most of the essays, but also their overall arrangement so that they seem to be in dialogue with one another. This creates a logical thread throughout the book, and it makes for an engaging read.

For this writer, the casebook would have lost nothing in beauty and logic if Achebe’s input had been left out. But one can understand the relevance of the interview at the end. College teachers and their students would love it. Otherwise the rest of the book throws a heavy task to scholars who are prepared not only to continue with the dialogue between the West and the Third World, but also to grapple with the existential challenges of the African continent. In regard to Okpewho’s question of what fell apart, the answer might even re-echo Achebe’s ideas expressed in his other book, *The Trouble With Nigeria*. There is no trouble with Nigerians; there are, however, quite a lot of troubles with opportunistic leaders who hide behind their ethnic groups to exploit the “rest of us,” and lead us to war. Okpewho’s question, I am sure, will define the new generation of African scholars.

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*Rethinking AIDS Prevention: Learning from Successes in Developing Countries.*  
Edward C. Green, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003. 374 pp.

In *Rethinking AIDS Prevention*, Edward Green controversially calls for a paradigm shift away from donor myopia concerning condoms in favor of a focus on Primary Behavior Change (PBC), which includes fidelity, partner reduction, and delay of sexual debut. Although it isn't an entirely new argument, Green presents excellent evidence of the inadequacies of condom campaigns in Africa and successes of PBC in developing countries around the world.

Condoms, though certainly appropriate only for high-risk groups such as commercial sex workers and truck drivers, are unfortunately touted as the only realistic prevention for mainstream society even though they are exogenous, inconsistently used, and less than 100% effective. Green argues that PBC is actually a better method of disease prevention for most Africans. The goal here is behavior change, which runs much deeper than simply turning society on to condoms and/or drugs, two technological solutions that may in fact actually increase risky behavior. Studies have shown that by delaying sexual debut of young adults, their lifetime number of partners greatly decreases. Therefore, a wider range of programs that focus on PBC yet still incorporate condoms when appropriate, are desperately needed.

If the evidence presented by Green is accurate, then why is so much international aid being dumped into these ill-suited programs? His answer is that donors overlook it, ignore it, or do not want to believe it. Some of the problems include biased surveys that focus on condom usage at the cost of questions on other forms of AIDS prevention; the ease of monitoring condom usage compared to the difficulty of measuring PBC; and programs that are based on western post-sexual revolution ideology. This last excuse means that "those who work in public health are loathe to appear to make value judgments about sexual behavior. Therefore they are more comfortable promoting condoms and treating STDs than advocating having fewer partners" (62). The pre-AIDS American sexual revolution instigated free love and the desire to avoid sexual judgments. This openness was reflected in policy decisions affecting a continent that had not undergone the same revolution. In the race to avoid association with the religious right, donors missed the fact that socio-cultural variables are just as important as medical. The only way to turn this 20-year oversight around is to overcome biases against partner reduction and abstinence and actually listen to Africans because they, like many Americans, are indeed choosing Abstinence and Being Faithful over Condoms (ABC). Green argues that PBC in Africa is cheaper than anti-retrovirals and can be achieved for less than US\$ 1.80 per person. He presents a compelling argument for both the health behavior specialist and the layperson in search of an alternative take on the behavioral potential to overcome high rates of HIV transmission. He mixes academic research with international articles and profiles in order to present a colorful, informative account of a topic too many other authors paint in redundant shades. The point is that programs must reprioritize and expand further than the promotion of condoms, and although the argument is certainly persuasive, it does require minor work.

To begin with, Green ties in several case studies (Zambia, Senegal, Thailand, Jamaica) but focuses mainly on Uganda's success with PBC programs, which is attributed to the government's 'zero grazing' campaign in the 1980s. By the time the donors entered and insisted on condom promotion, infection rates were already declining. USAID and the World Bank supported much of President Museveni's approach, so Uganda has had more PBC than other countries. Education began in the late 1980s and the government advocated female empowerment, media usage, and the mobilization of religious leaders. It also promoted

open discussion of the disease and allied with NGOs, political leaders, teachers, and traditional healers. The 1990s brought to Uganda much of what occurs in the rest of Africa: condom marketing, decentralization, salaried workers, and special programs for high-risk persons.

