

BOOK REVIEWS

Abena Ampofo Asare. 2018. *Truth Without Reconciliation: A Human Rights History of Ghana*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 243 pp.

In *Truth Without Reconciliation*, Abena Ampofo Asare discusses a human rights history of Ghana using records from the nation's truth and reconciliation exercise that took place from 2003 to 2004. The author demonstrates how the exercise failed to reconcile the nation, but served a "diversity of purpose" (p. x), including expression of public will, and curation, preservation and writing of history. The book portrays reconciliation as not only popular and political, but also, intimate and inclusive.

The analysis captures political, economic, social, cultural and environmental reality, from the last days of colonial rule to the first decade of independent Ghana's Fourth Republic. The book examines various subjects: establishing a truth and reconciliation process; rights violation in a democracy; complexity of rights abuses; disruption of familial and societal cohesion by rights violation; mandate, scope and operation of truth and reconciliation commissions; and implications of national reconciliation exercises.

The role of ordinary citizens in history-writing is a central theme in the book. Asare reminds readers of the significance and "power of people's voices" (p. 42) in writing history. Although manipulative sometimes, narrations by ordinary people helped to expose and challenge the narrowness of transitional justice agenda and elitist analyses. With their "bodies and voices" (p. x), participants in Ghana's truth and reconciliation process provided "artful representations" (p. 9) of the nation's human rights history. Despite being cacophonous, the many accounts by citizens created a narrative that transcends victim-perpetrator, individual-collective, private-public, local-global and other dichotomous categorizations in traditional discussions on rights violations.

Asare uses intersectionality (of gender and violence) and actor fluidity to explicate Ghana's complex human rights history. The commission's records showed that victim and perpetrator were significantly gendered and often disproportionately against women. As mother, wife, and sister in the private domain, and state official and market woman in public spaces, women's experiences elucidate the extent and intricacy of rights violation under different regimes. Besides, perpetrator, victim, hero, and villain were hardly distinct and exclusive categories, but often manifest in the same individuals. The "kalabule women" (p. 66), who dared to fuel the country's economic engine in harsh times, and "obedient ex-soldier" (p. 132), who served the "wrong" government or perhaps one who struggled to manage state authority and societal vilification, typify a reality that blurs neat actor categorization.

A major strength of the book is its practical take on reconciliation. The author notes that many people appeared before the commission to only voice concerns about present and future economic survival. People took great risks to make such "devastatingly simple" but economically profound complaints as, "I need a job. That's all" (p. 20). The desired practicality of reconciliation continues to manifest in and define interactions among Ghanaians, nearly two

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/pdfs/v16i3-4a9.pdf>

decades after the symbolic exercise ended. Thus, Asare observes that building the needed “bridge between the past’s troubles and a desired future” (p. 19) requires commitment to collective economic prosperity.

Another major strength is the book’s innovative contributions to research and scholarship. The notion and use of “citizen experts” (p. 19) widens and enriches the discussion on Ghana’s political history. The concept gives voice to the ordinary citizen, and highlights micro-level input to broader understandings of social phenomena. Also, by humanizing state institutions, the author offers nuanced and contextual reading of the state and its part in writing history. Moreover, the analysis on Ghana’s experience with truth and reconciliation, a trend that characterized a period of nation-building and democratization across Africa and elsewhere, adds unique perspective to the subject.

The discussion, however, is shallow on two key issues. The author mentions the role of global actors through colonialism (pp. 149, 166) and international development (pp. 20-1, 56, 106) in Ghana’s human rights story. Yet, the analysis on reconciliation hardly addresses this relationship, and thus fails to effectively connect domestic reality to a global discourse. Also, Ghana’s stable and tolerant political environment, despite a history of rights violations, is often attributed to the role of traditional authority. Asare mentions chiefs briefly (p. 141) but a deeper examination of the role of Ghana’s traditional institutions would add essential context to the unique African perspective on transitional justice and human rights.

Nonetheless, the book is an excellent, timely, and timeless addition to scholarship on Ghana’s political history, and an important scholarly and policy resource on human rights. *Truth Without Reconciliation* reveals a true national narrative told in ordinary voices: truth borne in souls, hearts, memories, and on skins of citizens; truth about postcolonial statecraft and nation-building; but, truth that failed to meet the aspirations of and engender true reconciliation for a survivor people.

Timothy Adivilah Balag’kutu, *University of Massachusetts - Boston and Babson College*

Felicita Becker. 2019. *The Politics of Poverty: Policy-Making and Development in Rural Tanzania*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 366 pp.

Felicita Becker’s *The Politics of Poverty* is a true eye-opener when it comes to understanding what is missing from the economic development textbooks. Basically, many of these books have been written by those experts who have never lived in developing countries they are writing about and their models are based on an extensive literature review. Becker, who has been working as a professor of African History at the Ghent University, contradicts this approach and writes her book for those who want to better understand the local development patterns and the village-level effects of development and trade policies. The reviewer started reading this book with much enthusiasm as the title and the contents promised something really unique: understanding the development pattern and poverty in rural Tanzania. A case study like this, and basically the case studies of economic development, is a vital supplement to the lengthy and model-focused textbooks.

The book is divided into seven chapters. The first is clustered around a case study on a small-scale famine which happened in 1930. With this the author tries to call our attention to the fact that how the need for action within given political conditions shaped official analysis of the region's problems. However the chapter has a different and deeper meaning as well: when we want to properly understand the current and past problems of societies, and regions we definitely have to point to those historical events which had shaped the everyday life of the people living there. This method was championed by the Annales School historians but from time to time we have to remind ourselves to the importance of this approach. Becker is fully aware of the need for thinking in the long term (*longue durée*) and basically keeps the light alive.

The following chapter gives an introduction into the geographic overview of the region and those factors which were available for value creation: people, different soils, climate, and transport links. Also, in this chapter there is a focus on how the livelihoods of inhabitants changed due to colonization. Here again the reviewer has to highlight the fact that in the hope of better understanding the general development, widening the context is crucial, and this is what the author strives for.

The third chapter evaluates how the access to the global markets contributed to the development of the region starting from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. It turns out, that apart from the better links, the region's problems only increased, and the market potential was not really reaped. In addition, the local officials were not really interested and motivated to develop the region's infrastructure as they largely focused on the increasing taxable income. Basically, this section shows what the theory of core and periphery means in practice.

In Chapter 4, the author is focusing on the period of transformation and independence and claims that development was less politically useful to provincial officials than to nationalist leaders and their colonial counterparts. According to the reviewer, there are two important messages here. First of all, when technology failed its intended beneficiaries had to be at fault. Secondly, the political nature of the development rhetoric at that time was evident to the officials and villagers apart from its technocratic overtones. The following chapter is clustered around villagization, and Becker places emphasis on the problems arising from constrained market access and recurring agricultural problems. The author claims that villagization was more ambitious than the earlier program, but the problems were the same and the end result also: problematize, moralize, and localize the poor.

Chapter six is on the aftermath of villagization and how livelihoods and development interventions changed. The author points to fact that de-agrarianization proved to be unsuccessful as there were no other options and the relative absence of land shortage can also be highlighted. It is very telling what the author highlights: "Contrary to the rhetoric of liberalisation, access to the state, typically through personal networks, has become a more important component of livelihood strategies, while interaction with markets, albeit increased, remains unpredictable and risky" (p. 41).

Chapter 7 includes a case study in which the villagers' ambiguous position is described in a village near Lindi Town. This place has been the site of a succession of small-scale interventions since the 90's. It shows that anti-poverty intervention remained self-reflective and the long-standing financial and institutional constraints strong. Basically, the villager's needs and

expectations have not changed fundamentally. Their aim was to get material inputs and help in reaching markets instead of having newer and newer learning experiences.

Finally, it is to be highlighted that the book is recommended for researchers and lecturers of any level in African Studies or elsewhere as it approaches the issue of development from a unique, village-level angle. It would be desirable to include books like this one in the university curricula as they seem to be a good supplementary material when it comes to understanding real meaning of development and poverty in African societies.

Szabolcs Pasztor, *National University of Public Service (Hungary)*

Judith Casselberry and Elizabeth A. Pritchard (eds.). 2019. *Spirit on the Move: Black Women and Pentecostalism in Africa and the Diaspora*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 248 pp.

Pentecostalism is a flourishing Christian denomination with about 523 million members largely attracting people in the global south, with women constituting 75 percent of membership (p. 1). Though Pentecostalism is expanding fast, it has attracted little scholarly attention. Therefore, *Spirit on the Move* edited by Casselberry and Pritchard is relevant in our attempt to better understand Pentecostalism's transforming power.

The book is generally well-written and heavily grounded in theory. Primary among them is Crenshaw's 1989 intersectionality theory which is the bedrock on which the various parts of the book are woven. Intersectionality describes how race, class, gender, marginalization, political and economic structures, and other individual characteristics overlap and reinforce each other. The book explores the growth of Pentecostalism and its appeal to the marginalized, especially Black women, and succeeded in examining the subject matter in eight chapters. The introduction sets the tone for the book and also gives a succinct description of the chapters. The book suggests that a major attractiveness of Pentecostalism to Black women is its pragmatic ways of addressing social phenomenon (p. 3). For instance, Pentecostalism provides space and voice to the marginalized. It affords them the opportunity to formulate revisionist interpretations to their identities and interests. It also does not antagonize an existing social hierarchy. The book further highlights the political implications of Pentecostalism by challenging the idea of equality of citizens within a state. Contrary to the idea of equality and rule of law, Black women across the globe are continuously being discriminated against in many ways (p. 3).

In Part I, "Saving Race," the contributor showed how interviewees embrace their Blackness and its uniqueness which is central to God's salvation plan (pp. 39, 63). They diverge from race where it comes with its negative trappings and instead claim universal Christian citizenship (p. 47). Part II, "Scrutinizing and Sanctifying the Body," addresses how Pentecostalism empowers women to gain control of their bodies over conservative and modern gender practices. The section further highlights how Pentecostalism weakens as well as strengthens societal asymmetric power relations between men and women, thereby creating family tensions (p. 84). The section demonstrates how Pentecostalism promotes tolerance for gender equality and ensures that its realization is within acceptable socio-religious norms, given that, women are not perceived to be exercising formal authority over men (p. 92).

Part III, "Sonic Power," details how Wailing Women Worldwide, a prayer group founded in Nigeria couched within the country's pervasive heteronormative nuclear family model headed by men, clashes with the Caribbean's major family model headed by single mothers (pp. 121-23). The section also reflects how seating arrangements and gendered liturgical practices reinforce patriarchy. For example, men preach from the pulpit while women teach from the floor, referred as gendered geography (pp. 136-37). Finally, in Part IV, "Modeling the State," religious elites mimic "the authoritarianism and neo-patrimonialism of 'big-man' politics and male charismatic leadership" model of Africa where clientelistic behavior is in vogue (p. 164). Here, sampled Ghanaian pastors' wives assume the role of political first ladies by wielding and exercising enormous power and influence albeit within the existing patriarchal framework. This insight contradicts the notion that Pentecostalism promotes general empowerment of women. On the contrary, there is power asymmetry where religious elites wield and exercise more power both spiritually and politically which is contrasted with the powerlessness of the majority. Part IV also sheds light on the Yoruba concept of *alafia* which historically means peace (health, success, and prosperity) that flows from humans especially in childbearing (pp. 180-81). This concept of *alafia* motivated the churches sampled to establish prayer centers and build hospitals to make the church relevant and attractive to Nigerians. The churches' mission in building hospitals is two-pronged. Firstly, it counters government criticism and interference and next, it competes with government in providing health facilities and keeps the church attractive.

As shown by this review, Pentecostalism promotes women's empowerment, though within the existing social framework which is often patriarchal in nature. However, some of the essays in the book have methodological shortcomings worth noting. In chapter seven for instance, Soothill indicated that her fieldwork covered three churches based in Accra, Ghana. Though the churches she selected were more diverse, they were not equally treated. She had a uniform objective for the cases; as she indicated, "Of particular relevance to this chapter are the Women's Fellowships and Women's Conventions organized by these churches" (p. 152). Yet, close to nothing was said about the Women's Fellowships and Women's Conventions of Alive Chapel International. Finally, the contributors should have thrown more light on their methodology. Van de Kamp indicated in chapter three that "most of the Pentecostal women I spoke to had professional careers and wanted to divide up the household tasks" (p. 74). Since one is unsure of her interviewees' educational status, it is difficult accepting her conclusion, especially since her respondents were in the capital. If there were inadequate samples of the less-educated persons who constitute the majority, her research would be assumed as skewed to a particular conclusion. These shortcomings notwithstanding, the book is still a valuable addition to the literature on Pentecostalism's transforming power, and it is recommended for those interested in religion, Africana studies, gender, culture, and race.

Samuel Kofi Darkwa, *West Virginia University*

Rachel Demotts. 2017. *The Challenges of Transfrontier Conservation in Southern Africa: The Park Came After Us*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. 180 pp.

