

BOOK REVIEWS

Mulugeta Gebrehiwot Berhe. 2020. *Laying the Past to Rest: The EPRDF and the Challenges of Ethiopian State-Building*. London: Hurst Publishers. 355 pp.

The summer of 2018 appeared hopeful in Ethiopia with new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed instituting new reforms, releasing political prisoners, and ending the border war with Eritrea, for which he received the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize. Yet in 2020 there are millions internally displaced, reports of new political prisoners, ethnic tension and violence, and an indefinitely delayed election in response to COVID-19. While pundits forecast Ethiopia's imminent future, analyzing the last fifty years of political revolution, transition, and development can provide the context required to interpret today's reality. Mulugeta Gebrehiwot Berhe—a former senior leader in the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) during the armed struggle against the *Derg* regime and a former official in the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)—gives a historical account and analysis of the armed rebellion, the creation of Ethiopia's ethno-federal constitution, and post-war governance.

Mulugeta recounts the Ethiopian civil war against the *Derg*, analyzing the "critical factors" for the TPLF/EPRDF armed victory and the EPRDF's "achievements and "challenges" in government (p. 11). He then evaluates its record and contends the TPLF/EPRDF's "early values and strategies still have a major imprint on the organization and its current achievements and challenges in government" (p. 4). Mulugeta asserts the TPLF's success emanated from the "strength of the rebellion's organizing philosophy and strategies" and its "unique model of leadership" (pp. 258, 273).

There are many commendable things in Mulugeta's account of the civil war and post-war governance. First, his account enhances our understanding of the TPLF's organizational structure and key moments, especially the peasant evacuation to Sudan during the 1984-85 famine and the leadership conflicts resulting in the TPLF's split in 2001. Second, while more favorable to the TPLF/EPRDF than Aregawi Berhe's *A Political History of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (1975-1991): Revolt, Ideology, and Mobilisation in Ethiopia*, Mulugeta still offers substantial critiques. Finally, while the argument regarding the TPLF's victory is plausible, the more interesting contribution arises from his observation that its strengths "in rebellion now define its problems in government" (p. 292). This stems from "the incomplete transformation of the EPRDF's liberation war time model of leadership into a model of democratic governance" (p. 281). Even in areas where they transformed institutions into the democratic mold, "the EPRDF fell short of adjusting its behavior and organization and developing new norms" (p. 282). This puts Mulugeta in conversation with Terrance Lyons, who in *The Puzzle of Ethiopian Politics* (2019, p. 5) argued that "The mechanisms by which the TPLF as an insurgent movement organized and administered areas it occupied during the war were linked to how the TPLF-led EPRDF organized and governed as a ruling party."

Mulugeta also tackles the challenge of an "ethnicized" politics where people assert "grievances principally on the basis of exclusive nationalism" (p. 253). While he believes the "emancipatory identity politics" recognized in the Ethiopian constitution provide a societal

good, he decries a “negative exclusionist form” threatening “the project of building a common political community” (pp. 276, 277, 290). However, he argues the harmful version is not inherent to the federal system, but rather “the failure to fully implement the federal form of governance as initially imagined by the EPRDF” (p. 281). Mulugeta demonstrates the ways “regional states and ruling parties have become increasingly dependent and subservient to central decision making,” preventing context or region-specific policy, “undermining the right of nations and nationalities to self-rule” (p. 245). These are valid challenges, but in focusing here he may downplay the role of the TPLF/EPRDF’s ideology.

Mulugeta acknowledges the EPRDF “failed to anticipate” the challenges of harmful identity politics and did not “design ways of mitigating it” (p. 290). Yet, the issue may have gone beyond a failure to anticipate challenges. In recognizing their Marxist-Leninist influenced ideology, Christopher Clapham in *The Horn of Africa: State Formation and Decay* (2017, p. 107) describes Meles Zenawi and the TPLF as assuming “ethnicity was no more than a superstructural phenomenon derived from economic exploitation, which would in turn be neutralised by representation and development...” Yet, as Milton J. Esman argues in *Ethnic Politics* (1994, p. 15), “The more politicised ethnicity becomes, the more it dominates other expressions of identity, eclipsing class, occupational, and ideological solidarities.” At the very least, ethnicity has become more important, as Lyons observes (p. 52), “Being a Kambata or Wolayita as a primary political identification became much more salient after the 1991 transition.” Exclusionary identity politics were not inevitable with the federal form, but the EPRDF’s ideological commitment may have made the failure to anticipate these challenges more likely.

Laying the Past to Rest will become required reading for academics studying rebellion, institutional development, transitions, and Ethiopian history and politics. Yet, even more pertinent to a broader readership, it provides helpful context for interpreting current events, including the recent dissolution of the EPRDF and what that means going forward.

Michael Holmes, *Independent Scholar*

Florence Bernault. 2019. *Colonial Transactions: Imaginaries, Bodies, and Histories in Gabon*. Durham: Duke University Press. 344 pp.

Where debates over the nature of colonial domination have tended to emphasize the hegemony of the colonizer or, and rather more frequently, the strategies of resistance, negotiation, and adaptation on the part of those colonized, an absolute separation of worldviews between the two parties would seem to be a primary and unquestioned assumption. In her new book, historian Florence Bernault seeks to trouble this imagined divide by pointing to the “congruent imaginaries” shared by French colonizers and Gabonese subjects on the particular terrain of magic and witchcraft. Adopting the analytic of “transaction” as a key mode of exchange and transformation, Bernault further argues that the concept of transaction underpins cross-cultural understandings of how power and prosperity are accessed and acquired. Other domains of shared imaginaries proposed by Bernault include that of kinship and affiliation across race, “carnal fetishism” over the agentic qualities of human flesh, and cannibalism as an expression of the limits to colonial rule and social reproduction.

From these primary investigations in congruence and transaction, rooted in extensive archival research in France and Gabon and field research conducted across Gabonese provinces, Bernault aims to realize three principal objectives: the historicization of contemporary beliefs and practices of witchcraft in Gabon, the underscoring of European influences in these developments, as well as in broader notions of power and agency, and—in a rather more targeted assertion—the demonstration that sacred objects or fetishes were valued as both “agentive devices” and tradeable commodities by Africans and Europeans alike, even prior to the former’s colonization and incorporation into capitalist world systems. The affordances of transaction, then, in treating both sides as equally agentive in the construction of meaning, allows Bernault to explore intriguing possibilities of exchange and commensurability that do not necessarily privilege one or the other party, despite the structural inequality of their relationship. In this manner, Bernault is able to conclude that colonial hierarchies were at least partially shaped by (rather than precede) such transactions, and that colonial rule was experienced by both the French and Gabonese as “transactions gone wrong” (p. 8).

Despite the promise of transaction as an equalizing paradigm, however, it would appear that the extreme disparities in power (or *puissance*) between colonizer and colonized inevitably foreclose certain possibilities of exchange. Indeed, Bernault’s wide-ranging illustrations of the flows between European and African imaginaries prove nearly always uni-directional. Whether it was the unwitting desecrations of Murhumi, an elusive Punu water spirit, in the profane realms of the visual and infrastructural in the city of Mouila, the intensified equivalence drawn between human beings and monetary value under the penal formula of a “blood price,” or the misinterpretations (followed by punishment) of the “cooking” of charms with ancestral bones as evidence of ongoing cannibalism, the French made their influence felt with devastating effect. On the other hand, European imaginaries appear untouched by Gabonese modes of thought, or else remained undisturbed by the emergent contradictions between their criticisms of Gabonese practices and their own beliefs. Of course, European imaginaries also see less interrogation in the text—where archival records are supplemented by oral histories and interviews with living Gabonese interlocutors, for instance, French perspectives are largely confined to the archives and colonial-era literatures.

Furthermore, despite the moral neutrality of the concept of transaction, Bernault repeatedly evaluates these relationships in ethical and qualitative terms, seemingly to redeem the underlying inequalities of the contexts of exchange. For instance, in describing local imaginaries of the body’s mystical powers and European criticism of the same, Bernault judges that “Gabonese worldviews were far more symbolic than Western secular science or materialist philosophies” (p. 104). Perhaps it is unnecessary to critique the fallacy of comparative degrees of cultural symbolism, but it may be useful to imagine the implications of the statement if the subjects were reversed. This also makes Bernault’s conclusions on the outcomes of these cross-cultural exchanges even more surprising, as she describes present-day ritual murders committed under the imaginary of “eating-as-power” as “now partially exhibit[ing] what colonialists have derisively claimed to be true of the Gabonese: the impotence to produce symbolic action or transcendent meaning” (p. 193). Is it really the case that symbolism has disappeared in the materialist act of consumption, or could the material and the symbolic be understood and experienced as one and the same?

Nonetheless, Bernault makes significant contributions to scholarship on the historical evolution of power and witchcraft in Central Africa under colonial rule, with particularly well-considered explorations of value in its diverse permutations, whether in relation to fetishes as commodities or human bodies as embodied capacity and monetary worth. The analytic of transaction, too, offers significant scope for further development, especially if future work is able to examine conjuncture while suspending judgment on the nature of exchange, and so be able to consider the flows and transformations of powerful imaginaries independently of their moral connotations and consequences. Finally, the precise point(s) of transaction, largely obscure in this text, would be revelatory sites for further research, thus to identify the particular actors and negotiations of exchange that give birth to shifts in meaning and practice. Of course, even the discovery of the impossibility of this task could be revelatory of the limits of “transaction” as an analytical conceit, and so stimulate alternative modes of understanding cross-cultural exchange.

Wen Zhou, *Yale University*

Suzanne Preston Blier. 2019. *Picasso's Demoiselles. The Untold Origins of a Modern Masterpiece*. Durham: Duke University Press. 432 pp.

This book is the most recent monograph on *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* by Picasso (1907), the work that has been considered the criterion for Modernism throughout its long life of more than a century. It is a new addition to the prolific historiography that has scrutinized this painting from every methodological angle possible: formalism, iconology, social history of art, psychoanalysis, feminism, or the post-colonial perspective. Suzanne Preston Blier's book sits at the end of this path and applies a hitherto unpublished global perspective that is in perfect harmony with our times. To begin with, its author, a Harvard professor, is a specialist in African and African-American Studies and not specifically in modern art history. Her field of study has allowed her to associate her theories to one of the greatest concerns in modern art's existing literature: the impact of *art nègre* on Western avant-garde art at the start of the 20th century, at the height of contemporary European colonialism.

To understand the authentic novelty of Preston Blier's theses it is important to bear in mind that in the historiography on Picasso's *Demoiselles* there has been a whole throng of specialists who have, literally, denied the influence of African or Oceanic art in the work of the Malaga-born painter. And when they were not denying it, they belittled it by considering that it might have an air of mystique and magic but certainly nothing strictly formal or artistic. The author takes up the thread of this bitter debate and proposes to show the actual influence of African art in *Les Demoiselles*, basing her arguments on photographic documentation that had been disregarded until now. Whilst it is true that some African masks were unknown in Europe in 1907 and therefore had no possible impact on the work (as William Rubin had been saying since the '80s) it is also true that Picasso could have had an extremely rich source of information from books and magazines that contained illustrations of African art. Blier brings to light this documentation and thus thwarts the theories on the scant influence of the once-called *primitif art* in the work by Picasso.

But the importance of this book does not lie just in the new documentation brought to the

debate about the relation between *art nègre* and Modernism. It is also important because it puts forward the hypothesis that *Les Demoiselles* does not represent what has always been thought, a group of young naked women in a brothel. Neither prostitutes, nor a whorehouse; for Preston Blier, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* is an interior in which the multiple facets of the woman are shown through their different cultural identities. And here it is significant that the author refers to the young women by their ethnicities: Caucasian, African, Asian, or Egyptian and she even links the painting with the artistic tradition, common during the Renaissance, of representing the different continents. At the same time she maintains that the women present in the painting are women possessors of female genitalia that serve equally the for sexual act as for reproduction purposes and are therefore lovers and also mothers, sisters, daughters, grandmothers. "These women [she states] suggest simultaneously quite generic figures and temporally and spatially specific female prototypes, global referents to a kind of 'everywoman'" (p. 24). It is noticeable that on some occasions Blier refers to this representation of the different roles of the global woman, limiting them exclusively to family roles.