This part of his analysis is not problematic. But there is a difficulty in measuring which variables had the most influence, and it is entirely possible that Uganda's success is due not to the message, but the messengers and their quick response. The government coordinated quickly to avoid ambiguity, it promoted stigma-free discussion and created alliances, and there was an autonomous, non-sectarian women's movement. These combined factors are virtually invisible elsewhere on the continent, even now. Other countries instead offer confusing and overlapping messages. Politicians are unconcerned with the disease, equal rights laws that are not enforced, and competition between AIDS-prevention organizations is prevalent. We cannot know if decreased rates would have followed anything other than a PBC message, but the possibility must be kept in consideration, especially since some people *are* using condoms.

Green too briefly touches on the role of interpersonal communication and the use of discussion forums even though these are activities that target tailored messages to each region. Outside studies show that behavior change stemming from local developmental theatre is difficult to measure, yet small scale, personal drama of this sort can be more effective than mass media, which overlooks particularities. Often included in this form of education are Life Skills programs that teach women how to negotiate. Uganda's implementation of these was effective, yet South African school programs (such as that of the organization DramAide), although successful in doses, seem not to have permeated enough of society to stop the infection rate from climbing.

Governments should certainly take note of *Rethinking AIDS Prevention* because the role of poverty here is two-fold. The HIV infection rate is driven by affluent men; those with "cash, car and [a] cellphone" who attract more partners (313). But female poverty leads to transactional sex since women are subordinates due to economic dependence and traditions of male dominance. Governments must make a stronger effort to affect change through employment opportunities for women and the enforcement of rape and marriage laws, otherwise women are stuck in a situation where saying no is at best financially unsound, and at worst, deadly.

More research is certainly needed into the PBC hypothesis, but it's on the right track thus far. Green is currently advising the Bush administration, which brings up the curious question of whether or not there is any real danger of placing the end goal above the intentions (which occurs when programs refuse or are banned from discussing truthfully all possible routes of prevention). It may be a difficult pill for many in AIDS work to swallow, but in this case the end must justify the means. Too much money has been spent recklessly in pursuit of something that simply does not work. But Green notes that the condom and anti-retroviral companies stand to lose a chunk of money if PBC takes precedence over condoms, and it follows that if the international patent rights battle is any indication, these companies will not relinquish this control without a fight. This has, sadly, become the norm in the field of AIDS policy in Africa today.

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*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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*Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau.*  
Adekeye Adebajo. Boulder, CO.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002. 192 pp.

In this occasional paper for the International Peace Academy, Adekeye Adebajo takes a look at the role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the attempts to build peace in the internal conflicts of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. His aim is to come to an evaluation of the military interventions in the said three cases and the ECOWAS security system in general. Adebajo, who is the director of the Africa program at the IPA and a renowned specialist in West African politics, personally interviewed some of the key figures in the events detailed in the book and even managed to get access to some hitherto unpublished government documents from various nations.

He starts his analysis with a chapter on the political development of West Africa since independence. According to his view the events in this region can only be understood with regard to the development of the relations between the francophone bloc of nations (Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Niger, Burkina Faso, Togo, Senegal, Guinea), their former metropolis France, and Nigeria, the regional economic and military powerhouse. The conflict or convergence of interests of these key players shaped the political landscape of West Africa and influenced the way ECOWAS was formed and subsequently acted. Far from fulfilling the hopes of West Africans, Adebajo concludes, the political leaders of the region failed to create strong democracies and vibrant economies. These failures took on tragic proportions in the cases of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau.

The first case study of the present book deals with the civil war that ravaged Liberia from 1990 to 1997 and has recently flared up again. Adebajo gives a concise overview of the course of the war and its major events before analysing in more detail why no fewer than twelve consecutive peace agreements failed. He explains that peace in the end could only be achieved for three reasons: (a) Charles Taylor, the leading warlord of Liberia, had been weakened by his enemies, which made him more amenable to peace overtures, (b) Taylor and the Nigerian president Obasanjo achieved a rapprochement that made a negotiated solution of the conflict possible, and (c) ECOWAS gave up its efforts to strengthen the role of civil society in post-war Liberia and caved in to the demands of the warlords. Adebajo concludes this chapter with a glum outlook for the future of Liberia. The fighting between the new rebel organisation LURD and Taylor's government forces leaves the country devastated and drives thousands of Liberians from their homes. According to Adebajo, Taylor's failure to perform the change from warlord to statesman is the main reason for this new escalation.