This is an important book for environmental historians working on conservation in post-colonial Africa and particularly southern Africa. It provides insights into topical issues affecting conservation of flora and fauna in southern Africa. The book provides a historical analysis on the exclusion of the local residents in line with the establishment game parks. It shows how elitism has been a factor in environmental conservation, and this has been explained through the use of the top down approach by the responsible authorities, in this case the Zimbabwean, Mozambican, and South African governments.

Demotts provides detailed information on how the lack of local people's participation in matters that would affect their everyday lives was quite rampant in the three countries. The Community Working Group (WRG), later the Community Representative Committee (CRC), was established for the participation of Mozambican, South African, and Zimbabwean local residents in park issues. Demotts focuses on the trivialities of the selected committees, a recurring characteristic of post-colonial governments. The nomination and not the election of the committee, as "the word election did not seem to mean anything" (p. 61), is a highlight of most community conservation committees in areas close to game parks in Africa. The "elected" CRC members, due to the top down approach to the establishment of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP), did not know their roles. "Study by the Refugee Research Programme showed that the people did not know about the park" (p. 77).

The book raises a pertinent question in communities closer to game parks—who is important between human beings or animals? The erection of a fence was meant to protect the wild animals from mingling with the domestic animals, "much of the fence ... is to keep the cattle out" (p. 74). It was also to protect the animals from the people, which is problematic with the locals. Demotts shows how human-animal conflicts are common around the fringes of game parks mainly due to competition for resources and proximity to each other. The book also brings to light a common feature of environmental conservation in southern Africa—park ranger's brutality. Rangers have been known to be brutal in dealing with 'poaching' in and around game parks. Demotts, using a number of cases, shows how rangers would beat an accused person without asking questions. This is an important aspect of conservation history in southern Africa; game park rangers have a 'beat and ask questions later' attitude in dealing with 'poachers.' 'Poaching' can mean different things to local residents, and mostly they get beaten for trying to get healing tubers from the game parks, something they used to do freely. Demotts argues that GLTP officials viewed locals as obstruction to a game park and instead of viewing them as part of the game park for better conservation. The displacements to make space for game parks did not start with the GLTP. Rather, it was a colonial undertaking, and Demotts provides a historical trajectory of coerced displacements with no proper compensation. Due to the alienation and displacement, Mozambicans in areas affected were left with great uncertainty about their future. This is an important aspect that the author brings out: post-colonial governments have failed to provide assurance to victims of coercive displacements.

Over-emphasis and restitution of social identity is an important aspect to understanding environmental history in southern Africa, particularly South Africa. Groups claimed to have

belonged to the Kruger National Park and demanded compensation from the park operators for being evicted from their ancestral lands. Recompense of lost land and heritage is only popular in South Africa, and Demotts showed how detrimental it could be to development of game parks.

In as much as the book offers incredible insights of African environmental history, it could have provided a more nuanced history by looking at how the local residents perceived conservation. The book lacks a strong interaction with the people who claim that the park came to them; hence it has a biased approach in its analysis of conservation in Africa. The silence of the Zimbabweans affected by the GLTP is deafening and this makes it problematic to call it a tri-national history of conservation when one country, South Africa, provided much of the evidence. The book could also have had a chapter on African indigenous knowledge of conservation, in line with hunting and gathering of natural herbs, for which misunderstanding has led to the brutal beating of locals by wardens.

Neil B. Maheve, *Midlands State University (Zimbabwe)*

Lotje de Vries, Pierre Engelbert, and Mareike Schomerus (eds.). 2019. *Secession in African Politics: Aspiration, Grievance, Performance, Disenchantment*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. 501 pp.

This book reflects on the phenomenon of African secessionist struggles through a collection of case studies. The key concerns focus on statehood, power, and authority in relation to disputes over territory and borderlines, and how they link to identity questions such as ethnicity, history, belonging, ideology, marginalization, and resources. This unique, rigorous, and authoritative volume with its rich content is subdivided into four sections containing sixteen chapters derived from objective, logical, and empirical accounts of an eminently qualified team of academic professionals from leading universities and research institutions.

The editors' introduction in chapter one presents an overview of the key submissions made by individual contributors on an array of reasons or arguments that underpin secessionist claims or their rejections. It highlights four categories of secessionism— aspiration/dreams of solution, grievance/post-colonial metastasis, performance/posturing, and disenchantment. African secessionism is thus seen as inherently contradictory, especially in most postcolonial state systems, for it only reinvents the same structures it struggled to defeat.

Chapters 2–4 of Part I contains focus on issues of aspiration and dreams of independence. Chapter two discusses Tuareg separatism in Mali and Niger, with spotlights on decolonization, independence, new rebellions/uprisings, factionalism, international mediation, and the peace process. Chapter three is on Anglophone secessionist movements in Cameroon, while chapter four covers Ethiopia and Somali secessionist struggles in the Horn of Africa. Part II contains chapters 5–9 which basically dwell on grievances, resistance, and postcolonial confusion that underlie secessionist struggles. Some case studies examined are Western Sahara and Morocco; Anjouan in Comoros; Zanzibar in the Tanzania Union; liberation of Cabinda in Angola; and Somaliland's secession from Somalia. Part III, with chapters 10–13, examines how political, ethnic, and religious mobilizations have sparked and inflamed secessionist ideologies, with many prominent factions struggling to exert their self-determination amidst difficult hindrances

and obstacles posed by the postcolonial state. Specific cases examined include the *Mouvement des Forces Democratiques de Casamance* in Senegal, Lozi in Zambia and Namibia, Biafra in Nigeria, and Katanga in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Lastly, Part IV and its chapters 14–16 describe different shades of disenchantment and disillusionment that characterize the aftermath of successful secessionism. For example, it portrays the pitfalls of post-secession state and nation building in Eritrea, and the state of contradiction, discontent and divisiveness experienced in the new South Sudan after a successful secession from Sudan. Chapter sixteen concludes by highlighting some lessons for would-be African secessionists. It hints on mainstreaming secessionist politics, despite “the failure of most secessionist movements to gain recognition, or their decision to settle for less than independence, [which] tamed the continental enthusiasm” (p. 469).

Importantly, “Several chapters in this volume offer considerable evidence of the rise of Islamist separatism, [which] suggests it might be one of the furthest-reaching trends in African secessionism” (p. 479). The association between secessionism and Islamism, predominantly found in the Sahara and on the East Coast, is a novel trend that attracted the attention of the editors and compelled the contributions made in this book. The book reflects on “a new culture of referendum as a secessionist tool, which, if anything, promotes a more legalistic and democratic approach to separatism on the continent” (p. 485).

This volume is both theoretically and empirically rich and robust, with up-to-date case studies and illustrations that analyzed all relevant secessionist struggles in colonial and postcolonial Africa. Maps are not particularly used to make illustrations and show the exact location of the secessionist struggles, so that they do not complicate issues, or take power of authority over the many nuances that are crucial to all the cases of secessionist struggle discussed. However, a sketch of what Africa might look like if all current secessionist movements succeeded is shown in the concluding chapter. Footnote and end-of-chapter reference styles adopted in the book are very remarkable and commendable. The thick-cover hard-bound book, printed on acid-free paper, is beautifully designed with colored maps on its front cover and a brown-colored back cover.

To sum up, *Secession in African Politics* is a well-documented evidence-based one-off research material on secessionism in African politics. It is written in clear and understandable language. The editors’ incorporation of empirical trends and statistical analysis of secessionism in African in their concluding remarks makes the text a wonderful practical instrument for academic research. This book is highly recommended for African leaders, political analysts, academics, and in fact anyone interested in African peace and security.

Victor Chidubem Iwuoha, *University of Nigeria - Nsukka*

Sten Hagberg, Ludovic O. Kibora, and Gabriella Körling (eds.). 2019. *Democratie par le bas et Politique Municipal au Sahel*. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet. 209 pp.

This edited volume should be quite useful for students (both undergraduate and graduate) doing coursework in French on issues related to politics in West Africa. The essays that comprise the book cover numerous aspects of politics in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Each

essay has a short contextualizing discussion of national politics and of certain key concepts. The editing is consistently good, with relatively few mistakes and a reasonably consistent style throughout. The numerous co-authored essays exemplify an ideal of collaborative and accessible scholarship.

The book is a compilation of “cases” of many key issues in local politics, appropriate for classroom reading and discussion. For example, if students were interested in knowing more about the career trajectories of professional politicians in the Sahel, Sidi Barry and Sten Hagberg propose, in their essay, an ethnography of the 2012 elections of Burkina Faso that were the culmination of Arba Diallo’s electoral career. Diallo had been Minister of Foreign Affairs under the Sankara regime of the 1980s, and subsequently worked as an international civil servant. After retirement, he was elected mayor of his hometown of Dori in 2006, and then deputy of Seno province in 2007. He then ran for President in 2010 and came in second. So, he was a formidable opposition politician leading up to the 2012 parliamentary elections. His opponent Baba Hama had served in government for several decades, including as Minister of Culture from 2011-14. The landscape of both local and national had changed since 2010. The Emir of Liptako had died, and his son and brother contested the succession. The dominant political party of President Blaise Compaoré was riven by internal dissensions leading to the removal of an old guard. Barry and Hagberg describe the local campaign in Dori, local discourses and rhetoric, and how Diallo and his party crushed the Presidential party at the polls.

An essay by Bintou Koné and Hagberg on elections for the Mali National Assembly likewise focuses on the strategies and career path of a politician, a wealthy international merchant standing for the position of deputy in the circle of Banamba. The essay includes interesting ethnographic remarks about local traditions that descendants of families of *marabouts* should not be involved in politics, and how lineage groups may be quite important, but not necessary, in supporting attempts to gain office. Hagberg and Koné return in another essay describing female participation in politics at the highest levels of deputies and ministers. Then they give four short profiles. While informative, the women’s careers are described entirely by the offices they held and elections they contested, rather than by any particular policy position they had or policy accomplishment they may have been responsible for a missed opportunity.

Gabriella Körling and Mohamed Moussa similarly discuss local electoral politics in Niger by focusing on a few politicians. They note that political parties in Niger had been ephemeral social institutions, moribund for long stretches and then coming alive in the months before elections. The chapter describes behaviors and strategies of politicians vying in the 2011 election in a peripheral *arrondissement* in Niamey. The description confirms the old adage that all politics is local. When President Mamadou Tandja tried to extend his presidential term for an unconstitutional third term, the ruling party split into factions, and suddenly prominent local politicians were vying for office under different party banners. The various politicians had close ties to the *arrondissement*: a wealthy contractor had been a close ally of Tandja; a rice cooperative leader split with Tandja and then encouraged his son to leverage his influence; an accountant entrepreneur stuck with the ruling party; and a local leader of the teacher union tried to extend his influence. The competition was among personalities, though, rather than among ideologies. In the end, the striking fact is that despite a tremendous transition at the national level, the local

political elite in the *arrondissement* remained basically exactly the same, with jockeying between themselves replicating the earlier jockeying within the ruling party.

Several essays focus on issues rather than politicians. Ludovic Kibora offers a general overview of corruption and clientelism in local democracy in Burkina Faso. Others focus on local municipal public goods and services. Siaka Gnessi and Kibora describe the collection and disposal of urban waste in the southwestern city of Bobo-Dioulasso in Burkina Faso. Mohamed Moussa describes the livestock market in N’Gonga, Niger. The taxes collected on livestock sales are an important source of revenue for both the modern administration of the commune and the traditional administration of the *koirakoye* (village chief). Yaouaga Félix Koné describes the spread of quasi-formal village schools in Mali (*écoles communautaires*, or ECOM). These schools were authorized to be established locally, and apparently several thousand were initiated in the 1990s, and contributed to the spread of schools throughout rural Mali. But the government never made an effort to provide the schools with sufficient resources (either financial or human capital), and a decade later many of the schools were barely functional and poorly attended.

A third category of essays examine the organization of local politics. N’gna Traoré has a nice description of civil society associational life in Mountougoula, Mali, focusing on youth associations. The complexities and cross-cutting allegiances of youth are well-described. The author concludes that political ambitions, rather than promotion of public or common good, are the real motivating principle of associational leaders. Similarly, Traoré and Almamy Sylla offer a description of Islamic organizations and politics in Mali. The treatment is a broad overview, with brief mentions of key personalities and organizations. In a similar vein, Marie Deridder offers an introduction to changing political spaces in Youwara town and administrative district in Mali, emphasizing how what Bailly once called “local stratagems and spoils” were increasingly integrated into national-level political contestations.

The book is a useful volume for students of local politics. I would however not recommend it for scholars. The essays are very descriptive: this is not quantitative analysis of electoral results or polls, it is political ethnography. Moreover, the authors pitch their descriptions at a fairly general, anecdotal, level: this is not a “deep dive” into the details of discourses or events. Scholars of the region may not find much that is novel.