Throughout the book Blier provides documentation and arguments to defend the hypothesis of this Avignon interior as a global space. Her conclusions, as we have said, bring it closer to a critical perspective that fits in with the postulates of the Global History of Art. Every age has had its own interpretation of the *Demoiselles d'Avignon* and with it, its own narrative of Modernism. Every age has left its imprint, the values of its world, its own ideology in each of the narratives. Blier's interpretation is doubly interesting, directed as it is at cultural and gender identities and is, without doubt, the one which corresponds to the second decade of the 21st century, to our present.

Maite Méndez Baiges (translated by Diana Mathieson), *Malaga University*

Neil Carrier and Tabea Scharrer. 2019. *Mobile Urbanity: Somali Presence in Urban East Africa*. New York: Berghahn Books. 251 pp.

With the increasing exploration of mobility, migration, and urbanity, this edited volume is a ground-breaking contribution to the study of Somali mobile urbanity. In *Mobile Urbanity: Somali Presence in Urban East Africa*, Neil Carrier and Tabea Scharrer recognize the mutual re/shaping of mobility and urbanity, not only claiming "urbanity itself is mobile," but how it compellingly contributes to Somali economic, social, and cultural capital (p. 3). The volume contextualizes how processes of urbanization, such as refugee resettlements, mobile entrepreneurship, and precarious citizenship, serve as underbellies to an already complex pattern of urban diversity and social marginalization in these contentious, yet sprawling spaces. It focuses predominately on the infamous Eastleigh neighbourhood, as a commercial hub and urban locale in Nairobi with transnational connections to Somalia and abroad, but also underscores emerging "Little Mogadishu" in Kisenyi (Kampala) and Mayfair (Johannesburg), as well as its non-Somali populations. Given this problematic label, the book centralizes the historical settlement of Somalis in East African countries, particularly in Kenya, by citing colonial disenfranchisement in its territories/cities to the extensity of its state securitization in recent times. Indeed, as the prevalence of Somali integration narrates the bustling economy of the Eastleigh enclave, the

editors and contributors draw out the negative portraiture of Somalis through the increased hostility of national policies, fears of terrorism, and the transitory nature of refugeeism in a globalized, post-9/11 world.

The volume divides into four parts, with an introduction and thematic sections following (urbanity, economic networks, and the politics of Somali mobility), and an afterword by Gunther Schlee. Carrier and Scharrer correctly structure the chapters to argue spatial mobility leads to “social mobility” that facilitates new forms of trans-urbanity through cross-border trade and migrant agency (p. 8). The introduction grounds the salient features of urbanity as a highly mobile, permeable phenomenon where towns and cities, exemplary of rural/urban/ethnic divides, and with greater economic and inter-social relations, are now fluid spaces of transmission rather than translation. In other words, urbanity impacts mobility, and are “mutually constituted,” as it affects the trading networks and migratory routes brought by the circulation of movement (p. 7). If the book’s aim is to demystify Somali presence by detailing the ways in which they form and transform Kenya’s urban economies, in turn, it also contends with the need for future, and expansive contributions. Certainly, the interlude by Yusuf Hassan ascribes ‘becoming mobile’ not only as a movement of experience (highly mobile background) and a mode of existence (ambiguous citizenship), but also the outcome of cultural progression, commercial power, and political practice.

Part two comprises three chapters. The first imbues how pastoral mobility precipitated colonial settlement and livestock trade in the Northeastern Province and subsequent segregation practises for urban Somalis. The second chapter observes how ‘Somaliness’ is constructed and experienced by Somali women, contrasting between Eastleigh as an “entry and exit” port and the narrow, xenophobic world of Mayfair as an enclosing island. The third chapter relates the emergence of the Oromo to obscure the notion of mono-ethnicity in the district, and in so doing, speak of intersectional sources of identification such as religion, language, and moral community (p. 63).

Part three consists of four chapters. Chapter four examines the ‘life’ of multiple commodities as a manifestation of Eastleigh’s business acuity and commercial linkages. Chapter five reviews the capital mobilization of Somali businesses such as clan/lineage support in the form of remittances, contingency funds, apprenticeship, and savings, while discrediting the “freeloader” narrative of refugees (p. 118). The sixth chapter cautiously presents female entrepreneurs as “agents of change” in a turbulent, refugee economy, while countering a patriarchal culture and religious strictures through women’s groups (p. 135). To end this section, chapter seven delves into Eastleigh and Nakuru shopping centers, as “a city within a city,” of spatially reinvented single shops from hotel rooms, multiple stalls in a unit and outside vendors of its low-end globalization (p. 159).

Part four finalizes with three chapters. Chapter eight informs of the harsh treatment of urban refugees and the simultaneity of their non-citizen status and poverty exacerbating police harassment in the wake of Al-Shabaab attacks. Chapter nine engages with the “terrorist” rhetoric of the state against Somalis via secular and religious media in Kenya. The last chapter circles back to Eastleigh’s influence, and how it encapsulates the formation of Kisenyi through regional exchange and Uganda’s privatization and refugee law incentives. The afterword centralizes the obduracy of clan names as necessary in future research on global urban patterns

despite its arresting position in Somali Studies. It also advocates for Somali mobile urbanity as a new framework that refuses the essentialization of nomadic pastoralism, failed statehood or refugeism as the key fabrics of the Somali story.

The volume offers a specific study on the impact of urbanity on mobility and globalization in East African Studies. Indeed, in a fraught urban space as Nairobi, Somalis are considered out of place. The book, however, remedies this colonial-manifested precedent to shed light on the invaluable nature of the Somali mobile economy in contemporary African cities.

Nasra Smith, *York University*

Misia Kibona Clark. 2018. *Hip-Hop in Africa: Prophets of the City and Dustyfoot Philosophers*. Athens: Ohio University Press. 266 pp.

The published literature on popular culture in Africa has grown significantly in the last decade, with scholars bringing attention to previously understudied topics from the nightlife in South Africa to fashion in Ghana. Much of the writing on popular culture, however, particularly on music, is dominated by ethnomusicologists and anthropologists, who often eschew a historical approach to the writing on music in Africa. Misa Kibona Clark's *Hip-Hop in Africa* departs from this and examines African hip-hop using an interdisciplinary lens while maintaining an historical context throughout. Clark seeks to fill in some of the gaps in the literature on the political and cultural importance of hip-hop on the continent, particularly with regards to gendered representations and migrant experiences expressed in the musical genre.

Using the concept of cultural representation as defined by Stuart Hall, Clark argues that hip-hop in Africa "is a representation of African realities and African youth cultures" (p. 1). Likewise, the author uses Frantz Fanon's discussion of culture from the position of hip-hop as a tool for mobilization (p. 11). This is explored more deeply in chapter three, in which the author analyzes the social and political protest common in African hip-hop music through a Fanonian lens, particularly with regards to national culture. This can be seen in protest movements led by hip-hop artists, such as *Y'en a marre* in Senegal and *Balai citoyen* in Burkina Faso. These movements also show the significance of the musical genre in African politics. Likewise, youth is a significant factor in both the success of hip-hop as a music genre in Africa and in protest movements. Overall, Clark's examination of the artists' music as protest and combat literatures provides a theoretical grounding to the praxis of these movements.

A particularly important contribution of Clark's work is an examination of women in African hip-hop, as her focus is continent-wide. For her study, she investigated the work of over 100 female emcees and is able to show the similar themes found in their work, such as braggadocio and feminist rhetoric. While women have been historically underrepresented in African hip-hop, they have become more prominent in recent years (p. 119). Clark argues that this prominence allows for a wider circulation of an African feminist discourse, which she points out will either be the primary exposure for those who have not otherwise engaged with it or will reinforce the message to those who have (p. 126). Alongside feminist rhetoric, Clark also discusses the broader debate over women's sexuality and sexism within hip-hop culture and points out that the topic of women's agency is often sidelined. She states, however, that

presentations of female sexuality in African hip-hop, when paired with agency, “can be a representation of power, especially when accompanied by lyrics that challenge certain gender constructs” (p. 137). Clark ultimately concludes that the social messages in female hip-hop artists’ lyrics are what distinguishes them from male artists on the continent. A male-dominated examination of hip-hop has too often left a one-sided narrative of the genre in Africa (p. 146).

A key discussion found in *Hip-Hop in Africa* is the importance of situating the genre’s African artists and listeners in the shared cultural identities of hip-hop heads globally. Clark contends that in many ways the genre is being used to form not just transnational identities but also Pan-African ones (p. 185). A shared symbolism and slang, as well as a similar history of urban experiences and protest, has led to a global cultural identity of hip-hop. This of course does not mean that there is a single cultural identity amongst all hip-hop artists: Clark points out that language choice is one area in which artists differ across the continent (p. 184). This ties in with her previous discussion on national culture, as which language hip-hop artists perform in can lead to the increased use of that language in a nation-state (p. 187). Hip-hop can therefore act as a way to both represent one’s musical and national-cultural identities.

In writing *Hip-Hop in Africa*, Clark attempted to “survey many of the various representations within hip-hop culture across Africa” (p. 207). The study is remarkable for its breadth and depth, as well as its accessibility to both an academic and popular audience. While it takes on a number of topics within the broader discussion of African hip-hop, it provides an in-depth examination for each one. Clark’s approach to the research is particularly notable for its interdisciplinarity, working within a cultural and hip-hop studies framework. The result is a valuable addition to the literature on hip-hop and popular culture in Africa.

James J. Fisher, *Ohio University*

Carien du Plessis and Martin Plaut. 2019. *Understanding South Africa*. London: Hurst & Company. 316 pp.

This highly readable book explores South Africa’s progress and problems since the transition to democracy in the 1990s. The authors are well-qualified to undertake the task. Carien du Plessis is a South African journalist who has written for the *Mail & Guardian* and the *City Press*; her co-author Martin Plaut has served as the Africa editor for the BBC’s World Service and is now a senior researcher at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (UK). Their book, which is both wide-ranging and concise, covers South Africa’s history; the African National Congress (ANC); political opposition; corruption; the economy; land/agriculture; education; justice/law; civil society; violence; the rise of Cyril Ramaphosa; and the 2019 election. Although the authors discuss South Africa’s promise and peril, they focus more on the latter. *Understanding South Africa* might disappoint those seeking a rosier assessment, but it is well-researched, persuasive, and engaging.

Throughout their book, the authors provide historical context to help readers understand South Africa’s problems. They open with a concise overview of the country’s history, from the birth of a multiracial society to apartheid to democracy. A few small flaws could easily be corrected in a second edition. In chapter one, the formation of the ANC’s armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), is discussed before the Sharpeville massacre, which came first (and

partly spurred the formation of MK). The authors assert that South Africa experienced a guerilla war in the early 1960s (p. 30). While acts of sabotage had been launched, the country did not actually slide into a full-scale guerilla war. In the section on the protests of the 1970s, the Black Consciousness Movement should be mentioned. And although the authors assert that “apartheid was effectively at an end” when Mandela was released in 1990 (p. 34), apartheid did not really end until a democratically elected government took office four years later.

In their chapter on the ANC, the authors discuss the organization’s frustrations, difficulties, and success since 1994, when it became the governing party. They fully acknowledge the huge challenges it has faced but are highly critical of its record. “The ANC has . . . managed to convince the world—and most South Africans—that it was the party that brought liberation to South Africa,” they write. “History, however, is more complicated than that” (p. 36). They trace the ANC from a small, elite group to a national liberation movement to a “troubled party of Government after 1994” (p. 37).