In the second case study, Adebajo analyzes the conflict in Sierra Leone. He sees the roots of this conflict in the misrule of Siaka Stevens and Joseph Momoh which created an atmosphere of unrest and upheaval. In March 1991 Foday Sankoh, with the help of Liberian warlord Charles Taylor, launched an insurrection that sparked a decade-long war. As was the case in Liberia ECOWAS tried to pacify the situation by sending a peacekeeping force. Understaffed and poorly equipped, the ECOMOG (ECOWAS Cease Fire Monitoring Group) forces attempted to restore law and order in Sierra Leone. Only in 1999 when Nigeria, the main contributor to ECOMOG, threatened to withdraw its forces completely, did the UN react. The UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was created and political pressure on Taylor and other parties to the conflict intensified. Eventually a peace deal was struck that again favoured warlords over civil society. Adebajo comes to the conclusion that the ECOMOG forces were hampered by internal dissent in ECOWAS. Their effectiveness was further reduced by a shortage of military material and funding.

The civil war that raged in Guinea-Bissau between 1998 and 1999 is the third case study of the book. Since this conflict is little known outside the region, Adebajo relates in some detail the

background of this war and the flow of events. He explains that the trigger for this civil war can be found in the personal conflict between President Vieira and General Mane. When Vieira tried to push Mane out of office, the General used his command over the armed forces to instigate a coup against the President. Senegal and Guinea intervened ostensibly to keep the peace, but also with their own political agendas in mind. ECOWAS members later declared their approval of the intervention, but hesitated to give the mission financial or logistical support. The UN once more showed little interest in West Africa and reacted with forming the UN Peacebuilding Support Office for Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS) that with only eighteen employees was decidedly understaffed. Although a successful attack of Mane's forces ended the civil war and led to new elections, Adebajo gives a bleak prospect for Guinea-Bissau's future. The new President Yala has inherited an economically and structurally weak country that is ridden with internal strife. External help is hardly to be expected. Furthermore, Yala has embarked on a dangerous course of awarding high offices only to his ethnic group.

In the last part of the book Adebajo tries to draw some lessons from the past interventions of ECOWAS. He evaluates the reform of the ECOWAS security mechanism and discusses the idea of a West African rapid reaction force. His main doubt concerning the effectiveness of such a force deals with the notorious shortage of money and supplies. Nonetheless, Adebajo sees the attempts of the ECOWAS to install a security mechanism in its own subregion as an important step in the development of West African nations. The moves to integrate West African economies and to create stabilizing security institutions might lead to more healthy economies and more vibrant democracies.

Adebajo's book is a detailed and interesting study of the interventions of ECOWAS into the civil wars in its subregion. The author very skilfully combines a narrative of major events with an in-depth analysis of problems, causes and possible solutions. *Building Peace in West Africa* is a highly recommendable read for all students of African politics.

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*The Skull Beneath the Skin: Africa After the Cold War.* Mark Huband. Boulder, CO.: Westview Press. 2001. 408 pp.

Mark Huband, a British journalist, offers a detailed, if tendentious, account of Western contributions to the current African predicament. The author intends to illuminate the role of Western Cold War foreign policy toward Africa during and after the Cold War as the main cause of the relative durability of dictatorships across the continent.

Huband divides the book into four parts. In Part I, entitled “Empty Promises,” he elucidates the United States’ Cold War role in propping up corrupt dictatorships in Zaire and Liberia, and in aiding UNITA, an Angolan insurgent group. The core of his argument is that the United States overestimated the Soviet Union’s stake in each of these countries, causing US officials to make erroneous assumptions about the nature of different political groups in Africa. Therefore, he reasons, the United States’ Cold War policy in these nations actually amounted to destructive meddling and support of ruthless tyrants and insurgents of no actual strategic value.

In Part II, “Time of the Soldier,” Huband argues that the military regimes that survived and succeeded in this Cold War politics purposefully factionalized ethnic groups as a political tool in Burundi, (then) Zaire, Nigeria, and Liberia. This has contributed to those countries’ current struggles with transitions to democracy. In Part III, “Blood of the Ancestors,” Huband delves deeper into these strategies to show how political leaders in Rwanda, (then) Zaire, and Kenya reinvented ‘tradition’ to exacerbate ethnic rivalries in order to divide groups whose unity likely would have threatened the incumbent rulers. Huband explains that the source of ethnic rivalry, including that between Hutus and Tutsis in Burundi and Rwanda, springs more from these political strategies than from deep-rooted indigenous conflict. That is, for Huband, relations among pre-colonial ethnic groups tended to be less contentious than those manipulated by the European colonial powers and post-colonial African rulers.