A word that appears several times in the volume is *enchevêtré*, meaning “entangled.” The idea shared by the authors and editors is that local politics in democracies is complex with multiple layers. This is a truism worth repeating, but with diminishing returns. In the end, good anthropological enquiries into local politics should be a source of “grounded theory,” and that is what is lacking in many of these chapters. There is too little explicit commentary on what theories and principles emerge from the careful study of the local. There is much “on the one hand, on the other” type of writing: women are active, but women are constrained; lineages influence voters, but many times politicians do not have the support of their lineage; ethnicity is important, but politicians rarely mention it; Muslim associations are more significant actors, but no mention of what has changed to make that the case. The essays eschew the proposing and examination of hypotheses. Not to be a total reductionist, but hypotheses are the bread and butter of social sciences, and without them one can only go so far. These essays, with their rich and interesting descriptions of local politics, are an ideal platform to help students begin to

formulate hypotheses and explore ways to examine the veracity and applicability of claims about how local politics “works” not just in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali, but around the world.

Michael Kevane, *Santa Clara University*

Hannah Hoechner. 2018. *Quranic Schools in Northern Nigeria: Everyday Experience of Youth, Faith and Poverty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 269 pp.

Nigeria has become a tumultuous, yet fascinating environment to observe and study. This is largely due to the fact that various demographics co-exist in an extremely complex security environment. The complexities of security in this context have resulted in every-day demographics being painted in an extremely negative and threatening light with little to no regard given for the socio-economic or cultural circumstances these demographics have to endure. The *almajirai* are no exception as they are seen as actors with little to no agency which makes them “easy” targets. The word *almajirai* refers to groups of young men who migrate from rural areas to urban areas to receive a classical Quranic education. During this time, they experience abject poverty as they are forced to beg to survive; their teachers are only responsible for their education and not their general well-being. This arrangement helps to stimulate the negative perceptions surrounding the *almajirai*.

Hoecher’s main objective in *Quranic Schools in Northern Nigeria* is to help debunk the negative perceptions. As she notes early on “this book embraces the idea that young people are ‘social actors’ by highlighting instances when the *almajirai* ‘refuse’ to be reduced to the status of obedient subject” (p. 18). Chapters 6 and 7 are dedicated to their purpose. In Chapter 6 the reader is introduced to the economic “welfare” of the *almajirai* by illustrating how they confront their impoverished circumstances by embracing them so as to debunk the negative perceptions of them. The *almajirai* embrace their impoverished circumstances as a means of having the privilege of acquiring knowledge and build character. In Chapter 7 the reader is introduced to certain social constructs which the *almajirai* employ to facilitate a means of social belonging as a form of coping mechanism. One such example is the notion of the *gata*. A *gata* is a protector which looks out for an *almajirai*’s best interests outside of the classroom; these include protecting him from abuse he may endure from the urban communities they inhabit. If abuse does occur and an *almajirai* has to be patient and live through the experience. In response to the abuse the *almajirai* do not demand human rights. Instead, they assert their presence by claiming that they too have protectors with the aim of repelling future abuse. On a similar note, *almajirai* embrace their adversity in all its forms. In fact, “a certain degree of physical discomfort, including hunger, is considered necessary for one’s mind to stay alert and focused” (p. 117).

Quranic Schools in Northern Nigeria: Everyday Experiences of Youth, Faith and Poverty is a comprehensive and empirical study which has no glaringly obvious gaps. The book’s focus on youth and education by placing an emphasis on social constructs that are used to both embrace and overcome adversity, which is otherwise overlooked. Hoecher’s work is greatly needed if we are to balance our perceptions of venerable demographics in conflict zones. As such, the book would be of great interest to scholars, practitioners, students, and anyone who wishes to advance their own general understanding of the fascinatingly complex situation in northern

Nigeria. Hoecher's work should stimulate a desire within scholars to undertake similar grass roots studies on other venerable demographics such as internationally displaced persons and female Boko Haram returnees. In addition, future research should also seek to formulate an understanding of how authorities will balance general and traditional constructs and authorities to achieve the maximum result for poverty reduction, conflict management, and peace building efforts.

Sven Botha, *University of Johannesburg*

Abdulbasit Kassim and Michael Nwankpa (eds.) 2018. *The Boko Haram Reader: From Nigerian Preachers to the Islamic State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 529 pp.

Perhaps no other phenomenon in contemporary Nigeria has attracted research attention and publications like Boko Haram (BH). Such is the situation that *Conflict Studies Quarterly* now turn down manuscripts on BH. The call for papers to be published in the journal's volume 31 states: "due to overwhelming submission and publication of BH-related articles, we will stop for the moment accepting articles on this topic." Much of the bewildering publications profusely explore the BH conundrum from diverse perspectives. What appears to have suffered huge neglect is the serious engagement with BH ideology. This is the gap *The Boko Haram Reader* seeks to fill. Essentially, the text documents the development of BH's ideological premise and convictions.

From published documents, videos, and audios issued by BH as well as interviews, lectures, debates, and sermons delivered by its leaders, Mohammed Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau, the authors capture "Boko Haram's history" and detail its "ideological development" (p. 5). Although the sermons and teachings are far more political than theological, they, nevertheless, are framed in the Salafi-Jihadism ideology. Contrary to the widely accepted date of 2002, the authors contend BH may have emerged in the 1990s under a different name. The Iranian Revolution and the Islamic radicalism it engendered when coupled with increasing religious intolerance and tensions at the local level (manifested, for instance, in the 1977-1978 Sharia debates, the enrolment of Nigeria in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and a host of similar developments) not only radicalized Nigerian Muslims but provided the platform for the emergence of Yusuf and BH.

The exegesis of BH's ideology and modes of achieving them cuts across the five sections of *The Boko Haram Reader*. While the first two sections cover the period 2006-2009, the remaining three cover 2009-2016. Sections one and two begin with a debate on western education between Yusuf and Patami and end with the clerics' protest letter to the Nigerian government, the arrest, interrogation, and subsequent murder of Yusuf by Nigerian security forces. Abhorrence of western culture, its forms of knowledge, and agents of knowledge production, including structures of governance, are presented as the bedrock of BH ideology. Hence, western civilization, democracy, and Christianity are adjudged to represent shadows of unbelief, atheism, permissiveness, corruption and immorality. This, BH claims, justifies the establishment of Sharia rule, the purest form of government, in Nigeria. But if the establishment of an Islamic State, the ultimate ambition of BH, must be achieved, then Christians must be killed and agents

and institutions of western civilisation annihilated. No wonder the United Nations office and the Nigerian Police headquarters in Abuja were the first victims of the group's terrorist activities.

Sections three to five dwell on the declaration of Islamic State and subsequent enforcement of Sharia rule in northeastern Nigeria territories captured by BH as well as matters arising therefrom. Specifically, it addresses the close relations between BH and al-Qaeda affiliates, Shekau's highhandedness and dictatorship, indiscriminate killing of Muslims and burning of mosques, and the resultant split between the Kanuri-dominated BH and Hausa-dominated Ansaru. Other matters featured in the section include the abducted Chibok girls, the planned negotiations between BH and Nigerian government—dismissed by Shekau as fictitious and deceitful—and BH's declaration of allegiance to al-Baghdadi's ISIS.

The transition of BH to the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP) in 2015 marked the beginning of a crucial phase in the evolution and development of its ideology. BH now enjoys the recognition and support of ISIS and its affiliates, thus making it one of the most brutal and deadliest terrorist outfits. Nevertheless, it contends with centrifugal forces of disintegration that threaten the existence of the group and therefore the establishment of the Islamic State in Nigeria. Irreconcilable differences about how to achieve the group's ultimate objective is the bone of contention. Shekau, the erstwhile leader of ISWAP, who fell out of favor as a result of his insistence on killing fellow Muslims and burning mosques, leads a faction of BH. The other faction, led by al Barnawi, the late Yusuf's son, and supported by ISIS remains estranged from Shekau's group.

While the Nigerian military seems to lack the capacity to defeat BH, Shekau's poor leadership, the ethnic composition of BH, its passion for brutal killings, and bloody violence continue to rob it of the support of significant proportion of Nigerian Muslims. Under the circumstance, the group's striving for the Islamic State might well remain an unfulfilled dream.

Ifeanyi Onwuzuruigbo, *University of Ibadan*

Sara Beth Keough and Scott M. Youngstedt. 2019. *Water, Life, and Profit: Fluid Economies and Cultures of Niamey, Niger*. New York: Berghahn Books. 178 pp.

Despite efforts to address water access and quality issues on a global scale, hundreds of millions of people still lack this access, most of them in Africa. *Water, Life, and Profit: Fluid Economies and Cultures of Niamey, Niger* focuses on water quality and access through a holistic analysis of the people, economies, cultural symbolism, and material culture involved in the management, production, distribution, and consumption of drinking water in the urban context of Niamey, Niger. Keough and Youngstedt's book grows out of their extensive ethnography research, several field trips between 2013-2018, and a mixed method approach, which allows a holistic interpretation of water economies in which water is integral, even essential, to most domains or institutions of society-economic, political religious, leisure, etc.

The text is organized into six chapters in addition to the introduction and conclusion, each representing a distinct yet complementary view. The introduction explores the three interrelated terms—water, life, and profit—from which the book titled is derived. Chapter 1 situates water in the twenty-first century and explore how three thematic frameworks inform

the ideas about water, life, and profit described in the introduction. These thematic frameworks include urban water governance (including public, private, and community levels); access to and quality of water; and the cultural symbolism and material culture of water. Issues of governance are of particular concern in urban Africa, especially the issues related to water. Water governance is more than just a technical issue or matter of provision; it is a social and political issue revolving around power disparities between advantaged and disadvantaged populations. In the 21st century, governance of urban water supplies in Africa often involves the integration of public-private partnerships that emerged out of several decades of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and market liberalism. The authors argue that the provision of safe, potable water across the globe is considered a major development challenge. Water provision does not just refer to availability, it includes issues of access, including physical, environmental, and financial factors. The rest of the chapter provides initial insights on material, symbolic and sacred dimensions of water and how they are manifested in Niamey by different ethnic groups.

Chapter 2 provide an overview of historical urban development in Niamey. The chapter describes the evolution of the city's water regime, including the impact and influence of colonial powers, post-independence authoritarian governments, the establishment of democracy, and the implementation of SAPs and neo-liberal practices. The authors argue that Niger's peaceful transition from colony to independent state in 1960 and its ongoing reputation for tranquility has contributed to postcolonial Niamey's spectacular growth (p. 43).

In the next chapter, the authors begin by discussing the profile of one man's (Hassane's) life experience with drinking water involving many of key themes like the diversity of drinking water sources, the commoditization of water and water delivery, the gendered nature of water delivery in urban and rural contexts, inequality of access, changing material cultures of water, folklore, public health, the negative impact of Niamey's *piya wata* culture and economy on the environment, and looming climate change (p. 55). Later the authors emphasize that accessing water in Niamey involves a cross section of methods and strategies and varies by the purpose for which water is used. Here the author discuss that Niamey's residents use a multitude of networks and fluid strategies to access water that include, but are not limited to, piped water, buying water from street vendors, sharing water and obtaining water from their own NGOs and community associations, wells, and boreholes. The chapter also examines the pricing structure of piped water in Niamey, a city that uses increasing block tariffs to demonstrate why the poor end up paying more for water than the wealthy, even though they use less.

Chapters 4 and 5 provide in-depth analyses of two hybrid water economies that are the focus of this book. The fourth chapter, "Water Vendors in Niamey," examines the impact of commodification, urbanization, and technology on water systems and cultural relations in the urban context of Niamey. The chapter focuses on the lives, work and challenges faced by water vendors working in the informal economy. Water vendors first emerged on the urban landscape in Niamey in the 1950s, and their methods of water delivery and importance within the water network have continued to evolve. Most residents of Niamey rely on daily deliveries of water made by ambulatory vendors because only a minority of Niamey residents enjoys running water piped directly inside their homes or courtyards. Nearly 50 percent of drinking water in

Niamey is collected at standpipes and delivered to homes by vendors called *ga'ruwa* in Hausa (literally means "there is water") and the most commonly used term in Niamey. *Ga'ruwa* in Niamey typically work from sunrise to sunset seven days a week. They operate in almost every neighborhood in Niamey. Only in a few pockets within wealthy neighborhoods are they rare or nonexistent (p. 81). This chapter offers answers to two related questions. First, why are *ga'ruwa* jobs in Niamey dominated by immigrant Tuareg and Fulani men from Mali? And second, why do Nigerien men in Niamey, particularly from the traditionally sedentary Hausa, Zarma, and Songhay, avoid this job? The author argues that the answer is intertwined and *ga'ruwa* offer a conduit for understanding key cultural symbols, values, and social relationships that lead to answers to these questions. The authors point out that Nigerien men avoid this work in Niamey due to dignity preservation and shame avoidance. Nigerien men feel that women should serve men water. Furthermore, Nigerien men feel embarrassed to perform menial, physical labor in public. Keough and Youngstedt probe that a nuanced understanding of the culture of *ga'ruwa* and their role in the urban water regime of Niamey requires an appreciation of the symbolic value of water and their social relationships that revolve around it, particularly gender and ethnic relations.