The chapter on corruption is the heart of the book. Du Plessis and Plaut note that corruption predated the ANC government in 1994, but it was not always investigated. They argue that both the apartheid and ANC governments sought to cloak financial and security matters in secrecy to avoid public scrutiny. In their discussion of the infamous 1999 arms deal, they note that some of the networks that that helped the South African government evade sanctions in the 1980s bribed ANC leaders after 1994. They detail “state capture” perpetrated by the Gupta brothers and show how the immigrant family spent vast sums to influence government policy during the administration of Jacob Zuma. Sadly, corruption has become “endemic” to the ANC (p. 102).

The book’s chapter on economics charts South Africa’s deeply rooted inequality. The authors acknowledge that the ANC inherited a country stagnated by years of sanctions and capital flight. Unfortunately, the party’s policies have failed to stimulate economic growth or reduce poverty or social inequality. In the fact, these problems have grown in the last twenty-five years. The Black Economic Empowerment policy increased black managerial opportunities but led to the emergence of a “narrow black elite” that concentrated wealth in its own hands. The authors argue that in order to attract necessary foreign investment and create jobs, property rights must be protected, instability must decline, and corruption must be tackled. Making matters worse is the country’s dysfunctional education system. The authors discuss troubling trends from schools and universities and argue that teachers’ unions and policy makers are equally at fault. South Africa desperately needs a better educated workforce to generate economic growth, but so far, the education system has failed to deliver.

The authors see some rays of hope. In their chapter on justice and law, they praise the post-1994 separation of powers, the greater diversity in the judiciary, and the Constitutional Court’s willingness to criticize President Zuma’s abuses of power. They credit South Africans for vigorously protesting Zuma’s misrule and see the outcry from civil society as ultimately forcing him to resign. The authors believe that Cyril Ramaphosa, who succeeded Zuma as president in 2018, is committed to rooting out corruption, despite resistance from Zuma holdovers still in government. The book ends by discussing South Africa’s 2019 election, which resulted in the ANC’s narrowest victory since it took power twenty-five years earlier. The authors deem the

election generally free and fair, although the falling voter turnout suggests growing frustration with the political process.

Understanding South Africa offers a harsh assessment of South Africa since 1994, particularly the ANC government. The Zuma years did untold damage to South Africa, but the authors hope civil society and President Ramaphosa can right the ship. Carien du Plessis and Martin Plaut have produced an engaging account that is accessible to a broad audience. Their book is ideal for specialists, students, and anyone wanting an up-to-date introduction to South Africa and the many challenges it faces.

Steven Gish, *Auburn University at Montgomery*

Toyin Falola. 2019. *In Praise of Greatness: The Poetics of African Adulation*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press. 1035 pp.

In Praise of Greatness is a biographical presentation of the contributions of academics, literary writers, activists, artists, and administrators from diverse backgrounds to the humanities, social sciences, and institution and nation building in Africa. Featuring established scholar-activists like Molefi Asante and young, promising ones such as Funmi Olonisakin, the book unveils Toyin Falola's wide and rich intellectual and private knowledge of persons and personalities. Through their lives and works, the book addresses topical issues in African Studies such as the use of indigenous languages in creative writing, translation, challenges faced by diasporic intellectuals and female academics, and the interrogation of hegemonic Western theories and methods.

The lives and achievements of the objects of Falola's praise in each of the twenty-one chapters of the book are captured in the titles, opening *oriki* (praise poems), and biographical sketches. The book's content is foregrounded in three chapters of theoretical explication of indigenous African praise genres and the emergent forms occasioned by technologized media. The author considers praise as a means of deploying collective memory because of its characteristic nature of bringing the past into the present and preserving them for the future. In a style which evokes the concept of ancestral admiration in African praise genres, the author recounts the masterful use of the English language by the late Ali Mazrui and his promotion of pan-Africanist ideals.

Others in Mazrui's category are the late historian Jacob Festus Ade-Ajayi, praised by Falola for "his contribution to not only history but also the nation itself" (p. 128) and Tekena Tamuno reputed as a scholar and nation builder. Jan Vansina, whom the author labels a "garrison commander," Adu Boahen, Ogbu Kalu, Barbara Harlow, Akinwumi Isola, John David Yeadon Peel, and Ademola Babalola all make the list of "Heavenly Beings" (p. 113). Each of them is depicted as selfless in their pursuit of the preservation, improvement, and promotion of Africa. The book escapes from the trappings of tokenism as it features a good population of female academics, creative writers, and artists, whose inclusion is based more on their worth than their gender. Interspersed in the book are academic essays and book reviews, which are textual pools where the creative works of writers and artists are featured. Falola reviews Chukwuemeka Bosah's *The Art of Nigerian Women* (2017) and praises it for "dispelling the Western-grown

façade of universal aesthetics, breaking stereotypes that confine Nigerian women, and upholding the vitality of Nigerian women's voices that can revolutionize the world" (p. 815).

The book departs from the conventional narrative form of biographical studies by combining critical, poetic, prosaic, and graphic techniques and resources in writing about these lives. Chapter 9 exemplifies the rich texture of the book. Titled "Yoruba Ethnogenesis," this chapter eulogizes the creative and academic productions of Ademola Omobewaji Dasylva who is described by Falola as "The Preserver of African Verities" (p. 313). The chapter includes textual analysis of some of Dasylva's poems and a critique of his autobiographical writing to show the value of his efforts at preserving Yoruba oral tradition and cultural principles.

This book is perhaps the first biographical text on academics with an impressive list of almost eighty persons. Falola presents himself as a life coach, first and third person omniscient narrator-academic as he does not only know his objects of praise but almost in all cases, displays his knowledge of the diverse fields of specialization of these academics and ends the book with his personal reflections. Though readers may raise questions about the extent to which the book qualifies as an academic publication because of its highly subjective approach, the depth and spread of its scope and language of presentation should speak for it as an innovative study. The author's involvement both as a human witness to the achievements of the persons and their biographer is a combination that could also override the issue of uncritical portrayal of their lives. Falola has constructed and projected a community that usually is often neglected in biographical research.

The author delivers on his promise to "blend African and Western knowledge systems" by preserving African oral traditions and personal memories of worthy cultural, literary, and political ambassadors of Africa and Africanist studies. Beyond this, the book breaks limits and blurs disciplinary boundaries and methods. *In Praise of Greatness* manages to be both a primary and secondary text valuable to scholars interested in African oral traditions, auto/biography, and African Studies.

Folasade Hunsu, *Obafemi Awolowo University*

Steven D. Gish. 2018. *Amy Biehl's Last Home: A Bright Life, a Tragic Death, and a Journey of Reconciliation in South Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press. 392 pp.

She had it all. At twenty-six, she was a Stanford graduate, a blonde-haired blue-eyed competitive swimmer and diver from wealthy Newport Beach, California, and a Fulbright scholar at the University of the Western Cape. Today she would be in her early fifties, perhaps working as a professor or as a United Nations human rights lawyer. The problem is that we will never know. Amy Biehl is in that category of unfulfilled promise. Her fresh face is frozen in time and Steven D. Gish's *Amy Biehl's Last Home* gives that bright face of future promise the entire front cover of the book. If book covers have their own award category, this is one of the best. Why? Because we have all felt the way Amy Biehl felt if we were ever lucky enough to be doing something that meant the world to us.

To Amy, studying about Africa was not enough, even from the hallowed halls of Palo Alto. She had to go and meet the people on the frontlines of apartheid, face-to-face, to get to

personally know the women activists whose desires and demands needed enshrining in the new constitution. Amy knew that she came from privilege, not only racially but also economically, and she wanted to test out textbook assumptions. There was so much more to learn from others. Author Gish was in graduate school when he shared a class in African politics in fall 1987 with undergraduate International Relations major, Amy. He did not know her personally, but he did notice that she was always well-prepared and shared her opinion. His chosen profession as author and history professor with a focus on sub-Saharan Africa and a specialty in South Africa is something we might have imagined for Amy.

I could not put down this book. It brought back such sorrow. In late August 1993, the month of Amy's death, I was serving as a Fulbright Program desk officer in Washington, D.C. at the United States Information Agency's Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs. I will never forget the day that one of our scholars was killed. This is not supposed to happen to Fulbrighters, the gold standard of sponsored exchanges for the U.S. Government. Educational and cultural exchanges are proverbial life-changing experiences. They are stepping stones to greater things—graduate school, government, industry. Amy was a shining star among many who have "Fulbrighted."

She was on her way back to the United States after a year of postgraduate study abroad in South Africa. Her bags were packed. But she could not resist giving three friends a ride home to the township of Guguletu which she knew well. Her roommate, Melanie Jacobs, told the *New York Times* that Amy was not just another white person. "She loved Africa." And yet that day, she inadvertently drove into an extremist political rally. Teenage youths in a militant nationalist Pan-African Congress saw an opportunity to attack what they perceived as a white oppressor Afrikaaner in their neighborhood. It came just four months after the highly popular anti-apartheid activist Chris Hani was gunned down by a Polish immigrant. Her death brought national blemish to a country that had so much global support from people around the world who declared solidarity with those in South Africa who were seeking an end to the oppressive apartheid system. She was the only American killed in a bloody years-long transition to democracy in South Africa and her legacy is that of a foot soldier in a long battle.

Amy first traveled to South Africa in 1991, just two years after graduating from Stanford. She had gone there to work on voter education and women's rights. Her Fulbright academic year of 1992/1993 was to help the country prepare for its first free elections in 1994. She believed in a better South Africa, a more democratic and inclusive one, that would be accountable to all its people, black and white, rich and poor. Amy was memorialized after her death in the country she had come to love and Melanie Jacobs told those assembled: "I want to say to people that you have killed your own sister." In Guguletu, mourners carried placards that read, "Comrades Come in All Colors."

This book was published twenty-five years after Amy Biehl's death. It is painstakingly researched—Gish had full access to the Biehl family papers, including everything from Amy's academic work at Stanford and her activist work in South Africa—and is supported by interviews with her parents to give the reader a full picture of Amy. Gish documents how extensive Amy's pro-democracy social network was at her host institution, long before the social media era, with connections to Dullah Omar and Brigitte Mabandla, who became ministers of justice, and Rhoda Kadalie, who became human rights commissioner.

The journey of reconciliation is one well-documented to those who know the rest of the story. Like an organ donor, Amy's death, just eight months before the end of apartheid, breathed new life into the lives of those young killers who just as easily could have spent a lifetime behind bars. Convicted and sentenced to eighteen years, two of the men, Easy Nofemela and Ntobeko Peni, went on to work for the Amy Biehl Foundation after her parents testified on their behalf at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings. This restorative justice philosophy is the spirit of the Amy Foundation today (formerly The Amy Biehl Foundation) that for over twenty-two years has provided thousands of students in the Cape Town area with enrichment opportunities and after-school activities. Amy lived her life of academics mixed with activism at the grassroots level, not as an elite outsider who comes in to impose her knowledge and will. *Amy Biehl's Last Home* takes us back to the life of a bright light twenty-something and propels us forward to a reconciliation with our higher selves. We all are sisters and brothers and comrades do come in all colors.

Nancy Snow, *Kyoto University of Foreign Studies*

Ros Gray. 2020. *Cinemas of the Mozambican Revolution: Anti-Colonialism, Independence, and Internationalism in Filmmaking, 1968-1991*. Suffolk: James Currey. 292 pp.