In Part IV, entitled “New World, Old Order,” Huband’s analysis uncovers interesting questions about whether the end of the Cold War could foster the end of Western ‘meddling’ in Africa, whether the West is in fact interested in a policy that will benefit Africans, and what should be done about failing states. This is the most useful but also the most limited aspect of the book. In this analysis of the West’s post-Cold War policy, Huband largely limits his focus to the behavior of countries like the United States and France and multilateral organizations like the United Nations. Based on the post-Cold War policy of these formal actors, Huband offers a cautiously optimistic forecast for 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa. More importantly, however, he fails to take into account new forces whose influence in post-Cold War Africa is pervasive: international financial institutions (IFIs), such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and transnational firms.

IFI conditional loans typically demand political and economic liberalization. But previous research has found that aid flows from IFIs to regimes, as in the Cold War politics that Huband describes in the first part of the book, do not depend on levels of corruption or human rights abuses. Thus one has reason to question whether or not conditional loans will yield meaningful reform. Moreover, trade liberalization has not meant that predatory transnational firms cease dealing with corrupt African rulers who oligarchically control resources and commerce while formal state institutions collapse. In fact, case studies show that Liberia’s Charles Taylor used partnerships with transnational firms to assert authority in Liberia and West Africa in lieu of functional institutions. Huband could also have shown in his case study

of Zaire in Part I how Mobutu Sese Seko's relations with foreign firms in Zaire even then stood in as a proxy for actually developing state institutions and instead produced conditions that were a threat to already-fragile African regimes.

Huband's prescription for African politics is two-fold: first, he suggests that Africa needs to become free from foreign influence. Second, he suggests that continued democratization and democratic consolidation are necessary to promote political pluralism. Both notions are idealistic, yet flawed. In spite of the tentative withdrawal of official foreign government forces from Africa after the Cold War, economic globalization and foreign firms show no sign of abandoning the continent. More problematic for Huband is the fact that the increasing integration of African states into the global economic system further decentralizes foreign forces that affect African domestic policy. This makes it still more difficult to know precisely at whom blame ought to be levied. The blanket recommendation of democratization and democratic consolidation is wishful, but also reckless if applied to countries with long histories of instability, institutional weakness, and simmering ethnic conflict. In fact, elections in places like Congo-Brazzaville and Cote d'Ivoire have played significant roles in generating violence and increased state weakness and instability, even as they help promote reform in countries like Kenya that already are relatively stable.

*The Skull Beneath the Skin* offers neither an innovative theoretical framework nor a rigorously tested one. Problematically, Huband's sample of cases is not random; he carefully selected cases in which Western policy fostered detrimental effects on the continent. Useful for comparative purposes would be a section highlighting cases on the post-Cold War fates of African states that were Cold War clients of the Soviet Union. The journalistic aspect of Huband's account of the West's role in Africa's post-Cold War stakes, however, is successful in its descriptive nature. Academics may find this unsatisfying, but those interested in an accessible text about Africa's ills will find it useful.

Overall, Mark Huband's *The Skull Beneath the Skin* offers a well-compiled set of cases illustrating the consequences of foreign intervention on Africa. Students of African politics, international relations, and those with a general interest in Africa will find this to be a useful book. Indeed, Huband's careful account of events and circumstances witnessed on the ground during ten years of study and living on the continent is valuable to better understanding the realities Africans face today. Future research should build on Huband's work by investigating globalization's marginalization of Africa and ordinary Africans in the global economic order.

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*The Last Emerging Market: From Asian Tigers to African Lions? The Ghana File.*  
Nathaniel H. Bowditch. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1999. 201 pp.

Nathaniel H. Bowditch, a self-described “public entrepreneur”, went to Thailand as a Peace Corps Volunteer in 1966 and subsequently worked in Malaysia and Sri Lanka, as well as New England, in a variety of economic and community development positions (p. xiv). In 1990, he went to Ghana as a United Nations project advisor. He writes that “none of [my previous experiences] prepared me for Ghana” (p. xiii). Nevertheless, he predicts that “an ‘African Miracle’ will become *the* global economic story in the first decades of the next millennium” (p. xv). This book is a successful attempt “to penetrate Ghana’s deceptively complex culture and, in so doing, to entertain, inform, and raise some of the issues, questions, opportunities, and dilemmas that must be faced by Ghana and a world increasingly ready – perhaps even eager – for the emergence of Africa” (p. xii).