The fifth chapter examines the commodity chain and value chain of half-liter water bags referred to as "pure water" or "sachet water," containing water used only for drinking and washing market vegetables, the sachets were kept refrigerated and sold cold by mobile vendors on the street or in small roadside shops that are often found in many street scrapes in Niamey. Residents of Niamey refer to this water as *piya wata*. The authors begin with a focus on the discarded bag and work backwards through the commodity chain to consumers, vendors and finally producers of "pure water" to reveal the underlying power structures, cultural perceptions and assumptions that ultimately resulted in the discarded bag and landscapes of waste. The authors link the elements of commodity production to the economic value of the sachets and assert that the economic value of the plastic bag is largely based on four characteristics: the label, the temperature of the water, the time of year it is sold, and the apparent "purity" of the water. Later in this chapter they also explore these elements of economic value alongside cultural context and social relationship to uncover a complex political economy of water selling with implications for the environment, poverty, socioeconomic status, gender, local economies and global trade. (p. 98).

Chapter 6, "Fluid Materiality in Niamey," intensively focuses on the material elements of water, including its packaging and branding, by considering how water's materiality manifests itself in Niamey's visible landscape. The chapter explores the trends and impacts of plastic packing of water on perceptions of water quality and look at the advertising and branding of water by analyzing highway billboards with water-related themes. The authors specifically analyzed the branding of sachets by collecting sixty-five different sachets labels that has been discarded by the roadside during their field research trips in 2015, 2016, and 2017 and highlight that there is lack of brand loyalty among consumers in Niamey. Keough and Youngstedt argue that materials used to access, transport, and store water carry with them messages about socioeconomic class, perceptions of quality, and household priorities. They are elements of water's materiality and are part of the process by which people assign value and meaning to water. In essence, they are part of water's social life (p.134). In conclusion, the author suggest that water

governance must be holistic in its implementation by taking into account water's commoditization, cultural symbolism, materiality, the global plastic capitalism within which water regimes operate, and water's connections to both local and global forces. Good governance should consider life over profit. Realities in Niamey indicate that good water governance has yet to be achieved, although Niamey is not alone in this condition. (p. 158).

The strength of the Keough and Youngstedt book lies in the extensive ethnographic research and oral testimonies of 205 individual interviews and eight focus group interviews with water vendors, consumers, producers, and managers. This book is an interesting scholarly piece which attempts to fill the gap that scholars have rarely attempted and offers a clarifying lens for understanding this critical and multifaceted concept. *Water, Life, and Profit: Fluid Economies and Cultures of Niamey, Niger* makes a contribution to the less-explored discourse on the symbolic and material nature of water and the relevance of semiotics to the study of water relationships, specifically within the context of Niamey.

Priya Dahiya, *University of Delhi*

Mahdu Krishnan. 2018. *Writing Spatiality in West Africa: Colonial Legacies in the Anglophone/Francophone Novel*. Martlesham, UK: James Currey. 215 pp.

Krishnan has embarked on an in-depth study using space to reconstruct African literature exposing it to the contemporary world. She has provided a new reading of some selected novels written by well-known Francophone and Anglophone writers from West Africa from the 1950s to date. The book is divided into four chapters: (1) spatiality from empire to independence, (2) post-independence disillusion and spatial closures, (3) social space beyond the public sphere: women's writing and contested hegemonies, and (4) cosmopolitanism, migration and neoliberalism in the wake of structural adjustment. The strength of the book lies in the author's ability to interpret the concept of space from a multidimensional perspective, establishing thus, a relationship between space, political, social, and economic contexts in West Africa.

The choice of the Francophone and Anglophone novels by Krishnan should not be taken for granted. It is significant in the way that they represent two different contexts, two different minds, two different realities, two different policies—French and British—and the difference is clear to the reader: French colonies which gained “nominal independence” (p. 59) will never be free from their colonial masters.

The analysis of Krishnan shows that colonization is an endless cycle taking new names in Africa: globalization, the structural adjustment program brought to Africa by the World Bank and IMF “guided by the knowing hands of Euro-America” that regulate the international monetary system, and the liberalization of trade and privatization which contributed to the exploitation of African resources. In fact, Krishnan describes “global capitalism” as “a force of destruction and marginalisation” (p. 95). The results: “inequality,” “failure of development projects,” “ascendance of donor-led interests,” “political corruption,” “resource instability,” and “widespread conflicts” (p. 141) causing the dependency of Africa on the economies of Europe and America. Any effort to unite and strengthen Africa is doomed to failure because of the new forms of imperialism dominated by selfishness and jealousy.

By studying the West African Francophone and Anglophone texts, Krishnan was trying to inform the readers of the difference between the British policy and French policy Africa in general. For instance, L'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie which emerged as a reaction to Commonwealth, was contrasted with the latter: the first is guided and influenced by France "in a manner that replicates, rather than replaces, the structures of the Union française and Communauté française" (p. 157), while the Commonwealth has been regarded as a "multipolar organisation, increasingly free from British influence" (p. 157). A critical reading of the book would help to understand that the world is all about fear, selfishness, jealousy, competition, causes and consequences of events, endless destruction and reconstruction, conceiving and re-conceiving policies. In short, it is about "the continuation of old forms of domination under new names" (p. 82).

Krishnan has published a highly interesting book. It offers a pedagogic approach to researchers, teachers, and students of African literature to grasp an overview of the selected novels by applying their knowledge of history to the themes of the novels with a view to understanding the contemporary issues of West Africa in detail.

Voudina Ngarsou, *CEFOD Business School - N'Djamena (Chad)*

Jonas Kreienbaum. 2019. *A Sad Fiasco: Colonial Concentration Camps in Southern Africa, 1900-1908*. Translated from the German by Elizabeth Janik. New York/Oxford: Berghahn. 281 pp.

A Sad Fiasco is a measured, meticulously researched and enterprising account of two colonial concentration camp systems: the British in South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, and the German in South-West Africa during the war with the Nama and Herero peoples between 1904 and 1908. These institutions feature in a number of colonial wars around the turn of the century, conducted by imperial or would-be imperial powers: in addition to Britain and Germany, Spain in Cuba and the Philippines, where it was succeeded by the United States, following the Spanish-American War. The wars continued into the mid and late twentieth century, as the imperial and colonial yielded to the neo-colonial, involving other powers, such as Portugal, France, Italy, and Japan. The term "concentration camp" derives from the Spanish *reconcentrados*, originally devised by the Spanish Arsenio Martinez Campos for the Cuban insurgency, but which he himself refused to implement, as he had earlier refused to countenance anything like "ethnic cleansing." *Reconcentrados* were urban enclaves, behind trenches and barbed wire, in which hundreds of thousands of rural Cubans could be "reconcentrated" in order to isolate the insurgents in the countryside and cut them off from the support of their non-combatant fellow-citizens. The system was implemented by Campos's successor, Valeriano Weyler.

As Jonas Kreienbaum makes clear, it is worth considering the southern African concentration camps in the context of the general history of the institution. Global expansion of the European powers, whether it is essentially capitalist or imperialist, inevitably involves war, and war has been conducted by diverse means, apart from the weaponry and other resources available to the opposing armies, including various devices of containment: "homelands," "internment," "locations," "reserves," and "reservations." The argument that the southern

African concentration camps were designed to protect their inhabitants by keeping them out of harm's way, out of the line of fire, is difficult to sustain, although that seems to have been the motive of the missionaries who encouraged their converts to seek refuge in the German camps in South-West Africa. Jonas Kreienbaum faces up to questions such as these, as they are raised by the phenomenon of concentration camps. Quoting Horst Gründer, he asks, was colonization primarily "genocide, or forced modernization" (p. 3)? What defines or determines the roll-out of European colonization: mass violence, the civilizing mission, economic exploitation? Within this overall project, were the camps, given the high mortality rates, weapons of genocidal destruction? Protective civilian enclaves? Sites of upliftment and education? Pools of exploitable labour? In both southern African cases, it is possible to answer "yes" to all these questions. As Jonas Kreienbaum shows, motive and method could vary from camp to camp, from one superintendent to another.

The author is scrupulous in his marshalling of the evidence, which is important when one realises how widely the records of one camp may differ from another, how scantily some phases of the wars were recorded as opposed to others. *A Sad Fiasco* offers a clear account of the conduct of the two wars involved, showing that one perhaps important feature in common between the two systems was that both were initially implemented as counter-measures to guerrilla warfare, following on reverses in the field, or at least on a lack of success in ending the wars by other means, including para-genocidal tactics like Kitchener's scorched earth policy and the German "brutal military action" (p. 89) in South-West Africa.

One feature that distinguishes the British from the German camps is that the former set up separate camps for "Boers" and "Africans," and that some Boer prisoners of war were incarcerated in British colonies overseas. Despite the myth, this was never a "white man's war." The South-West African camps incarcerated Herero and Nama, but also some few Bergdamara and San. Over time survival rates improved, and as the wars turned in the colonizers' favor, the camps perhaps became more like labor reserves or re-education centers. One feature that distinguished the South African War was the strength of the international support and sympathy for the Boer cause. This was a complex phenomenon, involving some tension between acknowledgement of and respect for ethnic identity, and global humanitarianism and its antipathy to claims to racial superiority.

Jonas Kreienbaum's title is a quote from Sir Alfred Milner, British High Commissioner in South Africa, recognizing that high death rates in the camps were "not merely incidental" but inherent in the system: "The whole thing, I think now, has been a mistake" (p. 1). One way or another, their outcome was built into the colonial/imperial/capitalist system. This impressive book helps its readers to grasp more clearly a tragic phase of modern history.

Tony Voss, *Independent Scholar - Sydney*

Timothy R. Landry. 2019. *Vodún: Secrecy and the Search for Divine Power*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 201 pp.

This short monograph by Timothy Landry, an assistant professor of anthropology and religious studies at Trinity College, examines the globalization of Vodún in Ouidah, a coastal port town

in Bénin that has played a central role in the Atlantic world since the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Landry focuses specifically on the religious encounter between Western spiritual seekers and Béninois practitioners in recent decades. Over five chapters, Landry argues that the global expansion of Vodún has been facilitated by its ritual secrecy—an apparent paradox. Foreign spiritual tourists want to experience the “real” Vodún, and secrecy is how these foreigners authenticate their “experience, or a sacred object, space, person, and being” as legitimate (p. 164). It is necessary to point out that Landry does not approach the spiritual encounter as a dispassionate observer, but rather he is implicated in it. Landry previously trained as a priest in Haitian Vodou, and he apprenticed as a Vodún diviner himself as part of the research process. As a result, this is an insider-outsider account of Vodún in the tradition of anthropologists and historians including Paul Stoller, Judy Rosenthal, and Ivor Miller.

Landry’s monograph illustrates how foreign initiates integrate their cultural positions into African “religions,” in a kind of symmetrical process to how Africans have transformed Christianity for hundreds of years. Some of these innovations smack of cultural imperialism. Western spiritual seekers, for instance, have “whitened” African “religions” including Vodún and Ifá by avoiding difficult and challenging rituals such as animal sacrifice, head shaving, and praise poetry (pp. 145-146, 158). Other innovations, however, reflect the flexibility of Vodún itself. Westerners, for example, have adjusted ingredients in ceremonies to account for their unique environmental context. Jean, Landry’s divination teacher, for example, encouraged him to substitute leaves from trees found in Bénin for leaves from trees found in the United States in the construction of spirit shrines when he returned home (p. 146). Similarly, one American practitioner supplemented his practice of Vodún with independent knowledge of Lucumí whenever he encountered a Vodún ceremony that could not be replicated or an ingredient that could not be obtained in the United States (p. 145).

This book makes a variety of scholarly contributions. His analysis of the globalization of Vodún, for instance, raises questions about the utility of the term “ethnic, traditional, or indigenous religion” (p. 155), just as modern expressions of Christianity in Africa challenge the usefulness of the term “African indigenous/independent/initiated church.” Landry also makes an important contribution to the theoretical literature on religious conversion in Africa, which has assumed that processes of religious change always involve moving away from “indigenous religions” to world religions, such as Christianity and Islam. In addition, through his discussions of both a devout Catholic and an Evangelical priest embracing Vodún without abandoning their Christian identities (pp. 136-38, 142-44), Landry shows how new and old beliefs and identities frequently exist side by side, a situation of syncretism. In practice, conversion is rarely (if ever) “a clear case of replacing one set of beliefs with another” (p. 131), as some scholars have contended.

The monograph showcases both the benefits and the risks that accompany Landry’s apprenticeship methods. His apprenticeship as Vodún diviner not only allowed him to participate in Vodún ceremonies and festivals, but it also allowed him to engage in ritual dances, singing, and sacrifices that non-initiates would never have been allowed to observe and experience. Landry also notes that his initiation into Vodún as a diviner permitted him to reflect on his own belief system and interrogate the nature of belief in ways that are not possible using traditional historical and sociological methods (p. 149). At the same time, however, he does

point out that his position as a diviner within Béninois society as opposed to simply a “curious anthropologist” hindered his ability to ask questions about witchcraft (p. 107). Since Landry had been initiated as a diviner, Béninois frequently misinterpreted his innocent questions about witchcraft as a request to be initiated as a witch. While it is clear from a reading of this book that religious apprenticeship has some serious advantages for anthropologists of religion, future apprentices should try to be aware of the ways in which the apprenticeship method can affect the trajectory of their research.