Ros Gray narrates the use of filmmaking and cinema in late-colonial and immediate post-colonial Mozambique. The year 1968 is when the revolutionary war began, while 1991 represents the end of the Cold War, and the year when the Mozambican government privatized the filmmaking industry. Portugal colonized Mozambique and relinquished the colony in 1975. Following years of armed struggle, FRELIMO, the current ruling party, wrestled power from Portugal. Gray analyzes the processes of filmmaking through the "historical lens" of decolonization, the Cold War, technology and propaganda, and nation-building. The films produced between 1968 and 1974 helped to inspire the local masses against the Portuguese colonizers. Those produced by the FRELIMO-led government, mostly under President Samora Machel, and the National Institute of Cinema (INC), helped to consolidate the gains of decolonization and inculcate the spirit of nation-building among the multiple ethnic groups in Mozambique. Doing so also helped "erase" the horrible memories of the colonial era. The INC staff, in collaboration with other international allies, produced the films, went from village to village, and provided mobile cinema shows. The Soviet Union and China provided most of the filmmaking equipment to the Mozambican government, considered as a reliable Cold War ally since FRELIMO's adoption of the Marxist-Leninist ideology in 1969. The contents of the films, shown both locally and internationally, covered several issues, including speeches by leaders of FRELIMO, speeches by foreign heads of state, schemes of collective farms, the evils of Portuguese colonial rule, the bush and camp lives of the guerilla fighters, and the destabilization policies of Southern African white minority regimes, among others.

In the book's seven main chapters, the author analyzes the films both chronologically and thematically. There are films produced during FRELIMO's war of independence between 1968 and 1975. After independence, the films reflected the government's ideological position — where cinema served as an element of social change and nation-building. In chapter one, the films

analyzed cover the period from 1968 to 1973. FRELIMO's first president, Eduardo Mondlane, solicited the assistance of foreign filmmakers to help document the armed rebellion, from its Tanzanian base (where President Julius Nyerere had provided refuge). The films attacked Portuguese colonial rule, its claims of being a "civilizing mission," and portrayed a positive and new society (collectivized agriculture, and education and healthcare opportunities) under FRELIMO by showcasing life in the "liberated zones" of northern Mozambique. Some notable films of that period included: *We will win*, produced by the Yugoslav Dragutin Popovic in 1968; and *The peoples of Mozambique are fighting on*, produced by the Chinese filmmaker, Tan Qi in 1971. The other visuals came in the form of photographs, taken by FRELIMO cadres, who later launched the journal *Mozambican Revolution*.

In chapter two, the films focus on 1974 and 1975, during the country's transition to independence, as the Carnation Revolution toppled the Portuguese government. They portrayed FRELIMO as a government in waiting and the only hope for the locals. The films included: *Nachingwea: Intelligence and the Hand*, produced in 1975, which showcased the unity of purpose at the Nachingwea military camp in Tanzania. Then there was *From the Rovuma to the Maputo*, depicting Machel's triumphant and symbolic journey from the Rovuma River to the then capital, Lourenco Marques, now Maputo, until the country's independence on June 25, 1975. When the INC took over film production duties, in March 1976, it had the mandate of delivering the FRELIMO government's positive image, inculcating the nation-building agenda, and attacking the white minority regimes in the region. These issues are covered in chapters three to seven, covering the period from 1976 to 1991. The films include: *Year of Independence*, produced by the Mozambican Fernando Silva in 1976 and depicting the country's first year as a new nation. Then there were the *Kuxa Kanema* (Birth of Cinema) newsreels produced from 1978 onwards, shown countrywide in the absence of satellite TV technology. The film *Forward Zimbabwe*, produced in 1981, depicted the struggle against remnant white minority regimes and regional affiliation. *The wind blows from the north*, produced in 1987, depicted fictions of socialism and the myth of the birth of a new nation after colonial rule.

This is a must-read book, with significant contributions to areas of African cultural and global history. Its use of numerous primary sources, and its transnational approach makes it even stronger. Its shortfalls lie in the author's glossing over of such concepts as "decolonization," "the Cold War," "Marxist-Leninism," and "civilizing mission," all of which lack deeper conceptualization. There is also no concrete evidence provided on the impacts which the films had on the locals. These shortfalls aside, I recommend this book to those who study histories of decolonization, the Cold War, technology, and nation-building in late-colonial and post-colonial Africa. They will find *Cinemas of the Mozambican Revolution* captivating.

Paul Chiudza Banda, *Tarleton State University*

Erica Heinsen-Roach. 2019. *Consuls and Captives: Dutch-North African Diplomacy in the Early Modern Mediterranean*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press. 243 pp.

For long, scholars of the early modern period assumed that diplomacy was originally designed by Italians during the Renaissance, and then consolidated in Europe. This scholarship took for granted the fact that a diplomatic order was then imposed by Europeans, which divided the

world between law-abiding European states and lawless rogue states. The North African Ottoman regencies fell, according to this order, into the second category. These were the “Barbary states” and the “scourge of Christendom,” infamous for piracy, so much feared and despised by Europeans and very popular in western literatures. Contrary to this orthodox and Eurocentric narrative, *Consuls and Captives* offers a more balanced account, which addresses broader questions pertaining to the nature of diplomatic relations between Christian Europe and the Islamic West in the early modern period. Similarly, it stresses the intercultural commonalities, which were not always evident, and which facilitated the emergence of a different diplomatic order.

A bird’s-eye view would suggest that in the 16th century and after, almost everything divided the Dutch Republic and the North African states: geography, religion, culture, and diplomacy. Yet, the western European, Protestant, and “lawful” state would—through piracy and captivity—develop diplomatic relations with the western Mediterranean, Muslim, and “unlawful” Ottoman regencies in a way that challenges the old view. In the late 16th century, both the Dutch Republic on the one hand and Algiers, Tunis, and Morocco on the other, strove to be independent of Spanish and Ottoman rule respectively. The Dutch were also trying to develop distant commerce and expand their maritime expansion, while the Ottoman regencies were seeking more self-government and more freedom to practice piracy, a worldwide activity then, which would free them from Ottoman control. This common ground allowed the Dutch and the Maghribi states to establish diplomatic relations and shape them according to their interests, not as ‘traditional’ diplomacy required. Erica Heinsen-Roach tells the story of the evolution of these diplomatic relations or rather practices through the lens of captivity and by applying the “new diplomatic history” method, which focuses on the cultural and social practices of doing diplomacy and which accounts for the interactions with non-European actors to explain the evolution of diplomacy in the early modern world.

A vigorous relationship between the Dutch and North African states forged a set of diplomatic habits different from those common in the European resident diplomacy motivated by the Dutch quest to gain favorable trade conditions in return for military assistance through treaty making. In the process, the modest and vulnerable commercial consul became a consul of the state in charge of delicate political functions including state representation, treaty making, and the ransoming of captives. A new diplomatic order was, therefore, set up by the North African regencies in their relations with the Dutch, and more generally with other European states, different from the resident diplomacy imposed by the Europeans until then and evolving around the personality of ambassadors, not consuls. This, of course, meant that the North African states allotted Dutch consuls political responsibilities and in so doing, they affirmed their independence from the Porte and that of the Dutch from Spain. In like manner, they forced the Dutch to adjust to their standards of doing diplomacy by taking part in the ransom economy, by negotiating the price for freeing captives, by gift giving, and by signing treaties beneficial to both parties. If the Dutch wanted to fulfill these missions successfully, they had to adapt to local practices and traditions. And even though the Dutch and other European states still occasionally resorted to naval force with the North African regencies, they failed to impose their rules and standards of practicing diplomacy on the latter. The days of the one-way diplomacy were definitely over, and the 16th and 17th centuries saw the emergence of a more

pliant diplomacy characterized by flexibility, interchange, and reciprocity rather than a western-organized diplomacy imposing its rules, norms and ideologies.

Making use of an extensive archival research, *Consuls and Captives* shows the extent to which diplomatic relations in the western Mediterranean in the early modern period evolved over time as a result of cultural encounters and did not certainly originate in western modern traditions. This work is of great significance to scholars of the history of the Mediterranean, slavery, captivity, and diplomacy with a clear grasp of the early modern period.

Adel Manai, *Qatar University*

Farooq Kperogi. 2020. *Nigeria's Digital Diaspora: Citizen Media, Democracy and Participation*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press. 299 pp.

Nigeria's digital diaspora in the United States—mostly independent, non-institutional, anti-establishment, and radical—have emerged as the new adversarial watchdog and critical defenders of Nigeria's democracy. This is the thesis of this comprehensive addition to the growing literature on press and politics across Africa. The author argues that the re-emergence of alternative journalism in Nigeria by its digital diaspora has led to a new wave of radical critique that is fueled by digital investigative powers, unbound by local political restrictions, and angry with corruption and elite privilege. The book deals with its evolution in the United States, its move to mainstream media, and its impact on homeland politics, policy, and mass media.

Kperogi contends that democratization in 1999 was Nigeria's political 'end of history.' Guerilla journalism gave way in order to keep the military in the barracks. The vocal Lagos/Ibadan press axis were appeased by the election of a southerner as president. Pro-democracy politicians who emerged as governors in the new political dispensation owned and controlled national newspapers. Lastly, military-era journalists and radicals were compensated with political appointments. A decade later, a dearth of critical journalism, dissatisfaction with the political elite, and technically-deficient online news content by traditional newspapers betrayed a significant absence of a vibrant, intelligent press. This inspired the distant, aloof, detached, and dispersed diaspora into an active, engaging, transformational community.

Drawing inspiration from Nigeria's pro-democracy press, Nigerians in the U.S., described as urban, highly educated, middle-class, high income earners, mostly professional, and "the largest of all African migrants in the US with strong nationalistic attachment to homeland politics" (p. 75) created a virtual public sphere for open, inclusive, dialogic, critical discourse on Nigeria. By 2010, these platforms had transformed from chatrooms, online news platforms that transmitted news from home to far-flung Nigerians abroad into independent, critical, investigative news media with no roots in Nigeria. Three reasons accounted for their phenomenal growth: one, cutting-edge investigative reporting; two, geographical distance from state control; and three, high-quality online presence described as "interactive, multimedia and hyperlinked" (p. 81). The most vocal of these platforms include: Elendu Reporters, Point Bland News, and Sahara Reporters. Importantly, these platforms became go-to sites for breaking news, exposé journalism, and media activism.

These diasporic media sites shaped the homeland in four significant areas. (1) Policy Change: In spite of arrests, law suits, financial inducement, police harassment, and blockage of diasporic sites in Nigeria, US-based diasporic news sites played key roles in policy reversal in homeland politics. (2) International recognition: CNN, BBC, Aljazeera, and others have all used these services. In 2009, CNN obtained from SR vital background information and photos of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Nigerian-born terrorist who was convicted of attempting to detonate plastic explosive on board a Northwest Airlines flight to the US. As a consequence, Sahara Reporter received not only international donor funding from the Ford Foundation but also free legal representation in a US court. This recognition enhanced their credibility in Nigeria. (3) Symbiotic relationship with Nigerian outlets: At first, diasporic sites were ignored, then criticized for being out-of-touch with realities in Nigeria, and later copied. News content that originate on these sites now feature regularly in traditional newspapers. Diasporic sites also uncovered strings of corruption involving high ranking newspaper editors and publishers; ultimately, challenging local media sites to generate more critical content and become more visible online. (4) Social networked journalism: Online media activists, bloggers, investigative journalists, and social justice campaigners now use online platforms to vocalize, articulate and challenge power in Nigeria. Evidence from citizen journalists was used by politicians in court—sometimes successfully to challenge election outcomes where rigging was widespread but documented.

This is an important book and essential reading for any scholar in the field of Nigerian studies. If democracy is government by discussion and consent, then these sites offer broad, citizen's engagement with politics through online petition, expose journalism, public sensitization, human rights advocacy, open discussions, and collective watchdog activism. They also raise the bar for national discourse and inspire innovative bottom-up views. The Nigerian state has, however, displayed a remarkable resilience to silence media criticism by signing the Anti-Social Media Act into law—one that criminalizes the use of social media in peddling malicious information—an offshoot of the Protection from Internet Falsehood and Manipulation Bill (2019). Battle has now commenced between the forces of state-manipulated media and the brave pioneers of digital diaspora. It is important that the latter be read, protected, and widely disseminated both in local and diasporic communities.

Victor Jatula, *University of Utah (Asia Campus)*

Haim Malka (ed). 2020. *Faith in the Balance: Regulating Religious Affairs in Africa*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. 155 pp.