Part One is about Ghanaian culture, the significance of money within it. For Ghanaian businesspersons, “religion, family, and the rest of life all intermingle with the business” (p. 151). Bowditch shows how behavior regarding time and money that might appear to Westerners to be unethical or irresponsible can be viewed in a more favorable light from the perspective of the traditional cultures of what is now Ghana. Ghanaians frequently “borrow” money from *obroni* (Caucasians), without considering themselves obligated to repay the “loans.” But this is in a culture where people who have more money than they need traditionally share with those who have less than they need: “I also came to understand that I, as a relatively well-to-do father, shouldn’t necessarily ask for the money even though it was a loan, because I didn’t really need it” (pp. 47-48). Failure to prepare business plans can be explained by an environment of great uncertainty, in which what is needed is cunning or cleverness in dealing with whatever situations arise: “In an uncertain world, planning doesn’t seem to work well because there are just too many unknown and unforeseen, moment-to-moment contingencies to plan for” (p. 58). And many cases of what Westerners call bribery or corruption differ little from gift-giving in traditional Ghanaian cultures.

After working in several administrative positions, Bowditch extended his time in Ghana with a research grant “to study Ghanaian culture and traditional West African business practices vis-à-vis Ghanaian business development and management practices” (p. xiv). He interviewed fifty-three Ghanaian and *obroni* business owners, managers, and economic-development professionals and discusses these interviews in Part Two. Part Three includes citations of a wide range of sources – “perspectives and perceptions of individuals with little or no relationship to Ghana” – followed by Bowditch’s own conclusions, with numerous comparisons between “Asian tigers” and “African lions” (p. 160).

Bowditch’s thesis is that “today’s young lion cubs (Ghana, Uganda, Namibia, Botswana, Cote d’Ivoire, and many more) are just like their tiger-cub predecessors of twenty-five to thirty years ago” (p. 171). But, though there exists the potential for rapid economic growth in sub-Saharan African, there is much work to be done if the lion cubs are to follow in the tigers’ footsteps: “Africans are clearly watching and lusting after the prosperity that has emerged in Asia. However, they seem more interested in finding an easy way to get there than in learning from the tough decisions and hard work demonstrated in Asia” (p. 179).

A more important question than Bowditch’s – whether African nations can attain the economic prosperity of the Asian tigers – is whether they can do so without destroying the non-material wealth of

their own traditional cultures. Bowditch uses the Western categories of “capitalism” and “socialism” in analyzing Ghanaian business culture and how it needs to change. As he sees it, the challenge is for African nations to participate in the “global free-enterprise system” or “worldwide capitalism” (pp. 126, 173). In contrast, there is “the family-based African socialism that governs traditional family and village life” (p. 95). He states that “African socialism” is “not a political movement but a sociological phenomenon” and writes of “the challenges to capital accumulation by a fierce African, family-based socialist tradition” (p. 152, 181). But traditional African cultures do not fit into the categories of the contemporary West. The fact that the family is important has nothing to do with state ownership of the means of production. Both capitalism and socialism, as well as all compromises between them, are incompatible with traditional African cultures, because they are materialistic.

Bowditch writes of “a one-world philosophy, called *free-enterprise democracy*”, and maintains that “Ghana will have to develop both a competitive national economy *and* a free-enterprise management culture” (pp. xvii, 70). The challenge for Ghana and other African nations, however, is to develop a philosophy of business management that will enable them to increase productivity and reduce poverty without destroying the traditional family and religious faith. Such a philosophy of management must be rooted in neither Adam Smith nor Karl Marx, but in traditional African philosophy.

While not distinguishing African from Western philosophical traditions, Bowditch does provide insightful suggestions concerning what a theory of business management appropriate for Ghana and other African nations might look like. Because the family is so important, “every responsible and respected business in Ghana will have to care for the life, village, and families in its orbit” (p. 160). Religious faith is also inseparable from business: “Divinities simply cannot be ignored when undertaking anything of importance in one’s life, and business is no exception” (p. 165). What Ghana needs is a theory of business management, unlike anything the contemporary West can offer, consistent with these truths. Although Bowditch’s book is written primarily for business and development practitioners, it contains citations of scholarly works and insights that could be incorporated into a philosophical theory of Ghanaian or African business management.

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*Africa's Challenge to International Relations Theory*. Kevin C. Dunn & Timothy M. Shaw (eds). New York: Palgrave Publishers Ltd, 2001, 242 pp.