Unlike the majority of scholarly monographs, Landry’s book is a delightful read, for it is essentially a memoir of Landry’s eighteen months in Ouidah that is peppered with rigorous empirical and theoretical insights. Landry is always present in the narrative, and the reader can feel, for example, Landry’s nervousness as he prepares for his initiation (pp. 70-82), his hesitation to sacrifice a goat (p. 54), his fears about being initiated into Egúngún (p. 84), and his amazement when a chicken is protected from a gunshot by a charm (p. 110). Landry has a wonderful eye for small but significant details. He recalls, for instance, that a “large blue plastic container” used during his initiation was marked with the words “Made in China” (p. 74; see also p. 142), subtly highlighting how Vodún has become implicated in processes of globalization. Ultimately, this book is more than an ethnography of an African religious tradition, it is a thoughtful personal reflection on the ethnographic process that would make a nice addition to syllabi on research methods. In my final reflection, *Vodún: Secrecy and the Search for Divine Power* is a worthy recipient of the Society for the Anthropology of Religion’s 2019 Clifford Geertz Prize in the Anthropology of Religion.

D. Dmitri Hurlbut, *Boston University*

Daniel Mains. 2019. *Under Construction: Technologies of Development in Urban Ethiopia*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 240 pp.

It is encouraging to see such a comprehensive contribution on urban Ethiopia at a time when many studies in Ethiopia have been giving more emphasis on rural communities. While the direction of the rate of urban development in today’s Ethiopia is profoundly visible, little is known about the dimensions of the development, particularly technologies of development. This study by Mains should be accepted with gratitude, and welcomed as a huge contribution to Ethiopian studies of urban development. The book presents interesting research findings that several years of field work experience have yielded. It documents the complex interplay between construction and destruction, through questioning the legitimacy of the state and the struggles of labor in construction technologies, and further illustrates how affective politics shaped development in Ethiopian urban settings. It explores interplays at the intersections between the state, construction, and governance in urban Ethiopian. And of course, labor was also an integral part of this contribution.

The book adds fresh insights into issues of construction development in urban centers through making comparisons between two cities situated in southern and southwestern Ethiopia—Hawassa and Jimma. Its attempt on construction development transcends explaining technologies of development and emphasizes that “the complex relationship between

construction and destruction shaped urban residents' affective relationships with the state" (p. 91), for which it requires thoughtful reading to consider details and complications. Of course, articulated well, taking "construction" both as research site and analytical discourse or "framework," the book provides new dimensions for researchers and urban developers/policy makers to understand urban development in Ethiopia. The contribution provides fresh insights on how and what shaped state legitimacy in the "developmental state of Ethiopia." In the study of urban Ethiopia, Mains shows a new perspective which was not yet addressed by previous scholarship.

The book discusses construction as a site and analytical framework by using ethnographic method as its integral approach and employing primary data from the lived experience of participants including researcher's experience in the two urban settings. This helps the researcher to get a wide range of information. The author had a good deal of experience living in these two settings that gave him the full insights about the cities' infrastructural development. However, there are additional political economy insights that the author did not consider while making comparisons between these two case-sensitive urban contexts of Hawassa and Jimma. The cities might have faced similar experiences of governance, but the nature of the Ethiopian ethnic-based federal government might have privileged some cities while ignoring others. The comparisons made between Jimma and Hawassa would have benefited a lot from studying the political history of these two cities in relation to the governing policy and the political nature of the Tigray People Liberation Front/Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (TPLF/EPRDF). Hawassa, as the capital city of one of the nine regional states in Ethiopia, has more development and progress made in the last two and half decades arguably at the cost of other relatively older cities in the regional state. If we critically investigate the political interest behind the establishment of Hawassa as a capital of Southern Nationals and Nationalities and People's regional state, it is not surprising to see construction successes in Hawassa. However, Jimma, a city as old as the capital of Ethiopia, has suffered a lot from the TPLF/EPRDF development strategies as the city is believed to be the residence of the remnants of the old regime. The growth of cities in TPLF/EPRDF's Ethiopia is not just a matter of regional bureaucracy and governance; it is more of a federal government issue under TPLF/EPRDF's new state making process.

Fasika Gedif, *Bahir Dar University (Ethiopia)*

Kara Moskowitz. 2019. *Seeing Like a Citizen: Decolonization, Development, and the Making of Kenya, 1945 – 1980*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press. 322 pp.

In *Seeing Like a Citizen*, Kara Moskowitz documents the transition from colonial rule to the new independent Kenyan nation. At the most general level, the book is about the interactions between the Kenyan population and the colonial and postcolonial state, how these interactions formed people's understanding of statehood and citizenship, and the messy intricacies of everyday negotiations with state agents. At the same time, the book is a more focused study on a particular area of the new nation, Uasin Gishu. The fundamental argument is that the Kenyan state was never monolithic or standardized and that the population thus had plural and contesting notions of citizenship and the state.

Throughout the book we are told that land was at the center of the most important negotiations the population had with the state. The book begins with the settlement programs started by the British government soon after the end of the Mau Mau rebellion. The programs include the Swynnerton Plan and the Million Acre Scheme. Running through this chapter is a story about the kinds of claims that individuals and groups made to the state for a piece of land and how these claims were involved in people's understanding of their identity and relationship to the state. It is here in these co-constitutive relationships that ideas about rights and ownership, patronage and community development begin to emerge. Some people attempted to claim their piece of land through demonstrations of poverty, some through organized communal claims of long-standing ownership, some through what were framed as indigenous values like hard work.

Moskowitz does a particularly good job of linking local level interactions between people and groups and government workers and institutions to broader circuits of power and capital. For example, in the first chapters on the settlement schemes we are given an idea of how they are linked to British finance and the World Bank. These links provide Moskowitz with a platform to show how richer, better-situated Kenyans were able to benefit more from the changes wrought by Independence. We are given privileged access including interviews and life histories of people from Uasin Gishu and from their perspective the richer better-placed Kenyans were often Kikuyu. As government initiatives over land change during the timeframe that is covered in the book from those that help large land-owners to the those who own smaller plots of land and as co-operatives become entrenched as the way for communities to mobilize claims to land ownership, the relative success or failure of using ethnicity as part of claims to land and services ebbs and flows, particularly as there was no formal legislation for the new co-operatives. In this way and in particular in chapter three we are given a sense of the ways that groups start to self-identify and form boundaries between themselves and others.

Alongside land are the services that are expected from the state. Because these are largely non-existent in the settlement areas, Kenyans are forced into self-help schemes that are then funded or not by broader circuits of capital. Again, being able to tap into public funds is shown through the ways Kenyans' social and political networks are activated. Education over best farming practices through extension agents, for example, offered opportunities for personal negotiations over crops and services like a cow dip or a well, and it was often the larger landowners who could benefit from these services. Squashed into smaller and smaller pieces of land and forced into loan repayments and debt, many small landowners were pushed into poverty during the settlement schemes and this did not improve after Independence. The UK's attempt to switch to funding low-density schemes was met with opposition from the Kenyan government which implemented a *Haraka* scheme (fast resettlement). One of the book's main triumphs is the way that small acts of corruption are woven into the fabric of the interpersonal relations between the population and state agents. These acts are never given their own central position in the book or even much analysis, but they pop up from time to time in amongst all of the other details the reader is given about negotiations over land and services. In this way, we see how local level acts of authoritarian rule manifested themselves in the siphoning of public funds or the use of aid money for particular purposes.

Economic autonomy and its relation to Kenyans' ideas about the duties of the state and the duties of a citizen are brought together in interesting stories about extension agents and educators trying to manage the production of maize and other crops in rural settings whilst corrupt bureaucrats and farmers sell their maize in Uganda. We are also given details about different economic management schemes of the government and moments of crises such as famine after massive maize shortages. Some of these schemes are brought to the Kenyan population through growing newspaper and radio media. Running through the sections on economic autonomy is a story about the marginalization of women and the poor in public discourse and the different networks they pursued to alleviate this.

The book answers the question of how the state is experienced through presenting a collection that documents local level interactions. We are successfully given an idea of what "seeing like a citizen" looks and feels like as opposed to Scott's "seeing like a state" but the book is weakest in its overarching theoretical framework of these interactions in that ultimately it rests on a version of the social contract. The study could have been improved if the different visual and affective registers at play were then used to question the central concept of the social contract as an organizing principle.

Nathan Dobson, *University of Florida*

Seth Markle. 2017. *A Motorcycle on Hell Run: Tanzania, Black Power, and the Uncertain Future of Pan-Africanism, 1964-1974*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press. 296 pp.

Seth Markle's book is a fascinating history of how Tanzania and the ideologies and intellectuals that were central to the postcolonial project transcended national (externally-imposed) borders and placed the country under Julius Nyerere central to the Pan-Africanist project. This was by no means a certainty given the huge ambiguity between any putative continental unity and the reality of de jure (if not de facto) sovereign African states. This contradiction has always created tension between the idea that the regeneration of Africa can only be accomplished if the continent is united. Kwame Nkrumah warned that the balkanization of Africa was key to neo-colonial rule as this would enable the imperialists to take advantage of them individually. Nkrumah's cautioning has of course, been vindicated by history.

Central to the wider idea of Pan-Africanism is that it regards Africa, Africans, and African descendants as a unit. Pan-Africanism was originally conceived by people of African descent in the Caribbean and in the United States and can be traced back to the 19th century. In response to their alienation and loss of identity through slavery and their everyday experiences of racism in the New World, people of African origin naturally yearned for their ancestral homeland, where "Africa" represented dignity and freedom—even if only as an abstract concept for those who had been born in captivity.

What Markle's books demonstrates is how Black Power advocates in the diaspora visualised Nyerere's Tanzania as a forward movement for Pan-African organisation and implementation. Dar es Salaam thus emerged as the centre of an incredible intellectual power that still resonates today, with serious debates about the form of the African state, the desirability and practicality of continental unity, the question of neo-colonialism, and the role of

the comprador elite—and a myriad of other issues—being passionately discussed “on the Hill” at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM). This was a period of giants such as Walter Rodney, Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu, Walter Bgoya, etc. The role of UDSM was exceptional, given that Tanzania quickly became the gathering point for southern African liberation movements and a key Frontline State. Nyerere’s dedication to liberation and his resolute support inspired the staff and students at UDSM to adopt a wide Pan-African vision, thus encouraging a migration of radicals to its campus.

The book’s key focus is Malcolm X’s stay in Tanzania and his friendship with Babu, which Markle suggests laid the groundwork for a partnership between the Tanzanian government and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the United States. Babu of course had attended the All-African People’s Conference in Ghana in 1958, where he had met Kwame Nkrumah, Frantz Fanon, and Patrice Lumumba. His dedication to a progressive Pan-Africanism that sought to confront the baleful colonial legacy was consistent and integral to his thought. Indeed, prior to his visit to Ghana, Babu had been elected secretary of the Pan African Movement for East and Central Africa. Babu first met Malcolm X in Cairo in July 1964 at the second summit of the Organization of African Unity. When Malcolm X visited Tanzania, Babu introduced him to state officials. In turn, when Babu visited Harlem, he was introduced to the radical Black community by Malcolm X. It is indisputable that Babu influenced Malcolm X to adopt a more progressive and socialist-informed political position after he left the Nation of Islam. This dialogue between the diaspora and the continent is at the heart of one aspect of Pan-Africanism and it is fitting that Markle spends time on this matter.

The book consists of three parts: “Encounters,” “Doings,” and “Undoing.” It starts with Malcolm X’s cry that Africans in the diaspora must psychologically “return to Africa,” physically visit Africa and consequently develop their thoughts about the continent and their relationship to it. This is classic Garveyism and the thread of Pan-Africanism consistently weaves the ideas of previous thinkers into a collective unity. The “Doings” part demonstrates how both Nyerere and Black Power activists linked up around the question of literacy being a key to freedom. Markle shows how Nyerere’s devotion to knowledge production corresponded to the aims of organisations such as the Drum and Spear Press in the United States, which sought to publish African-centred books for dissemination in the diaspora and beyond. The “Doings” section has a focus on the brilliant Guyanese intellectual, Walter Rodney. Rodney’s experience in Tanzania was a process of mutual learning whereby the politics of the African diaspora was imparted to the UDSM students and in turn Rodney engaged in a deep reflection about the nature of the Tanzanian states and its *Ujamaa* project. Unfortunately, Rodney became seen to be hostile to Nyerere and the state, which highlighted the limitations of the Tanzanian state’s commitment to true socialism. But the legacy of this period, with the seminal *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* being published whilst Rodney was teaching at UDSM, is a testament to a practical Pan-African intellectual engagement.