In *Faith in the Balance*, editor Haim Malka has collected case studies of five African countries to explore the delicate balance governments must maintain as they regulate religion: while too little regulation allows a vacuum in which extremism can grow, too much can undermine religious institutions' legitimacy or create a cycle of repression and radicalization.

In the first chapter, Malka explores how "Morocco has built an impressive and strategic network to regulate religious affairs and paid close attention to how Islam is taught, preached, and organized" (p. 14). He warns, however, that this regulation cannot be static, but is rather a

balance that requires “ongoing self-reflection, assessment, and adaptation” (p. 33). Malka then in the following chapter examines the effects of political polarization and security concerns on Tunisia’s regulation of religion from independence in 1956 to the present. Alex Thurston’s chapter describes five primary tools by which the Nigerian government regulates religion: “formal regulation through federal institutions, partnerships with religious umbrella bodies, co-optation of hereditary authorities, state-level laws, and coercion” (p. 70). Thurston adroitly addresses the issue of balance, noting that politicians’ reliance on religious leaders can undermine those leaders’ authority, while “banning movements will fuel the very grievances that led to earlier tensions and violence” (p. 80).

Richard Downie describes the fragmentation of Kenya’s religious space in the fourth chapter. The Kenyan government has contributed to this fragmentation “through divisive actions that include co-opting religious leaders and mounting security operations that discriminate against and alienate Muslim communities” (p. 109). While *Faith in the Balance* primarily addresses the difficult balance of regulation from the government’s perspective, Downie also considers the perspectives of religious leaders: if they embrace political leaders, they risk alienating congregants, but if they confront the government, they risk marginalization and repression. Sebastian Elischer’s chapter explores the effects of Burkina Faso’s overall lack of state authority in the religious sphere. He focuses on Burkina Faso’s Islamic and Christian communities since the country’s independence from France, including a discussion of the impact of conflict in neighboring Mali. In the conclusion, Malka includes a concise discussion of common themes and implications for US policymakers.

It is worth noting that *Faith in the Balance* focuses almost exclusively on Islam and Christianity as the context for interactions between the state and religion, with traditional religions discussed only in passing. For example, the Burkina Faso chapter briefly notes that the government annually “provides equal funding to Muslim, Catholic, Protestant, and animistic communities” (p. 111) and that “Traditionalists” account for 16 percent of the population compared to 22.5 percent for Christians (p. 115), yet the chapter includes no subsequent discussion of traditional religions. It is unclear whether the general omission of traditional religions from this volume was to maximize generalizability to other countries, to keep chapters concise, or because they were viewed as relatively unimportant for understanding government regulation of religion. To their credit, though, the authors regularly distinguish key groups within these two major religions, such as Catholics and Pentecostals.

There is also a lack of clarity on how to apply this volume’s lessons to other African countries. The case studies are all countries to which the US provides economic and military assistance, and Malka suggests that “lessons here are also applicable to understanding the religious dynamics in other countries on the continent with which the United States has less intimate security ties” (p. 141). However, there is no clear, overarching framework (beyond the balance metaphor) to understand or categorize governments’ regulation of religion, which may limit direct application to African countries beyond the five case studies. Indeed, Malka writes in the conclusion, “Amidst the ethnic, sectarian, religious, economic, and political diversity of Africa, each government must find its own balance” (p. 137). As such, this volume is not a “how-to,” but instead a demonstration of how each country’s history and circumstances have shaped its regulation of religion.

These issues aside, *Faith in the Balance* has much to recommend it, such as consistently strong chapters. The chapter authors include sufficient background information to understand quickly each of the five states' approaches to religious regulation. The five case studies also represent a range of government approaches. In keeping with its origination at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, *Faith in the Balance* is primarily geared towards policymakers, though it may also be of interest to students and academics interested in the intersection of government and religion. Overall, it is an effective and approachable exploration of several countries' experiences that underscores the importance of dynamic, country-specific approaches to government regulation of religion.

Brad Crofford, *Independent Scholar*

Emily McGiffin. 2019. *Of Land, Bones, and Money: Toward a South African Ecopoetics*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press. 249 pp.

This is a well-researched and context rich book of *iimbongi* (praise poets). The book consists of six chapters plus introduction and conclusion sections. The book seems to be written for readership outside of South Africa as it begins with a rather simplistic explication of *iimbongi* within a South African, Xhosa context.

The introductory section delineates how the environment shapes and molds the work of *iimbongi* as ecopoetics. For instance, the author critiques the notion of ecopoetics as being foreign, western and an external imposition but falls short of explaining why her work should not be perceived in a similar light. The first chapter, "A Brief History of isiXhosa Literature," is certainly geared to non-South African readers in its oversimplification and over-explanation of African history of literature. The focus on the non-South African audience can also be gleaned from the author's usage of the obsolete and derogatory term in reference to the San and Khoi people, albeit in quotation marks. When such language is used, even in quotation marks, it breathes life into its derogatory roots, and one would like to think that it would not be used in a book intended for Africans. Explications of isiXhosa words can make the introductory section cumbersome to people familiar with the language, but perhaps useful to those who are unfamiliar with the language.

The second chapter, "Verse, Violence, and the Migrant Labor System," provides a well-researched history of the role of poetry in the fight against the pernicious apartheid system that required African men to leave their homes to work in the gold mines far from their homes in order to create wealth for white South Africans. The author does a good job highlighting works of often forgotten poets or *iimbongi* of the 19th century, especially Xhosa women poets. It is concerning, however, that the author refers to what was the backbone of the brutality of the apartheid system as merely a "migrant labor system," which connotes willingness on the part of those who migrated. This was a system that enabled accumulation of wealth for white South Africans and served as the main engine of oppression; it was not merely a parallel system of skilled and unskilled labor system as she asserts.

The third chapter opens with a call for worker unity and resistance from the renowned poet Alfred Themba Qabula. In this chapter the author makes connections between poetry and the

black African workers' struggle for social justice under the apartheid government, using Qabula's work as a foundation. This chapter is focused on Durban workers' strikes and resistance in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to Qabula's work, the chapter pays homage to Nise Malange's poetry. The commendable part of this book is the author's intentionality in including women poets—like Nise Malange—who are usually left out of poetry books.

The fourth chapter begins with a quote from Adrienne Rich, a western poet and essayist. Adrienne Rich's quote in a book about African poets illuminates what is at the core of this book: using a western lens to read and understand African poetry. This chapter spans from using poetry as a tool of resistance under apartheid to poetry's role to protest abuse of women in post-apartheid South Africa.

Throughout chapters five, six, and the conclusion, the author reiterates the points that iimbongi play significant roles in society as voices of resistance, morality, and a conscience of society. The book concludes with the author stating that "some contemporary iimbongi have been co-opted; their work has been commodified" (p. 178). This can be interpreted to mean that iimbongi who were not paid historically, are now being remunerated for their work. Does that mean cooptation? The author seems to miss a larger socio-political context that iimbongi were not remunerated for their work because the apartheid system did not have value for African iimbongi. In post-apartheid South Africa, the work of iimbongi is valued and they are compensated for it.

The book will be useful for people who want to study the role of iimbongi or praise poets in colonial, apartheid, and post-apartheid South Africa. The book is most venerable for its inclusion of the often-neglected women poets or iimbongi.

Shirley Mthethwa-Sommers, *Nazareth College*

Abdul Raufu Mustapha and Kate Meagher (eds.). 2020. *Overcoming Boko Haram: Faith, Society & Islamic Radicalization in Northern Nigeria*. Suffolk: James Currey Publishers. 336 pp.

This edited collection examines the socio-economic context of Boko Haram. It does not analyze the group's founding or post-2016 factionalization between the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Abubakar Shekau-led Jamaat Ahlussunnah lid-Dawa wal-Jihad (JAS) and is not "about Boko Haram itself," but rather "wider processes" in Nigeria (preface). The book, therefore, benefits students and scholars on Nigeria, although not necessarily those interrogating Boko Haram's history, ideology, military tactics, funding, external alliances, leadership, or factions.

Overcoming Boko Haram begins with former Kano emir Sanusi's foreword. He argues conflicts, including Boko Haram, stem from "grievances rooted in economics" and contends Salafi ideology is "far from" new in Nigeria (p. xxi). However, Boko Haram's discourses indicate the group is unlike Niger Delta militants, whose grievances were explicitly about economic exploitation. Rather, Boko Haram is committed to Wahhabism, or specifically "Salafi-jihadi ideology," which were newly introduced to Nigeria in the 1990s. While Sanusi distinguishes Boko Haram from historical West African Islamic revolutionary—and specifically

Sufi jihadist—currents, he also unintendedly indicates their similarities in “fighting oppression from unjust leaders,” including Nigeria’s rulers in Boko Haram’s case (p. xxii).

After the preface explains the book’s concept originating in 2014 and involving the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) and Nigeria’s Office of National Security Adviser (ONSA), Meagher and Mustapha argue in chapter one that Boko Haram reflects “Islamic populist” responses to “extreme inequality” (p. 4). Thus, like Sanusi, economic arguments are advanced. There are, however, two claims deserving substantiation in this chapter. First, it asserts Boko Haram pledged loyalty to al-Qaeda (p. 2). However, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) only provided funding, training, weapons, and media support to Boko Haram after Boko Haram’s delegation visited AQIM in the Sahel and Shekau wrote Usama bin Laden a letter requesting to join al-Qaeda in 2009. And, second, it alleges Nigerian Shias “called for direct violence against the state” when Shia leaders only delegitimized the Nigerian state on Islamic grounds, including when Boko Haram cofounder Muhammed Yusuf followed Ibrahim al-Zakzaky’s Shia movement in the 1990s (p. 10). However, Nigerian Shias, including al-Zakzaky, essentially promoted Islamic revolutionary activism.

In chapter two, M. Sani Umar discusses West African and Nigerian *ulama*. While scholarly and comprehensive, some of this history, especially regarding Izala’s origins, has been covered in previous literature. It might also have been fruitful to contextualize Boko Haram’s evolution more in the discussion, including offering details on Muhammed Yusuf’s associations with Shia and later Salafi scholars.

In chapter three, Abubakar K. Monguno and Ibrahim Umara provide invaluable statistics on violence in the conflict’s epicenter, Borno (p. 69). While their Borno-based fieldwork is exemplary, some findings may have benefited from data triangulation. For example, they relied on Thurston’s debunked claim that Boko Haram’s loyalty pledge to Islamic State “was a vain attempt to attract international support after territorial losses,” despite numerous primary source audios, videos, and written documents from ISWAP and JAS refuting that speculation (p. 81). Considering the authors’ rootedness in Borno, exploration into Boko Haram cofounder Muhammed Ali’s experiences in Sudan with Usama bin Laden’s deputies or at University of Maiduguri in the 1990s would also have added value (p. 80). Similarly, the claim is questionable that ISWAP is “far from being driven by concerns...of international actors” given ISWAP’s increase in attacks and video-recorded beheadings explicitly avenging Abubakar al-Baghdadi’s death in 2019 (p. 90). Nevertheless, the chapter successfully chronicles how Boko Haram’s violence in Borno is conducted, albeit not necessarily why Boko Haram rose in Borno and not elsewhere in Nigeria.

Rahmane Idrissa in chapter four convincingly finds Niger’s “Izala phenomenon” differed from Nigeria’s because only in Niger were Christians considered a “non-threatening minority” (p. 128). This finding and Idrissa’s Maradi-based fieldwork also warrant follow-up research on Algerian jihadist, Hassan Allane, who directed Islamic charities in Niger in 1993; Maradi’s Moufidha school; and Katsina-based Yakubu Musa “Kafanchan,” whose school influenced Moufidha. According to AQIM, academic, intelligence, and media sources, Allane birthed Nigeria’s jihadist movement and Musa spearheaded Islamist advocacy during Nigerian Muslim-Christian clashes before he welcomed Allane into Nigeria and Allane’s recruits joined AQIM’s predecessors in 1994. Further, the chapter could have emphasized “spillover” from

Borno to Diffa to explain why Diffa, but not Maradi, has suffered frequent ISWAP attacks since 2015. Moreover, there were correlations between subregional military intervention into Borno and the first attacks—female suicide bombings—in Diffa in February 2015. The chapter nonetheless contributed invaluable perspectives on ideological and evolutionary linkages between Izala and Boko Haram, especially because Muhammed Yusuf associated with Izala until 9/11.