Editors Kevin C. Dunn and Timothy M. Shaw boldly step forward to challenge established international relations theories and the ways in which IR theories are formulated. After reviewing the fundamental elements of core IR models, including neorealism, neoliberalism, and structuralism, Dunn reminds readers that Africa has conventionally remained absent from traditional theory-making. In other words, in terms of political analysis, Africa has become marginalized. Dunn then insists that to the contrary, African(ist) issues are central to understanding today's international relations, although not necessarily along the parameters of "old-school" Western IR theory.

*Africa's Challenge to International Relations Theory* focuses on the concepts of security, power, states, nations, and sovereignty to underline the holes in current methods of analysis. The articles included within this compilation are organized into three parts: Part I begins by dismantling traditional IR theory; Part II emphasizes the absence of African(ist) content in leading IR analyses; Part III outlines policy implications based on the preceding material.

For readers relatively unfamiliar with the conventions of international relations theory, Dunn and Shaw include writings that provide historical background to the Westphalian System, and on the beginnings of IR as a political science. For readers who are well-versed in IR theory, this book offers a fascinatingly unconventional examination of Africa as a unique region characterized by a similarly unique role in IR studies. The articles in this volume combine overviews of colonial and post-colonial dynamics in Africa with strongly supported suggestions for a revised IR theory that takes these dynamics into due consideration. The contents of each individual article seem united by a theme that highlights the distinctiveness of African institutions. The articles identify as an important concept the idea that Africa cannot, and must not, be held to a universal standard of moral authority. Although sovereignty encompasses many diverse forms, a Western interpretation of sovereignty and statehood has come to dominate others interpretations. Not only do several articles bring to question the [Western] perception of African states, but they also question the basic importance of the state (or lack thereof) as an African institution. After overturning several well-established theories on issues of sovereignty and statehood, a number of the authors present possible alternatives to IR theorizing, such as a broadening of social knowledge, or a reevaluation of the very concept of statehood.

This book does not merely dare to suspect the gospel of IR traditionalists, but it goes further to question popularly studied trends, such as liberalism and globalism. Without discounting these trends entirely, the authors find, and try to fill, the loopholes within such approaches to IR analysis. The authors point out areas in which others may have failed to acknowledge Africa as an essential diversifying contributor to major IR questions. Rather than seeking to make room for African(ist) analysis in existing theories, Dunn and Shaw emphasize the need to revise theories altogether. Africa, being a singular representative of myriad non-Western conventions, brings to light the gaping holes in IR studies to date.

Far from being an empty treatise on the flaws on IR theory, *Africa's Challenge to International Relations Theory* suggests policy implications built on a strong foundation of evidence and analysis. James Jude Hentz proposes regionalism as a revised approach to foreign relations toward Africa. Timothy M. Shaw provides a checklist for policy makers, including the expansion and diversification of peace building efforts.

This book is ideal for those seeking an explanation for Africa's unique position in the world, and for IR theorists wishing to find an enlightened reconsideration of the conventions in their field. The authors/editors invoke frustration with regards to the marginalization of Africa, while simultaneously generating urgency for the need to tackle the flaws of IR theory and to create an appreciation for Africa there within. In their commentary, the editors brush the line of didacticism, but do not cross it. The articles in this volume communicate a general tone of regret and exigency, but in the process do not completely attack the validity of the theories they criticize. Dunn and Shaw clearly acknowledge the need to offer varied perspectives from a wide source of authors, and to include historical, theoretical, and political views. The occasional inclusion of primary sources facilitates balance between an objective presentation of facts and events, and a potentially subjective author/editor interpretation of the issues.

*Africa's Challenge to International Relations Theory* achieves its goal of problematizing conventions. However, it also goes beyond, venturing into possible solutions for theory revision. In stressing future implications, this book demands the attentive consideration of Africanists; as source of historical example, as a model for regional and global trends, and as a superlatively influential factor in IR studies. This text ought to be revisited, so as to gauge the progress of policies and attitudes toward Africa in the future.

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*Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa.* Paul Landau and Deborah Kaspin, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. 380 pp.

Instructors teaching about African history and society have long wrestled with the stereotypical images of Africa engrained in the heads of their students. This collection of essays, originally presented at a conference at Yale in 1997, offer a number of creative ways to analyze and read images constructed by Africans and Europeans about one another. Gravesites, comic books, anti-colonial cartoons, photography, and wily ethnographic performers are among the subjects covered. This well-written book manages to evade many of the pitfalls of conference compilations and contains information that would be quite useful for those teaching graduate and upper-level undergraduates.