The “Undoing” part centres on the Sixth Pan African Congress of 1974, held in Tanzania. This Congress was a conscious effort to continue the series of meetings initially launched in 1900 by Henry Sylvester Williams. Subsequently taken up by W.E.B. Du Bois (who organised an additional five in 1919, 1921, 1923, 1927, and 1945) the Congresses at first were somewhat elitists

in nature and restricted largely to discussions by diasporic Africans. This changed in 1945 when a younger generation of radicals, many from Africa (such as Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta) called for immediate African independence

The organizing idea for the Sixth Congress came from American activists, who were inspired by the Pan-Africanist vision. Significantly influential was C.L.R. James, who had assisted in organizing the previous (fifth) meeting. Eventually, two hundred people attended. The pressing objective of the Congress was to discuss how to bring an end to neo-colonial exploitation, address the condition of dependency and underdevelopment, and build support for the liberation struggle in Southern Africa. The differences that emerged at the Congress accounts for the "Undoing" title. Arguments over whether African-Americans had suffered a singular experience compared to other Black people in the world arose. The central focus on race, rather than class, by some Americans drew criticism from socialist-inclined Africans. And the Tanzanian government's ban on opposition groups from independent African and Caribbean nations attending (albeit in line with the Organization of African Unity's principles), led many attendants to believe that statism was incompatible with Pan-Africanism. Although Markle acknowledges that many saw the Congress in a positive light, he does suggest that it drew to an end the developing transnational Pan-African relationship that had built up over the precious ten years.

Markle's book overall highlights the contradictions of an African organised around notional sovereign states, rather than on continental unity. This is what Kwame Nkrumah warned about and it is a pity that this central issue facing Pan-Africanisms (i.e. unitary states vs. unity) was not developed in an introduction that could have laid the basis for a framework to understanding the deep-seated paradoxes. However, the details and information that the author provides and the incredibly exciting times that Markle recounts brings to life a time when the future of Africa and its diaspora was debated seriously and engaged a multitude of audiences. One can but wish that those days will return.

Ian Taylor, *University of St. Andrews*

Joseph Mujere. 2019. *Land, Migration and Belonging: A History of the Basotho in Southern Rhodesia c. 1890-1960s*. Martlesham, UK: James Curry. 176 pp.

This book is a result of a research project about the history of the Basotho community residing in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) to where they had immigrated from South Africa. The author examines how they were able to uphold their culture, tradition, and language in this area where their neighbors were Karangas. The key aim of the book is to examine how this small, mainly Christianized community of Basotho were able to use the ownership of freehold land, their grave sites, and their school as well as religion and language to sustain a particularistic identity while at the same time engaging with their non-Sotho neighbors (p. 3). One could readily confuse this group of Basotho with Basotho from Lesotho, but the author explained that this group was from Limpopo in South Africa.

The book comprises six chapters. The first introduces the research methods and the hypotheses used. Mujere explains his sources for research, an example being the use of oral histories collected from members of the Basotho community as well as their non-Sotho

neighbors, diaries, and letters. The second chapter analyses the findings, showing that Basotho ownership of farms, religion, and education were central in the construction of the Basotho as progressive Africans since they were the earliest converts. The author continues to explain how the Basotho unity in diversity shaped the way they interacted with Dutch Reformed missionaries and colonial officials (p. 3). Chapter three discusses land inheritance disputes and segregation which led to the debate on the legality of African 'wills' and the position of women in inheritance cases. The author argued that Basotho women did not accept the minority status that was purported by customary law. This led to showing the dynamics that were within Basotho community. Chapter four describes how the Basotho bought a farm, naming it Bethel, and refused to accept the assistance from the Dutch Reformed missionaries. The author showed that Bethel tells a story of Basotho belonging and attachment to the area (p. 90). Chapter five examines building a community school, which illustrated that education was one of the strategies to weave their sense of belonging. Chapter six explained that the Basotho expressed their desire to retain a measure of independence from the Dutch Reformed Church by refusing to accept the missionary paternalism (p.132). The concluding epilogue noted that some migrants have traced back their roots to South Africa and found their relatives who still live there. They never really broke their ties with their place of origin as shown by the story of Mr. Thema (p.3) who went back to South Africa. This group of Basotho had maintained a sense of home in both the place of emigration and their ancestral home.

This very readable and informative book provides comprehensive coverage of the history of Basotho migrants. It uses belonging as an analytical tool to explore the history of the Basotho in Zimbabwe (p. 4). Mujere provides the trajectory of the Basotho migrants' unity as shaped by the way they interacted with the Dutch Reformed Church missionaries and became the early converts. The Basotho were portrayed as a hardworking, educated, and progressive model of Africans because they were enterprising on their farms, producing grain and other types of farm produce. This small group of Basotho had established themselves through the sense of belonging by owning land.

The book is adding value to the history of southern Africa and movement of people from one place to another in the period under study. The role that was played by the Missionaries at that time, how their encounter with indigenous people in their places and changed their cultures and traditions. But Basotho migrants to Southern Rhodesia were not easily changed from their normal hymns, funerals, gatherings and their language. It also contributes to the debate of identity, land and politics of belonging.

It is a good book for the students of history, especially because one would want to know how the group of Basotho has landed in Zimbabwe. The author has elaborated on how it all happened. Those who are studying issues of migration can access the dynamics of it within this book. It can also be recommended to the people who are interested in community development and rural development, when they read about Basotho and how they survived in Zimbabwe. It is factual since it brings historical survey of the minority groups in colonial Zimbabwe.

Moliehi Motseki-Mokhothu, *National University of Lesotho*

Jacob Mundy. 2018. *Libya*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press. 293 pp.

Libya, virtually a failed state, now has become a haven for global terrorists who fight under the pretext of the “war on terror” waged by the US and its North Atlantic allies. This oil rich North African country is in every form of crises today—suffering from terrorism, violent militias, refugees, and a lot of uncertainty and power poles. Libya’s stolen revolution and the freedom from slain dictator Mu’ammr Al-Gaddafi came at an alarming price—the fall of rich Libya into poverty and perpetual instability.

Jacob Mundy’s description on Libya, the Gaddafi regime, and especially post-Gaddafi Libya is thick political ethnography. He finely explains how Libya’s basic institutions became impoverished during the Gaddafi regime, itself creating internal divisions, power centers, and dangerous weaknesses, and how the situation worsened and led to the emergence of US proxies in power after his brutal murder. This crisp academic commentary tells it all, though it seems he has not consulted some of the important works written on Libya after the country’s half-baked revolution. His approach is triangular; he presents a fine and balanced correlation of polity, security, and humanity in today’s Libya besides giving readers a lucid background of Libya’s emergence on the world map and as a rich nation state. Mundy’s commentary, though indirectly, talks about the prevailing uncertainty and the failing efforts of peace building in contemporary Libya which is caught in the great game of the powerful and war mongering West. Sociologically speaking, the very offshoot of the Arab Spring in Libya did not work at all and in turn drowned Libya in more chaos and conflict. Libya’s vast oil resources and its divided and violent militias (rebels) somehow lured the global capitalist powers, who are politely branded as the international community, to destabilize it forever. Mundy’s work, comprising five chapters, discusses the uncertainty that resulted out of the lack of conflict resolution in Libya’s post regime change powered by the West. It describes the Libyan situation as more fragile than ever as the powers that started and encouraged the Libyan chaotic conditions failed to clean them up in the end.

Libya today undoubtedly has proved to be the worst victim of the Arab Spring that and lost almost everything to the 2011 uprising that proved nothing more than a hapless/mindless revolution. The fallout from the Arab Spring has hardly been constructive and friendly to the populace in almost all the regime toppled states. Like a massive flashflood it collapsed everything that came its way, even the basic institutions of law and order, centralized state regulation, security apparatus, people’s psyche of feeling secure, basic human rights, etc. As for Libya, the unceasing chaos and violence seized the whole oil rich state and led to serious ramifications/fallouts including the unaccounted for and unregulated mass proliferation of weapons, continuing unrest, unceasing bloodshed, and the emergence of a plethora of self-styled and tribal militias and their fiefdoms, thus shaping the prolonged chaos and uncertainty throughout. Gaddafi’s murder in fact proved the beginning of an endless chaos. One can well imagine the terror/fear among the common Libyans, and it also reflects the nasty fallouts of the so-called Libyan revolution. The big powers, which took pride in attacking Libya (i.e., NATO assaults) and helped/encouraged the rebels/thugs to sabotage the entire country to topple the Gaddafi regime did so to satisfy their own egos and interests.

The biggest challenge today is the deteriorated law and order situation along with the appalling activities by the emergence of uncontrolled militia/erstwhile fighters of the

(incomplete and mishandled) revolution. The continuing bloodshed accompanied by the loss of the country's huge wealth and more importantly the collective psychological feeling of personal security has resulted in public dismay and panic instead of jubilation after the collapse of Gaddafi's tyrannical regime. This entire chaotic state of affairs raises certain questions to ponder over for Libya's future that seems too dark in the absence of credible leaders and powerful institutions. Undeniably, the Arab Spring has sabotaged peace and the common person's life more than proving constructive. Just regime changes for never ending instability and chaos cannot be a revolution. Also, the military in Africa lack a good record as far as upholding human rights are concerned. Libya's transition to true democracy can prove developmental and positive, but it needs patience and time. Rebuilding a new democratic Libya and improving its international relations and diplomatic skills cannot be done overnight. The planned annihilation of civil society and horrors of the so-called Libyan revolution will keep haunting the state for decades to come.

Jacob Mundy's work is a thought-provoking analysis. He has, however, taken considerable effort to be diplomatic and present things more politely and indirectly.

Adfer Rashid Shah, *Jamia Millia Islamia University - New Delhi*

Øystein H. Rolandsen and Martin W. Daly. 2016. *A History of South Sudan: From Slavery to Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 200 pp.

In a short span of eight to nine years, there exists already a growing output of work dedicated to the complex history of the newly independent Republic of South Sudan. The central-eastern African nation, which, after nearly two centuries of ongoing discord with the northern country of Sudan, gained its sovereignty on July 9, 2011 to much socio-political commentary and literary debate. Authors such as political scientists Matthew Le Riche and Matthew Arnold, BBC foreign correspondent James Cophall, activist Dr. Peter Adwok Nyaba, U.N. representative Hilde F. Johnson, field investigator Edward Thomas, and American scholar D. H. Johnson have all explored and attempted to pinpoint the root causes of South Sudan's secession. Contrastingly, *A History of South Sudan: From Slavery to Independence* by historians Øystein H. Rolandsen and Martin William Daly offers an immersive perspective on the topic.

A History of South Sudan is a relatively concise 200 pages of comprehensive writing on the troubled nation which chronicles the complex web of political dynamics leading up to the 99 percent vote for independence. It is a dense narrative of how one of Africa's largest territories split in half after two civil wars and the killing and displacement of millions of people throughout the region. Organizing the book into ten succinct chapters, Rolandsen and Daly build their research from the early 19th century Egyptian encounter with Nilotic inhabitants up to Mahdiah slave-harvesting in *zariba* enclosures and the establishment of the colonial Anglo-Egyptian Condominium in 1899. Delineating decades of tense negotiations between the North and South regions leading to Sudan's independence in 1956, the manuscript effectively lays out the dire instability in the region including three decisive military coups, and the 1983 birth of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM/A) under the leadership of the late and patriarchal John Garang. It is worth mentioning that Garang's untimely death by a helicopter

crash in 2005 threw South Sudan into a downward spiral from which it has yet to recover. The book ends with how oil-related power struggles, the “leadership crisis” (p. 155) and human insecurities have led to yet another civil war and disrupted the nation’s stability since 2013.

A History of South Sudan’s strengths lie in its structure and scope. The book is a compelling historical primer addressing, per the authors, “several audiences and a wide variety of issues” (p. vii) and touching on profound socio-economic debates concerning “the Southern problem” (p. 75). For example, Rolandsen and Daly report: “In the mid-1930’s, the government spent five times less on each southerner in a subsidized mission school than it did for each northerner in a government school” (p. 53). The authors are especially versed in historicizing the main actors and factors in the growing disaffection toward the North—including Muhammed Ahmed, Jaafar Nimeiri, Riek Machar and the National Democratic Alliance. Rolandsen and Daly are to be commended for the thorough timeline and the book’s chronological organization from 1839 to 2014. The bibliographical essay is a fascinating read as well, providing essential reading for the devoted initiate. Further, it is refreshing that *A History of South Sudan* acknowledges the fraught portrayal of South Sudan in the media. “By the mid-1980’s, Sudan had in Western countries become synonymous with humanitarian catastrophe” (p. 114). Compounding South Sudan’s messy infrastructural development is, in Rolandsen and Daly’s view, the dismissive and cursory regard given it all over the world.

A History of South Sudan is not, by any means, a people’s account of its own history, and the authors Rolandsen and Daly make many assumptions about African agency that plague most Westernized ethnologies. They explain: “By this, we hope to correct (and indeed to analyze) the tendency in foreign source materials to depict outsiders as agents of change...” (p. viii). Understandably, the book inspires more questions than it provides answers. Were there external factors that led to the North’s exclusion in the landmark voting? How was the U.S. (or any other oil-exporting superpower) complicit in the political disparity and civil unrest between the two regions? Who actually benefits from the secession if, obviously, not South Sudan? What is, in fact, South Sudanese national identity? What are the humanitarian implications of civil war on the region? Questions also remain as to whether South Sudan itself condones the historical representations in the book. What do African intellectuals have to say about it? Notwithstanding, by capturing important milestones and appeasements such as the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 and the important Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005, two pivotal referendums that lead to prolonged peace for South Sudan, the book provides an expansive view of independence and nation building. All in all, *A History of South Sudan* gets a nod for generalizing the long, storied march to independence for the new nation, and will hopefully provoke important discussion about African self-determination, empowerment, and human rights.