Chapter five by Julie G. Sanda makes astute methodological assertions about how researching Boko Haram based on perceptions of officials, journalists, and scholars is different than researching “actual members” because few elites know members’ lived experiences (p. 147). Sanda also rightly recognizes security abuses occur frequently, but their correlation with radicalization is “not very significant” (p. 156). The radicalization research for chapter five, like David Ehrhardt and Umar’s research for chapter six, dates primarily from 2014. This makes both chapters no less robust, but perhaps less compelling when published in a book about a rapidly evolving jihadist group like Boko Haram six years later. This is also why chapter six could not evaluate “international connections in the patterns of mobilization,” especially impacts of ISWAP’s 2015 loyalty pledge to IS or the 2016 ISWAP-JAS factionalization on recruitment (p. 189). Chapter six argued personal contacts to Boko Haram members were “crucial” in recruitment, which suggests why chapter five found security forces abuses were insufficient to explain recruitment if, for example, the abused lacked group members’ contacts (p. 181). Chapter six also rightly distinguished between pre/post-2009 recruitment because only pre-2009 recruitment was conducted openly. It is questionable, however, whether women could really be “preachers” (p. 174) because no other sources such as videos or documents indicate Boko Haram allows women “preachers.” Perhaps terminological clarification there would have been warranted. Further, asserting that “no single profile” explains Boko Haram membership is a strawman because no members in any organization—whether Boko Haram, Nigeria’s army, Nigeria’s “Super Eagles” soccer team, or Izala—ever fit one “single profile” (p. 188). Despite methodological limitations in meeting active Boko Haram fighters, the authors contributed valuable assessments of financial, ideological, and personal factors in recruitment.

Zainab Usman, Sheerine el Taraboulsi-McCarthy, and Khadija Gambo Hawaja also base findings in their chapter seven on research from early 2014, which limits current relevance for a book published in 2020. Moreover, they acknowledge difficulties in interviewing actual members given the scale of fighting in 2014 (p. 196). While discussing various ways women actively participate in mainstream Nigerian Islamic movements, it would have been worthwhile to explore whether women ever joined Boko Haram from mainstream movements like FOMWAN because men did, including Muhammed Yusuf from Izala, Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria, and Kanemi Institute of Islamic Theology and Yusuf’s deputies, Shekau and Mamman Nur, from Borno College of Islamic Studies. The chapter also finds women are often “companions” of male fighters or logisticians and recruiters (presumably of women) (pp. 210-11). Further interrogation of how ISWAP’s executions of Muslim women, including not only Hauwa Liman but also Saifura Khorsa, and “enslavement” of Christian women, including Leah Sharibu and Alice Ngaddah, in 2018 played into Nigerian gender norms would also have been fruitful (p. 216).

Murray Last correctly asserts in chapter eight that “Boko Haram is not now behaving in a way that follows traditional Hausa and Kanuri values” in Nigeria (p. 228). If Last or the chapter seven authors further interrogated Boko Haram audios, videos, and books, they would observe ISWAP justifies enslaving women based on IS theology, and not Hausa or Kanuri values or even Usman dan Fodio’s precedents. Last’s scholarship on Hausaland is unparalleled, although chapter seven reflects the book’s drawback of overly situating Boko Haram in a Nigerian context when the group’s loyalties and longstanding theological references are to IS and non-Nigerian scholars, including ISWAP’s own IS shaikh, Saudi Salafi scholar Abu Malek al-Tamimi. Thus, Last’s chapter risked assessing a problem (“radicalization in Hausaland”) that is quite rare. Because much research for the book was conducted in 2014, there was also little opportunity to explore why non-Kanuris traveled to Borno to fight with ISWAP after its March 2015 formation.

In chapter nine, Meagher and Ibrahim Haruna Hassan mention the book’s key conundrum, which is that northwestern Nigeria is only “slightly better” than northeastern Nigeria for “inequality and access to services” (p. 271). If the book intended to explain why Boko Haram formed when (presumably 2002-2003) and where (northeastern Nigeria) it did, the answer, therefore, may not be in marginalization as much as individuals’ agency, including Muhammed Ali’s post-9/11 alliance with Muhammed Yusuf, which the book minimally examined. While Meagher and Hassan also discussed “interreligious violence” (p. 261), they could have also evaluated whether pro-al-Qaeda and pro-Taliban discourses after 9/11 by Salafi scholars like Isa Ali Pantami, Abubakar Gero Argungu, Aminu Dourawa, Yakubu Musa “Kafanchan,” and others, whose recordings are now available, contributed to Boko Haram’s post-9/11 emergence. Nevertheless, like other authors, their research was mostly conducted in northwestern Nigeria and in 2014. Thus, little was found relating to radicalization and the informal economy. Rather, radicalization has primarily been a Borno-based phenomenon since Boko Haram’s jihad commenced in 2010.

Chapter ten by Umar and Earhardt creatively explored futures of Boko Haram. One might suggest an additional comparison would have been the Taliban because, like ISWAP, it is a contemporary jihadist group, although it accepted international diplomacy. While ISWAP and JAS are more extreme, perhaps future “moderate” factions could eventually gain power in ISWAP and follow the Taliban’s path. However, would Nigeria ever agree to autonomy for jihadists? Only time will tell how this conflict ends, but one cannot fault the authors who collectively explored various possibilities in the concluding chapter.

Notwithstanding certain critiques, the book is undoubtedly well-researched, well-written, and a valuable addition to Nigeria Studies bookshelves.

Jacob Zenn, *Georgetown University*

Bruce Mutsvairo and Cleophas Muneri. 2019. *Journalism, Democracy and Human Rights in Zimbabwe*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. 151 pp.

Zimbabwe has undergone significant changes domestically in recent years. *Journalism, Democracy and Human Rights in Zimbabwe* provides an empirical analysis of Zimbabwe’s

historical and ongoing state of affairs by examining its unique media landscape and the intersection between journalism, democracy and human rights. The opening chapter provides the context to Zimbabwean politics and highlights the tense and complex relationship between Zimbabwe's key political players. It also includes major recent political developments, including the end Mugabe's reign in 2017 from a military coup. The second chapter presents through the lens of postcolonial theory, the country's political and economic history and its colonial legacy.

The next two chapters analyse media ownership patterns and media law in Zimbabwe. These highlight essential information about the country's media sector in both the colonial and postcolonial period. By using discourse analysis of Zimbabwe's main newspapers, namely government-owned *The Herald* and privately-owned the *Zimbabwe Independent*, Chapter 4 argues that the land reform programme and other political developments were represented in very contrasting perspectives in the media, demonstrating the polarized media and political environment in the country.

As citizen journalism and social media have recently shaped many countries' political engagement in numerous ways, the Zimbabwean situation also needs to be explored further. By looking at digital activism and the contribution of several diaspora-based online publications, the authors argue that citizen journalism and social media have provided an opportunity and platform for citizens to participate national issues, and to critique government policy (p. 77). Concurrently, diasporic media, citizen journalism, and digital activism also face multiple challenges, such as "slacktivism," especially since the government have always used armed police or military personnel to deal with protesters.

The authors, in chapter seven on human rights discourse, offer us well thought-out understanding of Zimbabwe's complex human rights situation. They address the differences in emphasis between political and economic rights between Western and non-Western governments. In so doing, the chapter highlights the importance of recognising the colonial historical context. Using homosexuality as an example, the authors also analysed the critical role of media in covering human rights issues.

The concluding chapter argues that "the struggle of democracy will continue to be bedevilled by political polarization, economic decline and laws that are inimical to the broadening of political space for the opposition" (p. 117). The authors provide recommendations for the future, urging collective efforts from the Zimbabwean media, civil society, and private citizens. The future, however, is also very hard to predict, considered many uncertainties, such as how to handle powerful force (i.e., the military), and how to reform the media under significant state control.

The afterword – "Journalism for Ill-fated People" – written by Colin Chasi, a South-African based scholar who has been working the philosophy of communication, is also valuable. With a particular focus on African philosophy and Ubuntu, Chasi highlights the importance of investing moral philosophical insights might eventually bring democracy and prosperity to Zimbabweans, who have been seen as "an ill-fated people" (p. 121). His optimism is drawn from social media that might be able to offer a way to shatter the colonial socio-economic and political structure in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

The lack of gender dimensions and discussions is a potential weakness of this analysis. While it has long been recognized that human rights harms affect men and women differently, the book has paid little attention or awareness to the gender dimensions. The book also does not reveal a lot about ordinary Zimbabwean's life, especially how the media coverage has shaped local Zimbabweans' perception towards nation-state and democracy. The voices of people that have been interviewed are limited in number. In the acknowledgements, the authors mention the book is a product of many conversations with many Zimbabweans from all walks of life. It would be beneficial and possibly more exciting if the authors could make their fieldwork and conversations more visible in the text.

Another striking yet under-studied area on Zimbabwean media politics is digital surveillance and censorship, with the support from foreign capital and technology. It is, of course, not realistic to cover everything in a book, but some further research could be conducted on these aspects in the future. Nevertheless, the omissions cited above do not unduly affect the contribution of the book. It is still a must-read for anyone interested in understanding the long historical and current trajectory of Zimbabwe media landscape and human rights issues in Zimbabwe. It will also be particularly helpful for scholars and students who are interested in Zimbabwe, journalism in Africa, African media politics and African studies.

Hangwei Li, *University of London*

James Ogude (ed.). 2019. *Ubuntu and the Reconstitution of Community*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 236 pp.

At first glance, one would think of Ubuntu as being human because of other beings in whom one finds a wholeness, and thus a community. But such simple understanding and construction has been upheld and also challenged in this volume. The question "what is ubuntu?" has polysemous answers, and each contributes to the nuances of the concept. In the same vein, each tranche of meaning of ubuntu expands the horizons of the construction of community: what community, which community, and whose community—local, global, or glocal community?

In the first chapter, Aloo Osotsi Mojola traces the history of the concept of ubuntu along and across ethnic and linguistic lines, particularly among those speaking a Bantu language. The primary source of understanding ubuntu, he argues, is the history, culture, language, religion, and philosophy of the Bantu communities. The main thrust of ubuntu is the very essence of what it is to be human; the humanity and humaneness of human. This autochthonous conception has further been elaborated upon to encapsulate moral quality and a worldview. With the emergence of Christian missionaries and colonialism, the nuances of ubuntu came to be expanded in scope: philosophized and theologized.

In the second chapter, D.A. Masolo espouses variants of use that ubuntu has been subjected to and raised critical questions as to how best to underscore it as a local or universal theory. Masolo contends that one's position, status, or interest may have a huge impact on how a concept like ubuntu is articulated and acted upon. Thus, he concludes that if care is not taken, as history has demonstrably shown, ubuntu can be utilized to discriminate against people instead of its intended ideal of building a just society.

Bhekizizwe Peterson reiterates in chapter three that the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission popularized the concept of ubuntu even though it has been in existence for long. Ubuntu as adopted by the Commission was meant to address the grubby inhumanity that the authorities of the apartheid regime meted out to black people. Peterson's evocations of ubuntu are situated within the remit of art, and how art evokes humanity, humaneness, morality, aesthetics, and communality which were denied and disrupted by apartheid. He concludes that ubuntu flourishes not in caring for one's individual or group's interest, but fostering and empathizing with others, which is the moral template of lived ubuntu.