The introduction by Paul Landau is a thoughtful and often daring overview of images in and of Africa. He rightfully notes the chaotic evolution of the series of images of Africa developed by a wide range of travelers, writers, advertisers, and governments based in Europe. Photographs of “native types” allowed governments and foreigners to construct and classify labels, ethnic or otherwise, on Africans while eliminating the individual context of photographic subjects themselves. Thankfully he goes much further by noting how indigenous artists and audiences created their own visual commentary on the colonial experience and appropriated imported pictures and genres for their own ends. One of the most fruitful areas Landau opens up is the complicated ways representations were made, read, and altered in a colonial context. The author notes, “Every unit of meaning, and not just every image, is a public crossroads of histories of interpretation” (16). The rest of the essays pursue the idea of images as a meeting point where widely different and even contradictory social meanings might be placed into visual representations crafted by or of Africans.

In a collection as rich as this one, it is hard to choose certain contributions to highlight. Robert Gordon’s essay on Bushmen and film is a fascinating examination of how Africans might manipulate their role of providing stereotypical images of “authentic” Africa for European mass consumption. Governments exaggerated the possible ramifications of film-viewing on African audiences. Some Bushmen themselves, faced with an increasingly harsh set of impositions from the South African government, gleaned both merchandise and cultural influences from the long train of visiting filmmakers while self-consciously performing the “wild” and “primitive” representations that documentary makers wished to capture even though these practices had increasingly vanished in their everyday lives. Tourist culture, far from keeping Bushmen forever pinned in a timeless ethnographic present that only existed in the minds of Europeans, allowed them to comment and gain influence on their contemporary marginal position.

Paul Ben-Amos Girshick offers a look at a group of nineteenth-century artists in the pre-colonial state of Benin (Nigeria) that overturned many of conventions of art to comment on local political and social tensions. *Omada*, young male servants to the king, produced works that parodied royal art and criticized the ominous shadow of increasing British power in the region. *Omada* were placed in a position where they were marginal figures as individuals yet intimately close to the center of power. They could act as ‘gatekeepers’ who could open or close access to the king to individuals far more respectable than the *omada* themselves. Kings in *omada* art might appear as secondary rather than dominant figures, and Europeans often appear as drunk and oafish buffoons in ways that highlight local views about their

unattractiveness. This piece is a valuable antidote to readers who might expect unchanging and monolithic traditions in royal art.

Eric Gable compares a Portuguese official's obsessive documentation of female scarification among Manjaco people in Guinea-Bissau with Manjaco statues of Europeans. African chiefs decided to innovate an old tradition of abstractly-formed statues with a much more realist set of statues of Portuguese administrators and traders. Both trends articulate cultural concerns during the 1940s and 1950s when state power expanded in the region. Administrators sought out a supposedly vanishing authentic Manjaco culture by photographing women whilst damning men in European dress as "bad copies" just as they tried to prop up chiefs as "traditional" leaders. At the same time, chiefs and their families sought out individual artists known for carving posts in honor of a man's ascent to adult responsibilities. Young men needed to master colonial technologies of power and influence, Gable contends, that were embodied in the statues. The construction of tradition thus influenced indigenous and foreign visual representations in the region.

Other pieces in this collection deserve far more attention than space available in this review. Hudita Nura Mustafa explores relationships Dakar people make between the trapping of modernity and global circulation with individual selfhood and group identity through photographs. Nancy Rose Hunt takes a characteristically cultural turn with her genealogy of Congolese comic strips and images of the Belgian icon of Tintin. Mission-educated Africans, settlers, Catholic priests, and others produced comic art that could reveal rivalries between ethnic identities, brute caricatures of Africans, or more recent pieces that parody teachers and officials.

All in all, every selection here provokes thought and deserves a reading – a rarity for this sort of publication. The authors and editors are to be commended for the book's excellent design and its cohesiveness.

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*Africa and the West: A Documentary History from the Slave Trade to Independence.* William H. Worger, Nancy L. Clark and Edward A. Alpers, eds. Phoenix, Arizona: Oryx Press, 2001. 429 pp.