Dexter Story, *Independent Scholar* - Los Angeles

Landry Signé. 2018. *African Development, African Transformation: How Institutions Shape Development Strategy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 190 pp.

From development perspectives, Africa is considered as a poor continent. In connection with this state of affairs, there are voluminous literature interrogating why Africa is poor and which

solutions should be opted to address the problem. In *African Development, African Transformation: How Institutions Shape Development Strategy*, Landry Signé examines how continental institutions shape development strategy in Africa. Specifically, the author seeks to understand the emergence and persistence of new continental development institutions and paradigms and their capacity to affect development outcomes and interstate cooperation under conditions of near anarchy. Limiting its scope to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and subsequently renamed as the African Union Development Agency (AUDA), the volume addresses two important issues. The first is whether or not AUDA (formerly NEPAD) represents an innovation or it is merely a continuation of the development initiatives created by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). The second issue concerns how and why did AUDA emerge and evolve to the present including its contribution to Africa's transformation and positive economic performance. Using an eclectic and heuristic perspective, the author notes that AUDA's development policies and strategies are consistent with those established by the IMF and WB. Likewise, AUDA has yet to make substantial progress in implementing its initial agenda despite some Africa's encouraging economic performance.

This reviewer is of the view that the two findings were obviously expected and are not new in the African development discourses. This is due to the approach used by the author. Rather than interrogating the context within which AUDA operates, the author focused on the mere superficial organization renaming from NEPAD to AUDA in trying to understand if there is any shift or continuity. It has to be stated that NEPAD and later AUDA works under the framework of imperialism whose capital is mainly operated by the IMF and WB. By side stepping this reality, the author shied away from interrogating critically the position of the two world financial institutions in affecting the evolvement and performance of AUDA. Related to this fact, arising from the experiences of colonial economies where countries achieved only some political independence, Africa has remained dependent on external financial institutions and donors to the extent that funding AUDA is becoming almost impossible. The author has linked the underfunding of AUDA to anarchy, implying the absence of a central sovereign authority to mobilize and pull together resources for the purposes of continental development. While this reasoning is partly true, it may not account for why other continental organizations like the European Union have comparatively been more successfully.

Yet, on another account, Landry wanted to study NEPAD for his doctoral dissertation way back in 2004. However, his mentors stopped him on the ground that NEPAD could disappear before completing his dissertation. As can be seen, to Landry, writing this volume was actually fulfilling his long academic ambition. I would commend the author for being persistent with his ideas. In scholarship, developing research interest and realizing it is not something easy. Hence, development of this volume is a lesson to upcoming academics and writers particularly as they develop in their career. Finally, the *African Development, African Transformation: How Institutions Shape Development Strategy* is a well written and articulated book. The author has in seven chapters been able to develop excellent arguments backed up by evidence. This book may be useful to policy makers, academicians, and the donor community.

Alexander B. Makulilo, *University of Dodoma*

Mobolanle Egunoluwa Sontunsa and Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso (eds.). 2017. *Gender, Culture and Development in Africa*. Austin, TX: Pan-African University Press. 651 pp.

This book provides a critical view of gender, culture, and development in the African context of development. African perceptions of gender and culture may have both positive and negative influence on sustainable development as studied by the authors in this book. In the introduction, the editors began with a review of the synopsis of its fifty chapters, followed by a description of the four major themes under which the chapters were organized: Gender Representation in African Literature and the Media in Africa; Gender, Language, and Pedagogy in Africa; Gender, Education, Health, and Empowerment in Africa; and Gender, Political Participation, and Governance. The individual authors have discussed various topics under each theme the book's fifty chapters. The themes and chapters together outline major development areas that greatly challenge the African perception of gender and culture in development. Some of them include women and children as victims of war, gender language, women empowerment, and politics and governance, among others. Wars have caused psychological and physical injuries, disabilities, rape, loss of lives, loss of cultural values, prostitution, among many other harmful effects on development of the African continent (pp.11-18). For example, the overview of Arab femininity has brought socio-cultural changes on African continent which has subsequently affected women participation in development activities (pp. 21-29). Further, an emphasis on masculinity in many African societies particularly in sub-Saharan Africa has brought a severe cultural dichotomy of gender which eventually may have affected women's participation in social policy formulation and implementation (pp. 41-52). Recognition of women's contribution to gender, education, health and empowerment in Africa is critical for assessing their innovation and creativity on indigenous technology development on the continent (pp. 269-77).

As Africa envisages to implementing the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this book provides important discussions for reviewing social development policies related to gender and women's involvement in development agenda to enhance equal participation and contribution to social development. For example, chapter 36, "The Role of Women in Economic Development," author Prince C. Gaius Anonaba describes the definition of economic development and how poverty, inequalities, and employment may be dealt with in the African context of development (pp. 441-50). Through the topics, the authors have expounded a true reflection of gender, culture and development in African context capturing cultural gender language in Africa, women participation in politics, governance, education, health, and development in Africa among other crucial development issues. However, it is imperative to recognize that in Africa patriarchal views are common and still considered superior to matriarchal; although this is in transition owing to emphasis of pedagogies for social and gender equalities in employment, education, political participation, governance, and women empowerment programs described in this book. In addition, the book also fights against gender-based violence (GBV) by emphasizing equity and gender roles rather than disparity, thereby causing cultural social change and transition in Africa for sustainable development.

The book is written in easy to read and understand English; hence, the content is inspiring for analyzing how gender, culture and development in Africa interact. It also has some typical

African illustrations such as: the role conflict in job performance among female employees in the African job market context, (pp. 289-98); an empirical investigation of gender, education, and economic development in Nigeria (pp.315-26); and gender disparities in education in Ondo State in Nigeria (pp . 329-44), among many other illustrations. These illustrations are not only relevant to Nigeria and West Africa, but they also apply to the entirety of sub-Saharan Africa; hence, providing important information for development on the continent.

While the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015) appreciate the important roles of gender and culture for sustainable development worldwide, this book can precisely inform, educate, and orient international development policy experts about how Africans perceive, understand, and interpret gender imbalances, equities, equalities, inequalities, cultural relevance to gender-based violence, women participation in politics and governance among others. Gender and cultural woes in Africa, if not addressed in the African socio-cultural context, can significantly affect effective and efficient policy development and effective implementation of development policies, projects, and programs. This book, therefore, helps to understand gender, culture, and development issues concisely as perceived by development experts in Africa. Since Africa is a developing continent with considerable cultural diversity where also the role of gender is significantly affected by patriarchal and matriarchal views, the book provides a very interesting overview of the context of gender and culture in development. Further, this book brings into focus the most recent approaches and policy perspectives across the themes and topics the authors have discussed in relation to gender-based violence (GBV), women empowerment, education, pedagogy, and gender language, participation in health, politics and socio-economic development issues.

African men and women also understand their distinctions and diversity in gender and cultural roles in developing their societies. This book highlights multiple social-cultural, economic, and political challenges and opportunities women and men face when they want to actively participate in politics, governance, and economic emancipation for their communities in sub-Saharan Africa. Of course, women face discrimination in political leadership and governance positions due to the African emphasis on patriarchal culture; despite that women are the majority population on the continent.

Gender, Culture and Development in Africa should prove useful for sustainable development policy makers particularly in sub-Saharan Africa as well as for institutions of higher learning in development and human rights studies in Africa. Finally, the book teaches well balanced principles and practices for development practitioners and academics in Africa and countries of similar cultural and economic background beyond Africa. Therefore, I recommend it to African scholars in culture and development, gender and development, development anthropology and development and human rights studies and development practitioners to consider reading it for personal and scholastic knowledge enrichment. Since Africa hosts most of the developing countries that are challenged to effectively implement sustainable development goals (SDGs) by 2030, it is expedient that they should read, understand, and apply the contents of this book to help them achieve the SDGs successfully while promoting gender and culture in African perspective. Inclusive development cannot underestimate the importance of gender and culture

which are critical to enhancing social equalities, equities and community development of the African societies which this book has dealt with in depth.

George Allan Phiri, *University of Livingstonia (Malawi)*

Paul Stacey. 2019. *State of Slum: Precarity and Informal Governance at the Margins of Accra*. London: Zed Books. 219 pp.

The ethnography, in which Paul Stacey explores the question of how every day governance is organized in Ghana's largest illegal slum of Old Fadama, opens a promising book series *Politics and Society in Urban Africa* by Zed Publishers. Series editors Jennifer Robinson and Jeffrey Paller have assembled prominent scholars in their advisory board, such as Edgar Pieterse, Abdoul Maliq Simone, Garth A. Myers, David Simon, and Filip de Boeck. In this respect, the book sets standards for the series, which explicitly aims at post-graduate readers, meaning experienced readers of Social Anthropology, African Studies and Critical Urban Studies.

State of Slum starts with a fifty-page introduction, which provides the reader with key data and basic information, as well as with a detailed explanation of what the book intends to do and, above all, how it should be understood and what its relevance was. Since the entire text is 188 pages, this chapter spreads over more than a quarter of the book: introduction of key data on Old Fadama, ethnographic vignettes, explanations of land law in Ghana, a brief description of the global political arena, positioning into the theoretical debates of critical urban studies and political anthropology, clarification of concepts, as well as a reflection on Stacey's data collection methods. The author undoubtedly masters an ambitious, skillful, and dense writing style. The text, however, requires advanced English reading skills plus some experience in ethnographic reading.

The editors seem to have neglected that the world of urban studies is multilingual, with also French, Portuguese, and Arabic serving as work languages for students and scholars in Africa. Many of those readers have basic or good but rarely native speaker's English skills. This raises the question of accessibility. Should the book series support scientific dialogue of researchers in Africa (and beyond) and overcome existing language barriers in the field? More illustrations, sketches, diagrams, tables, or timelines would support international and interdisciplinary readability. Higher quality and meaningful maps would be desirable. (Old Fadama's sketch map looks like it was self-made in 10 minutes using MS PowerPoint).

The monograph is structured into five empirical chapters following the introduction, and concluding with a brief summary and policy perspectives: Stacey observed everyday urbanity, housing, and work challenges, as well as social navigation strategies in Old Fadama and the adherent Konkomba Yam Market (several periods from 2014 to 2017). He socialized with residents, traders, and different local leaders and kept ears wide open for typical and exceptional life stories, rumors, contentious opinions, and, above all, the different ways in which the residents figure out and react to the ambivalent attitude of the Accra Metropolitan Authority (AMA) and successive Ghanaian governments towards their settlement and work places. The method mix is purely qualitative including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus group interviews. Stacey also took photographs and carried out reviews of documents, albeit unmentioned.

The main argument Stacey would like to pass on is that “judicial decisions concerning densely populated areas also have serious political consequences when they are not implemented” (p. 29) and that “the legal entanglement [...] suspends everyday governance by statutory institutions” (p. 177). Old Fadama is a thirty year old settlement facing all the typical material and socio-political deprivations of slums. It spreads over thirty hectares and hosts about 80,000 inhabitants, most of whom have migrated from Ghana’s poorer north to the capital in search of better economic opportunities and/or higher levels of individual freedom. State authorities and AMA communicated eviction notices over the past decades without being capable of implementing their decision.

Stacey demonstrates how Old Fadama legally hangs in the air—a highly precarious but permanent condition that affects its population psychologically and aggravates infrastructural improvement. Uncertainty also leads to specific forms of everyday politics, institutions, leadership, and “impromptu urban governance” (p. 153) that clearly illustrate that the state with its offices and agencies is at best only a minor player in Old Fadama’s political arena, which is a loose network of various local actors who cooperate at times and undermine each other’s activities at others. One result is that painful ethnic and North-South disparities in Ghana are reproduced in Old Fadama leading to unequal citizen rights of urbanites.

What Stacey describes and how he approached the theme theoretically will not open much new insight to readers already familiar with current studies and debates in the stream of African Urban Studies represented by the advisory board of the new book series. Stacey’s empirical evidence, fully wrapped into the narrative (as in many ethnographies), however, convinces with vivid and haunting descriptions of the situation in houses, and public places (e.g., what the confiscation of a flip flop by the AMA means for a female head carrier, or why the manager of the second largest West African yam market works in an empty office). Stacey has an eye on the ever-changing conditions and ambitions of his interviewees over time. He gives space to their views and words. Readers are taken by the hand and brought very close to the spot. Detailed explanations do not leave much room for the readers’ own interpretation of the data. Therefore, and because of the good introduction to the current debates and concepts, the study is recommended to readers with an interest in urban livelihoods of poor people or everyday governance in countries of the Global South.

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Theodore Trefon and Noël Kabuyaya. 2018. *Goma: Stories of Strength and Sorrow from Eastern Congo*. London: Zed Books. 230 pp.