Chapter 4 by Niels Weidtmann examines the philosophy of ubuntu within a complex philosophical field, ambiguating and disambiguating the notion, existence, nature, and content of African philosophy. For him, many African philosophers have denied the existence of African philosophy and they exclusively uphold the tenets of western philosophy even in African contextual discourses. Ubuntu does not miss this debate, but as Christian missionaries like Belgian Placide Tempels philosophized, the vital force or ontology of ubuntu is grounded in the knowledge and revelation of God. Because "the idea of a universal community integrating all these communities, however, is a mere abstract concept" (p. 111), the idea of African ubuntu, Christian ubuntu, philosophical Ubuntu or western ubuntu may be in order.

Dirk J. Louw in the following chapter raises fundamental questions about ubuntu itself. Does ubuntu exist? How does it exist? Who lives it out? Ubuntu, he contends, is an ethical ideal, which those who are inspired by it struggle to attain. If ubuntu means that one is human because of the humanity of others, there is therefore a sharing of power in an unequal manner. This communal thinking in itself challenges the very understanding of community and humanity. Pre-colonial and post-colonial African communities are not the same: there is a plural notion of community, for example, in South Africa, where for instance, Mbeki's "I am an African" means being born and bred in Africa, while de Klerk's "I am an African" means being an African whose ancestors are Huguenots. This rainbow reality of Africanity, he concludes, must be put into consideration if the ideal of ubuntu will be realized.

Oriare Nyarwath next examines the Kenyan philosopher Henry O. Oruka's notion of punishment in light of ubuntu. He argues that instead of punishing an individual for committing a crime in the society, the latter should be made to account for the individual's crime. The person, the argument goes, is a product of societal socialization; s/he is not free as it is commonly assumed. Legal justice as it is being currently practiced, cannot cure the society of crime because it does not indict the society that breeds criminals in the first place. Nyarwath concludes that the practice of ubuntu has the capacity of addressing crimes: "Ubuntu should be the basis of global justice in which society cares for its most unfortunate members if humanity is to establish a sound basis for a humane world" (p. 147).

For Anke Graness, a comparative study of ubuntu and *buen vivir* in Latin America shows that they both are indigenous value systems and knowledges steeped in culture and history, which as moral and political tools have been garnered by the people to address their similar situations. Augustine Shutte's chapter eight further entrenches the Christianization of ubuntu in Africa deploying enculturation and contextualization models. With ubuntu, the western individualism and African community, though different, can be lived out practically. Annie-

Marie De Beer (chapter nine), and James Ogude and Unifier Dyer (chapter ten) analyze from a practical perspective how ubuntu can be put into play in conflict-ridden contexts such as the genocide in Rwanda and post-election violence in Kenya. They argued that restoration of peace in a troubled world is the core of ubuntu.

These test cases bring to the fore Louw's argument about whether ubuntu is not just an ideal yet to be realized, or realized by a few people. But they also show, as the volume represents, that ubuntu cannot be packed into one basket of meaning in an ever-evolving world. Because ubuntu is expanding in scope, one hopes that its Islamic interpretation can be analyzed in a revised volume.

Benson Ohihon Igboin, *Adekunle Ajasin University*

Ike Okonta. 2020. *The Failure of Leadership in Africa's Development*. Lanham: Lexington Books. 219 pp.

In *The Failure of Leadership in Africa's Development*, Ike Okonta seeks to determine the causes and bring answers to questions surrounding "Africa's chronic underdevelopment" (p. 2). Ike's approach is neither a simple description of the sources that are linked to Africa's backwardness nor an innocuous response to the countless unanswered thorny questions. This analysis reflects his revulsion as an informed researcher expressing rage against the inertia of African leaders who, he thinks, have everything to effectively get the continent off the ground and attain the same level of development that other continents, considered today as developed, enjoy. The words Okonta chose in his opening statement to convey the gravity of the failure of African leaders are not tender: "Conquered, colonized, subjugated, and humiliated for centuries by a relentless succession of invaders and conquerors from Asia and Europe, the continent became poor, wretched, downtrodden, backward, and unprogressive" (p. 2). It is striking that Okonta does not limit his diagnostic to contemporary Africa. He dives into medieval Africa to exteriorize the historical indifference of African rulers to science and technology since ancient times.

Through his analysis, Okonta shows that he understands the degree to which Africa is lagging. But, unlike modern racist theorists including de Gobineau, Chamberlain, Rosenberg, and Hitler (p. 32), or the theories related to the unfavorable geographic conditions of the continent that he debunked brilliantly, Okonta links Africa's backwardness directly to the poor governance of its rulers who have not understood the stakes of the scientific and technological advancement. He firmly argues that no development in Africa would be possible if African rulers do not change their way of governance: "Geography, benevolent or non-benevolent, does not develop or underdevelop a nation. Good leadership does" (p. 59). To make his case, Okonta offers in-depth historical evidence, contrasting ancient civilizations of Ethiopia and Egypt with those of eastern Europe and Asia, proving how Africa's underdevelopment can be attributed to neither racial prejudice nor to Africa's geography. His argument highlights the severity of Africa's historic technological disadvantage against the invaders who continuously assaulted the continent through the centuries.

Making this argument requires Okonta to challenge the powerful narrative of prominent scholars of African origin, including Cheikh Anta Diop and Walter Rodney, on their theories linking Africa's backwardness to major historical events like slavery and colonialism. This book draws heavily on historical references that Okonta makes as evidence of the failure of leadership in Africa's development throughout generations. African leaders missed the vision that would have enabled them to prepare for unforeseen challenges. Based on a wide spectrum of medieval kingdoms, historical evidence suggests that Africa would not have fallen prey to European and Asian predators if it had the same military and technological capabilities as they possessed. As an example, Okonta explained the incapacity of Afonso I, the King of Congo, who wrote to King John III of Portugal to plead for help, after failing to stop slaving expeditions of his people by Portuguese merchants, because he did not have military powers to enforce his own decree: "In the letter, Afonso complained that his own authority as king of the Congo was being disregarded by the Portuguese slave merchants, and he shamelessly implored the king of Portugal to help him restore that authority" (p. 97).

In the outcry of Okonta, there is a sense of many lost opportunities within the African intellectual elite who could have helped trigger African material and technological progress that would lead to meaningful freedom. Okonta's argument echoes the book *African Freedom: How Africa Responded to Independence*, in which Phyllis Taoua argues that national liberation did not deliver meaningful freedom to African nations. For instance, making ideological comparisons beyond the African context, Okonta describes how Voltaire opposed Rousseau's criticism of European modern civilization defined by material and technological advancement. He praises Marcus Garvey's thought of black liberation through scientific and technological progress as opposed to W.E.B. Du Bois' view that exalted rural African village life free of "inhumanity, superficiality, and moral decadence" (p. 175). Okonta then provides Wole Soyinka's sharp criticism of Negritude philosophers, including Césaire and Senghor, who's cultural and identity theory undermined the intelligence of African people moving toward modern progress.

Okonta's judgment of Africa as a permanent failure, his radical criticism of pan-Africanists, and the African Union that he deems a "confederation of impoverished African nations" (p. 137) carries the risk of Afropessimism. His narrow focus on development by the means of science and technology has somewhat limited his ability to pay a well-deserved tribute to some of the renowned leaders of African economic freedom. These heroes include Sylvanus Olympio of Togo, Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso, and Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, all of whom were targeted and assassinated for their initiatives geared toward African nations economic freedom.

Abou-Bakar Mamah, *Rhodes College*

Benjamin Rubbers and Alessandro Jedlowski (eds). 2019. *Regimes of Responsibility in Africa: Genealogies, Rationalities and Conflicts*. Durham: Duke University Press. 344 pp.

This book encapsulates the formulation of the concept of regimes of responsibility through a number of case studies from different regions of the African continent with an expansive perspective on the explicit political, economic, and social transformations occurring in Africa in recent times.

Chapter one, by Jean François Bayart, takes off from Lonsdale's preoccupation with the transformations of political accountability in African history. Bayart demonstrates how regimes of responsibility in today's Africa can be better understood by applying a Braudelian perspective that brings to light the imbrication of the long, medium, and short durées of precolonial, colonial, and post-colonial African societies. Stylianos Moshonas's chapter two focuses on the practice of invoking 'responsibility' in the relations between the DRC's political elite and the country's external partners with reference to the transitional period between 2003 and 2006. This period paved the way for the presidency's consolidation of power. It also explores the interchange of the issue of 'responsibility' between the government and donors since year 2001.

In chapter three, Rozenn Nakandabo Diallo brings us closer to the life trajectories of those individuals in Mozambique who happen to occupy an intermediate position between African governments and international donors. The high officials find themselves in an ambiguous space whose existence points to the intricate, overlapping nature of regimes of responsibility in today's Africa. Chapter four, Giulia Almagioni and Armando Cutolo as co-authors, focuses on the sphere of the family, and how international organizations' discourses and policies have shaped recent transformations in the conception of responsibility and family care in Côte d'Ivoire. Almagioni and Cutolo discuss how responsibility discourses and practices introduced by international actors and response to neoliberal principles of governing mentality are reframed and reformulated locally. This is done in order to accommodate some specific political factions over others in the context of an intense struggle over the control of the country's economy, territory, and population.

Dinah Rajak's chapter five focuses on health and family care policies through the lens of corporate programs for HIV prevention in South Africa. These are enforced by the mining companies of Anglo American, which reveals their impact on relations between employer and employee. The programs demonstrate "the violence of corporate responsibility as an instrument of benevolent tyranny (or tyrannical benevolence) that enables companies to give and withhold benefits as techniques of control used in undermining worker agency" (p. 134). Chapter six, by Marie Schnitzler, discusses the dynamics taking place within families in order to analyze how people with disabilities and their relatives in the Cape Flats area of Cape Town reinterpret specific welfare programs. It shows how they negotiate their responsibilities within a complex social landscape defined by contradictory claims and expectations from family members and institutions. On the one hand, they have the possibility of receiving a state allowance, which on the other hand raises expectations from family members and generates dependency networks around them.

Chapter seven focuses on the conflicting regimes of responsibility within which people find themselves in the predominantly Pentecostal city of Kinshasa. Here, Katrien Pype places emphasis on the way in which the politics of allocation of responsibility are interposed in the unverifiable processes of Born-again Christians. Her research involved working with the evangelizing television troupe CINARC and one of its television serials to examine the role of confessions, soul healing, and deliverance rituals in the construction of responsible Christians and the depiction of responsibility. Peter Geschiere in chapter eight discusses the equally complex and constantly-transforming regimes of responsibility that are conveyed by witchcraft

imageries and discourses among the Maka of the south-eastern forest region of Cameroon. He provides a detailed, historical analysis of the transformations of local definitions of the 'witch' among them, to highlight the ambivalence of the concept of *djambe* (witchcraft) itself. Roberto Beneduce in chapter nine analyzes the disruptive epistemological force of witchcraft discourses when they enter the territorial commissions and tribunals in charge of evaluating asylum seekers' demands for refugee status in Italy. This chapter acts as a conclusion to the book, producing a meta-commentary on the other chapters, and offering a number of final thoughts about the role of anthropology in contemporary social and political contexts.

In conclusion, each chapter of the book have ending notes, references, and round off with an index. The book examines the discourses and practices of responsibility in nine different settings, which reflect on the broader changes in the regimes of responsibility in which they take part. However, the changes have not affected the continent's different countries, but have contributed to multiplying discourses around responsibility, which have transformed the way in which it is imagined, discussed, and organized in African societies.

Alaba Rotimi Oti, *The Redeemed Christian Bible College (Nigeria)*

Maya Shatzmiller. 2019. *From Berber State to Moroccan Empire: The Glory of Fez Under the Marinids*. Princeton: Marcus Weiner Publishers. 222 pp.

Algerian poet Kateb Yacine's quote goes off like a hand grenade in the introduction of Shatzmiller's book: "They want to depict us as a minority within an Arab people, when in fact it is the Arabs who are a minute minority within us" (p. xv). The theme of the Berbers' quest for identity, dignity, and legitimacy of rule informs each of the book's essays providing an outline of the Moroccan Marinid dynasty (1250-1465 CE).