This hefty book really is a documentary history, rather than simply a collection of documents. The editors' comments are very minimal. The selection and organization of the documents, however, is so effective that the book provides a wonderful introduction into Africa's intersection with Europe through the words of the people who lived through it. From the era of the slave trade to the establishment of the new South Africa, Africa and the West portrays Africa as a real place full of complex and interesting people and institutions, and it emphasizes that the "Western" intersection with Africa was more than just an impact and response. People experienced, observed, critiqued, thought, planned, plotted, and dreamed.

The book's first section, "Africa in the Era of the Slave Trade," includes narratives of enslavement by Venture Smith, Olaudah Equiano, Ali Eissami and Chisi Ndjurisiye Sichayajunga. These are counterposed against documents showing what European church and state leaders thought they were doing, and vivid reports by Alexander Falconbridge and Mungo Park, Europeans observing the realities of trade in Africa. The section also incorporates documents on South Africa, instead of separating its history into a separate section, and a discussion on East African Muslim perspectives on slavery.

The next section, "From Abolition to Conquest," makes the emphasis on dialogue and conversation even more clear, as it includes exchanges over treaties with Asante and between the missionary George Champion and the Zulu king Dingaan. This section also brilliantly illustrates the problems of conquest in the British Secretary of State for the Colonies' instructions to the Niger commissioners in 1941 (pp. 133-6) and a fill-in-the-blank sample treaty for use with "African Chiefs" (pp. 137-8). The final sets of documents in the section, "voices of imperialism" and "voices of resistance" provide documents—including photos and political cartoons—that will enliven any discussion about the logic of conquest. Likewise, Edward Blyden's inaugural address as president of Liberia College provides a vivid illustration of how 19th century diaspora Africans longed for an experimental program of research, study, and development that would connect Africa's past to its present and allow Africans to "regenerate a continent" (p. 194) ravaged by the slave trade and slavery.

The editors continue to follow this pattern in the book's other sections on colonialism (and its critics) and "The Contradictions of Post-Colonial Independence." They draw heavily on Ghana and South Africa, and preferentially depict British-dominated regions. But throughout the collection, vivid documents challenge any oversimplifications students might make about colonialism, its opponents, and its end. Furthermore, documents provide insight into more than just elite politics, as they include excerpts from Casement's "Evidence of Colonial atrocities in the Belgian Congo" (pp. 239-40) and a 1909 school exam from Togo that testifies powerfully to colonial initiatives to re-shape children's minds (pp. 249-50).

For those who teach using documents, finding accessible and relevant documents that cover the range of African history has been getting gradually easier. While some classic collections of documents from specific locations (such as D.A. Low's *Mind of Buganda* or Anthony Kirk-Greene's *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria, 1966-1970*) are out of print, new collections have recently proliferated, including more manageable works from the University of Wisconsin's African Studies series, new editions of explorers' narratives, and excellent collections of colonial documents such as the PRO's British Documents on the

End of Empire series. This particular volume, like most document collections, is too expensive for students to buy as a textbook. But it would be a valuable addition to a library collections, particularly in libraries with limited Africana materials. The volume would also be good for public libraries, or secondary school libraries, as it would provide a text-based introduction to part of African history that might well stir student interest and encourage creativity.

This is potentially a quite useful book. But there are several things that it quite clearly is not. First, it is not a depiction of all of Africa, through all of time. The editors are quite explicit that their focus is on Africa and “The West”—and thus many familiar sorts of documents, such as Ibn Battuta, epic histories, or indigenous kinglists, are not included. Ethiopia (with one uninspiring document) and North Africa are also notably absent. And the sheer size of the topic means that editors had to make choices. The incorporation of South Africa here is thought-provoking, but feels sparse and thematically awkward. Documents provided here are mostly previously published, drawn from some out-of-print collections, obscure materials, or official sources. Further, for all the complexity of politics and intellectual engagement that selections demonstrate, major issues such as colonial debates over women, the politics of ethnicity, and post-colonial discussions of economics, seem left out. The post-colonial section is by far the weakest, with less coherence and a reliance on fiction by Chinua Achebe and poetry by Jack Mapanje to invoke the frustrated hopes of independence. The section lacks anything on globalization, structural adjustment, military interventions, or any of the newer ways Africa and “the West” interact.

Despite its limitations, this is an excellent book—rich in ways I have only begun to mention. Perhaps the key to its success is the editors’ willingness to include large excerpts, whole documents and interchanges. Together, the documents of this collection provide powerful evidence of the sheer level of thought, debate, struggle, and planning that went into every stage of the Africa/West experience from the first contacts between explorers and coastal peoples to the achievement of the new South Africa.

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