In a region of the world much known for its tragedies, *Goma: Stories of Strength and Sorrow from Eastern Congo* by Theodore Trefon and Noël Kabuyaya is instead a colorful cloth of stories of very diverse citizens of the eastern Congolese city of Goma. The story of the Democratic Republic of Congo is usually told from the outside looking in, and described as a hopeless land marred by diseases, decades of unending conflict, and in Goma, the natural disasters of the gaseous Lake Kivu and Nyiragongo volcano. Trefon and Kabuyaya’s urban sociological

ethnography gives the people of Goma a chance to tell their own stories (in this English version) as resilient and savvy citizens, masters of their own destinies, and that of their city's future.

After many interviews and participant observation, Trefon and Kabuyaya selected stories from twelve diverse Goma residents. The personal narratives recount suffering, ethnic tensions, fear, poverty, and sometimes violence. Yet as the stories weave the book together, other common themes amongst the *Gomatriens* emerge, particularly "resiliency, pragmatism, balance, freedom and a determination to take charge of one's own destiny" (p. 1). The book's primary strength lies in the words of the Congolese themselves, which present a picture more complicated, nuanced, and multi-faceted than usual.

Goma is a unique city in central Africa which struggles toward its own future. Challenges documented are fourfold: the history and effects of the 1994 Rwandan genocide and ongoing and intermittent conflicts in the hinterlands; enduring deficiencies in infrastructure and health services; the natural threat of the active Nyiragongo volcano and the gaseous Lake Kivu; and finally, the new culture of international humanitarian and non-governmental organizations which has effected Goma's overall culture. Meant to be accessible to a general audience, Trefon and Kabuyaya's book demonstrates that qualitative studies are necessary to understand complex social realities, and in particular to implement development and humanitarian aid programs.

The first and second chapters contrast a savvy, dynamic, and multi-enterprising Goma businesswoman and teacher with a pragmatic farmer and operator of one of Goma's famous wooden scooters, *tshukudu*, used to transport goods between the rural hinterland farms and the bustling and gritty urban life. Both accept the coexistence of contrasting social realities, and Mathilde the businesswoman proclaims, "I'm not frightened by the future because I know I have the smile and the determination to make life move in the direction I want it to" (p. 37).

The third and fourth chapters show Goma's and its people's roots in the natural environment—a determined, orphan charcoal producer and supplier from Lake Kivu's Idjwi Island, and two unlikely friends who are stone-cutters cutting and shaping Nyiragongo's volcanic rocks for house foundations. All three are masters of wit and creativity in the dialectical world of Goma, and Mituga the stonecutter reflects, "It's the head that breaks stone, not muscle" (p. 82).

The fifth and sixth chapters present life in Goma's formal sectors, as a female doctor balances private and public clinics and the medical pluralism of western medicine and witchcraft, with a home-grown religious do-gooder who works his way up the ranks of the humanitarian aid sector. Both are proud of their community, to be *Gomatriens*, and to help others, yet they recognize the paradoxes and pitfalls of their sectors. Eric, the Congolese humanitarian, asserts of international NGOs, "Actions help but they stifle individual and community initiatives. And when a project comes to an end, people are lost" (p. 117).

In chapters seven and eight, a savvy businesswoman who began as a street-seller and became a notable bean supplier is coupled with a motorbike taxi driver who started by borrowing his brother's bike to owning a garage and employing a fleet of young drivers. Both are pragmatic and recognize the underlying processes that keep Goma going. Bernadette the bean supplier knows Goma's paradoxes: "Our region may be cursed but the earth is blessed" (p. 139).

The paradoxes that characterize Goma's conflicts and colonial history are presented in chapters nine and ten, as a former member of one of eastern Congo's violent militias settles down into the sector of private security, guarding NGOs and humanitarian agencies. This is followed by the narrative of a female Belgian agronomist and coffee estate manager, her husband, and children. Both have grown to recognize the importance of relationships, though their perceptions of hardship are contrasting. Papy, the security officer and former rebel militiaman accepts that "In any event, it is good to have problems because, if you don't, it means you are already dead" (p. 176).

Chapters eleven and twelve give illusions to Goma's future, as a motivated broker of the private sector seeks to bridge the formal and informal economies, and how the family of a young millennial urban Congolese woman floated into Goma's upper-middle class, supported by a strong but uncertain future in the prominent NGO and humanitarian sector of Goma. Both chapters reflect on survival and prosperity, and as Clarisse the hopeful millennial concludes, "It seems like Goma thrives on chaos. After a tragic event, the lights come back even brighter" (p. 213).

Trefon and Kabuyaya's ethnographic sociology reframes well the cities of eastern DRC. The book is accessible to a general audience and should be read widely by people interested in Congo today. Yet, scholars of ethnography, sociology, and anthropology will find treasures in the book's direct quotes from interviewees. The book's academic solidity could be strengthened by integrating some sociological theory or history without alienating non-academics. Also, a comprehensive Notes section including works cited or suggested reading, and an Index to refer to themes, history, geography, and theory would strengthen the book.

In short, rather than the usual bleak, one-sided outsiders' perspective, *Goma: Stories of Strength and Sorrow from Eastern Congo* has the potential to spark research and journalism that reflects the dynamism of eastern Congolese cities. The book allows Congolese to speak for themselves and provides a deeper depiction of everyday life in Goma, DRC.

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Clara Usiskin. 2019. *America's Covert War in East Africa: Surveillance, Rendition, and Assassination*. London: Hurst Publishers. 282 pp.

In *America's Covert War in East Africa: Surveillance, Rendition, and Assassination*, Clara Usiskin has given detailed descriptions of how the United States and its Western allies, in collaboration with East African nations, in particular, engaged in acts intended to curtail the War on Terror. The post 9/11 era and the failed attempt on the Mombasa Kikambala Hotel and an El Al airliner at the Mombasa airport had the outcome of the US pledging funding, training, and support in East Africa (Kenya). This resulted in the "domestic East African counterterrorism investigation triangulating across regional borders and being carried out in association with US counterterrorism operations elsewhere in the world" (p. 66).

Usiskin brings to the fore that in conducting the War on Terror, these governments collaboratively breached the dignities and human rights of many people. Thus, she travels to the East African region to investigate and conduct wider research on human rights abuses

perpetrated by governments. Usiskin explains that her focus in this book also includes how misguided counterterrorism operations had become a common way in which the victims of terrorism are failed by the states whose role it is to protect them (p. 78).

Many citizens in East Africa were arrested in a bid to obtain information from them of their involvement in terrorist acts. Usiskin mentioned a few names and the ordeals they went through by the various agencies of the state to extract the truth of their actions. Some of these arrested individuals, termed High-Valued-Detainees (HVD), did not have a hand in any terrorist act, yet were renditioned. These are sad realities on the part of the various governments. Suleiman Abdallah, an itinerant trader from the Indian Ocean island of Zanzibar, for example, was detained and he went through humiliation and psychological torture to speak the truth of his involvement in a terrorist act. However, after enduring five years of interrogation, the “powers that be” could not extract the information they desired of him.

Mohammed Saad Iqbal Madni, a Pakistani-Egyptian captured in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2002 was moved from Jakarta to another interrogation points in Cairo, Bagram Air Base (Afghanistan), and finally to Guantanamo Bay (Cuba) until 2008 when he was released. He was subjected to severe interrogation techniques that included torture to force him to confess that he had connections with the British “shoe-bomber” Richard Reid. Madni was arrested because his phone was bugged. A joke he made caused him the odious torture he went through. Under duress, Madni confessed to a Russian prisoner in Guantanamo Bay that he was forced to admit he met Osama bin Laden under Egyptian interrogation. The Madni interrogation also indicated that the US interrogators themselves did not believe in polygraph tests because although Madni spoke the truth of not meeting Osama bin Laden, he was still forced to say so thus making him spend seven years in US custody (p. 58).

Usiskin details the background of the word “rendition” which had been associated with runaway slaves in the US in the 1800s to the theorization of the investigation techniques used as well as the invocation of various US Presidential Decision Directives (PDD) which gave the US presidents the power to contravene human rights and territorial boundaries to pursue people whom they thought were a threat to American sovereignty. Interesting twists in this book are the roles of the archipelago region of Diego Garcia and Djibouti in all these operations and how pirates in Somalia were roped into the operations. Extrajudicial killings of individuals mistakenly or otherwise as well as the assassination of Al-Shabaab leaders Aden Hashi Ayro and Swale Ali Nabhan are mentioned. Human rights lawyers and individuals were also arrested without justifiable reasons.

Most of the sources for the book, as the author explains, are in the public domain. Others, she had to obtain by way of interviews (in which she was subjected to detention and deportation from countries), and from other painstaking sources but she took a decade putting all together. Her training in law helped her in putting logic and reasoning together in deciphering some of the information she got to arrive at possible truths. Working for Reprieve and Cageprisoners and collaborating with other such NGOs gave her much access to information as well. *America’s Covert War in East Africa: Surveillance, Rendition, and Assassination* is well-written and is recommended for a general readership. The title might indicate that only America was involved in the acts, but it extends beyond that: the UK was subtly involved.

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Iain Walker. 2019. *Islands in a Cosmopolitan Sea: A History of the Comoros*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 293 pp.

In recent decades, Indian Ocean studies has grown as a wide-ranging field dedicated to exploring the intimacies that for over a millennium have linked port cities and coastal regions across East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian subcontinent, and Southeast Asia. While a wealth of literature within Indian Ocean studies has concentrated on the Swahili coast, the Comoros islands have tended to figure less prominently, especially in comparison to the scholarly focus on the Zanzibar archipelago and old city-states like Mombasa and Lamu. Iain Walker's *Islands in a Cosmopolitan Sea* contributes much to this conversation, providing a dense and detailed historical account of the Comoros islands and their significant position within wider local and global networks of connectivity, exchange, and empire.

As one of few English book-length manuscripts dedicated entirely to the Comoros, *Islands in a Cosmopolitan Sea* follows in line with Walker's earlier anthropological work in the islands and broader engagement with Indian Ocean studies, including much research on the Hadhrami diaspora in East Africa. Comprised of eight chapters, the text makes use of archival, archeological, and ethnographic data. Beginning with "a speculative history" (p. 24) referencing the famed *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, the book moves chronologically from the islands' archaeological "origins" to later Portuguese encounters, French colonialism, nationalist/secessionist movements, and contemporary federalism—all culminating in the current context of continued movement and complexity across the archipelago and its diaspora communities.

Following an introductory preface and contextual first chapter, Chapter 2 engages the earliest archeological evidence related to the Comoros, along with oral traditions, to tie together a picture of the islands' initial settlement as well as its early systems of kinship and language. The chapter follows with an analysis of Islam's spread to the Comoros by way of Shirazi migrations to East Africa leading up to the archipelago's "classical period" between the 13th and 16th centuries when the Swahili coast thrived as an important node in Indian Ocean trade networks. Chapter 3 charts the arrival of the Portuguese to the islands as well as other European powers and pirates, noting that the Comoros did not suffer from much of the Portuguese incursions that reigned havoc along the East African coast. Further, Walker highlights the broader economic significance of slavery in the islands throughout these periods as well the political impact of continued waves of destabilizing raids from the Malagasy of neighboring Madagascar.

Chapter 4 bridges earlier histories of European engagement with that of the wave of 19th century shifts that restructured Indian Ocean space and the globe. Highlighting the Malagasy influence over the islands of Mayotte and Mwali over time, the chapter covers the successive efforts toward French colonial rule in the Comoros as the links between Mayotte and Madagascar drew the islands more closely into the webs of French imperial interests. These movements coincided with other political transformations in East Africa such as the British establishment of a protectorate over the Sultanate of Zanzibar in 1890 and the great war on the island of Ngazidja. Chapter 5 follows by delineating the infrastructure of French colonialism in

the islands, which Walker characterizes as being of neglect and stagnation as elites across the Comoros vied for power among one another.

Chapter 6 covers the turning point of independence in the islands in 1975 which was followed by revolutionary politics and successive changes in government administrations by way of varied coups up until the turn of the 20th century. Much of the chapter is dedicated to the drastic shifts initiated by Ali Soilihi's presidency, such as his attacks on extravagant customary practices and attempts toward secularization and decentralized socialist governance. Chapter 7 explores the many transformations brought about in the islands at the turn of the twenty-first century, most notably the establishment of the Union of the Comoros in 2001 which brought all islands (except for Mayotte) into a federated system of governance. Emerging after much secessionist turmoil in Ndzuani and transitions in leadership, the new constitution ushered in a decentralized union with each island retaining its own respective governments and presidencies, which Walker argues ironically led to more conflict in the archipelago.

The book's concluding chapter closes with a broader look at "The Comorian People" and the current state of the islands and its varied diasporas, summing up that "If the Comorian state is to survive and to prosper, then the issue of Mayotte, both deeply symbolic and prosaically economic, needs to be resolved" (p. 232). Providing not only a political but also an economic, cultural, and global history of the Comoros islands over a *longue-durée*, Walker offers a much welcome history for students and researchers of the Comoros and the broader Indian Ocean world.

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