Although this book consists largely of papers that were written separately, and originally in French, the contours of the history of the Marinid administration emerge clearly in Shatzmiller's work. Missing though is a map, which the next edition should include. The first essay describes the creation of spurious but helpful narratives giving the Berbers Arab origins. It continues to examine the accommodation of the Berbers to the over-arching legal and social structure of Islam, which also related to tensions between the Berber tribes of the countryside and the "refined" Berber urban dwellers. Shatzmiller then proceeds to review the 14th century apogee of the dynasty with the reigns of Abu Said, Abul Hamam (various spellings), and Abu Inan. Those three rulers carried the Marinid banner all the way to Tunis, establishing a Mediterranean-wide presence.

The final essay, which it is not too bold to call ground-breaking (though there are some grammar and punctuation problems, probably casualties of the transition to English), identifies four strengths the Marinid dynasty brought to bear in its efforts to withstand outside pressure and expand its own influence: First and perhaps most importantly, the western Maghreb had a steady population growth surpassing the rest of North Africa (further research establishing this would be helpful, no doubt it will be forthcoming), which assured numbers of troops available to apply a weight in Iberian affairs as well as to march east. Although slavery existed in Morocco, unlike the situation with the Mamluks of Egypt, the survival of the dynasty did not depend on the importation of manpower—quite the opposite in fact. In some of the reigns of

the 14th century, it seems almost like the Marinids sent detachments to Iberia to give the excess manpower something to do ('at least they won't be making trouble around here').

A second strength with far-reaching effects was control and astute use of the gold caravan-routes extending from the sub-Sahara up through Morocco and secondly, to Tunis (the existence of the second route was surely one enticing reason to march east to seize the realm of the Hafsiids). Use of income from the gold caravans facilitated such international game-changers as the renting of an entire fleet of forty ships from the Genoese and the routine use of not a few companies but thousands of "Frankish" cavalry and Iberian archers, who were paid in cash (p. 141). This was a dynasty that in its heyday controlled great wealth. Unfortunately, the steady provision of gold to Spain and Italy provided a boost to the very economies and states which eventually brought military pressure to bear on their North African neighbors.

A third advantage the Marinid dynasty used to good effect was participation in the grain and other trade around the Mediterranean. Although the court's hand in grain and wool trade was inconsistent, the overall trend contributed to the prosperity of the region. Finally, institutional innovations such as increased religious endowments (*waqf*) and the creation of schools (*madressas*) in Fez diluted the influence of the traditional urban elite and assured control by Berber elements and allies.

Marinid nimbleness in the creation of new institutions (*madressas* and *waqf* administrations), use of outsiders within their administrations (Jewish bureaucrats, foreign mercenaries), and shrewd exploitation of gold and other trade propelled their state forward for two centuries. In the end, however, these strengths proved insufficient to enable them to acquire and make use of the technological advantages of the Renaissance. Furthermore, in the 15th century there were increasing pressures from Portugal, Spain, and eventually the Ottomans. Those later interactions must await another book.

Each generation of Berbers must face the challenge of assessing and defining Berber identity, and each generation shall respond to the challenge in its own way. Kateb Yacine's words would not have sounded strange to the Marinids, nor have they lost any relevance today.

Kenneth Meyer, *Western Washington University*

Alexie Tcheuyap and Hervé A. Tchumkam. 2019. *Avoir peur: insécurité et roman en Afrique francophone*. Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval. 306 pp.

Avoir peur is an ambitious study, which addresses literary practices and the "postcolonial condition" in Africa through the examination of the discourse on fear, anguish, and insecurity. Using a large corpus of detective stories and realist novels, the book's main argument is that "security as a form of freedom" and as "a guarantee against threats remains utopian in the African context impeded by the social, political and even cultural order" (p. 3; the translations are the reviewer's). To demonstrate this, Tcheuyap and Tchumkan draw from Frantz Fanon, Giorgio Agamben's "sovereign power" and "state of exception," Achille Mbembe's "necropolitics," and Laurent Jenny's "terror and the signs" among others, to suggest that detective stories and realist novels taken as "sites of terror" (Jenny) provide renewed literary paradigms (p. 11) to understand the evolving relation between life and death on the continent.

Indeed, “crisis” dominates most of the analyses of the narratives, in the form of humanitarian and ecological disasters, wars, migration tragedies, terrorism and radical Islamism, popular justice and the manipulation of the occult (p. 6), to assert that crises have become integral parts of the functioning of the state and even critical to its longevity. The texts examined reveal how the state “creates and perpetuates social fractures” (p. 6), and profit from the establishment of a “state of exception” and a discourse on “security” (p. 11).

The literary corpus involved to investigate these important themes include narratives from North and Sub-Saharan Africa and analyses reveal how African letters have engaged with the “state of crisis,” by tracing the relation between violence and the political since independence and by emphasizing how “fear” and “insecurity” clearly defined the postcolonial period and its literary practices. The book consists of three parts, each with four chapters. While some chapters are dedicated to individual authors such as Moussa Konaté (chapter 2) or Modibo Soungalo Keita (chapter 6), others explore themes, concepts, and symbolic characters that African authors have convoked to engage with and respond to the “state of crisis”: migration, the occult, and the “humanitarian reason” (chapter 3), globalization and pan-africanism (chapter 4), dissidence, family conflict, and violence (chapter 5), fraud, bluff, and madness (chapter 7), gender and death (chapter 8), policing and sycophancy (chapters 9 and 10), and terrorism (chapter 12).

Most chapters combined investigations about realism and the detective novel as a genre considering whether “fear” and “insecurity” have led to the development of specific narrative features. The analysis provides definitions for a “political bildungsroman” (chapter 3), considers “murder as an esthetic category” (chapter 6), and describes the narrative logics of writing about madness (chapter 7). The book closes with an epilogue, which starts with a powerful critique of the silence about the death of writers such as Mongo Béti and Driss Chraïbi, and their subsequent disappearance from the literary landscape. The authors then reflect on what they call the “auctorial insecurity” (p. 269) in African letters, questioning through an analysis of popular genres whether the “popularity of an author” could depend on the genre.

At times, the book exhibits some limitations. While celebrating *à juste titre* the works of Ambroise Kom, Bernard Mouralis, Pius Ngandu Nkashama, and Mildred Mortimer, it is sometimes difficult to find references to additional critics and commentaries on African literature. For instance, this is not the first study on the detective novel or insecurity in African literature. The authors mention several times a special issue of the journal *Notre Librairie* and yet they barely engage with its findings on the detective story. This would have perhaps contributed to better articulate some of the readings of the narratives examined and some of the findings of the book. An additional comment could be made about the absence of references to the “child soldier” in a study on fear, insecurity, violence, and literature. It is also difficult to understand why Moussa Konaté and Williams Sassine have not been included in the epilogue, as the biographies of both authors are indeed central to the argument made. Lastly, the authors sometimes tend to take the selected fictional novels as documents to draw conclusions about contemporary Africa. This is particularly true regarding commentaries made about Malian society and traditions often presented in the study as homogenous and rather stagnant, missing nuances about its evolution.

These limitations aside, the book is a valuable contribution to the discipline and certainly opens avenues for future research in African literatures. The study of North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa literature in conjunction represents an important step to reduce the gap between these two domains of study. The authors show how vibrant the detective novel has become, a development that calls for further examination. By incorporating the works of Moussa Konaté, Williams Sassine, and Modibo Soungalo Keita, writers who are clearly underrepresented in the study of African literatures, Tcheuyap and Tchumka explain the crucial contribution of these stimulating authors to the history of African letters through innovative narrative and generic practices combined with audacious ideologies. The study speaks to contemporary urgencies and uncertainties (as in the chapter dedicated to Islamism and terrorism) and engages with the crucial debate on the Sahelian crisis over the last eight years. The combination of insightful literary analysis, engagement with theory, and openings to relevant new contemporary literary production allows the authors to convincingly demonstrate how African letters consistently engage with some of the ordeals of postcolonial African societies.

Alioune Sow, *University of Florida*

Hedley Twidle. 2019. *Experiments with Truth: Narrative Non-Fiction and the Coming of Democracy in South Africa*. Suffolk: James Currey. 250 pp.

The non-fictions of South Africa's transition emerge from, and are written out of, a historically particular, often densely personal situation. Yet at the same time, they enact a reckoning in language with a bitter and compromised past, drawing its poison, writing it out (p. 224). The author of this book, Hedley Twidle is a writer of narrative non-fiction as well as a literary scholar. *Experiments with Truth* is indeed a familiar terrain for him having specialized in 20th century, Southern African and world literatures. The book focuses on non-fictional form in modern South African literature by considering a fuzzy set of narrative modes involving an aesthetic selection of novels, short-fiction, poetry, and drama. Twidle examines how various non-fiction writer read or misread the literary novel in the 21st century.

The book is composed of ten chapters. In the introduction, Twidle attempts to understand the "surge of narrative energy" surrounding non-fictional modes in a particular time and place. On the other hand, he attempts to avoid an insular approach, as well as the narrative of exceptionalism in which many texts about South Africa's political 'miracle' find themselves implicated (p. 8). Chapter 2 tracks a cluster of figures and events that have remained recalcitrant to now familiar narratives of struggle, liberation, truth, and reconciliation. This chapter concentrates on the story of Demetrios Tsafendas who killed Hendrik Verwoerd — prime minister and architect of apartheid — in 1966. For this Twidle refers to the archive of official documents, myths, and personal reembrace that surrounds Tsafendas. The author here explores artistic responses to the Tsafendas story and tries to find what narrative logics are operating and what are their consequences, along with what cultural forms might be adequate for a life story that is in one sense, useless but at the same time intensely significant and overdetermined (p. 30). By referring to Tsafendas's life, his aim has not been to recover a submerged subaltern history. Rather, he attempted to track different artistic and formal strategies to engage in the

apartheid archive, ranging across the non-fiction/fiction divide. Twidle highlights that these histories do not fit linear and end-stopped plots, thereby remaining outside the liberation movements and from the accounts of anti-apartheid struggles.

In the next chapter the author tracks how the African Resistance Movements (ARM) story reverberates through many literary and cultural texts from the 1960s onwards. Twidle begins by discussing Hugh Lewin's book *Stones Against the Mirror*, a moving confessional tale about a series of betrayals involving members of an obscure whites-only anti-apartheid movement, the ARM, of which Lewin was a prominent member. It focuses on a betrayal by a friend during the struggle and how the betrayal led to Lewin spending seven years in jail under the apartheid laws and which still haunts him. The book also joins several other non-fictional texts that express a post-TRC aesthetic.

The author turns in chapter four to Jacob Dlamini's first book, *Native Nostalgia* (2009) which is about nostalgia, an affliction of the heart that began life as a passing ailment but became an incurable modern condition. The book is an attempt to understand the question of what it means for a black South African to remember his life under apartheid with fondness. Here Jacob Dlamini seeks not only to retrieve memories of the struggle against apartheid – memories that would be quite compatible with the anti-apartheid, post-apartheid national narrative – but also to describe his nostalgia for apartheid itself, including life within the very instruments of the apartheid regime. Twidle then refers to his second book, *Askari, a Story of Collaboration and Betrayal in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle* (2014). The story focuses on Glory Sedibe (aka "Comrade September"), a member of the ANC and its military wing, MK, who was abducted from Swaziland by an apartheid death squad in August 1986, taken across the border to South Africa, and 'turned.' *Askari* fills an important gap in our historical understanding of the struggle. It also raises larger questions about the era of apartheid, its legacies, the significance of the past and memory in South Africa, the role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the complexity of human actions and motivations, the difficulty of seeing or articulating the same, and therefore also often the limitations of the historical record. In this chapter, the author attempts to trace the relationship between (profoundly destructive) betrayal and the kind of (possible generative and productive) betrayals effected by the text in the world.

In the next two chapters there is an attempt to think more deeply about South African biography as a literary and political form. Here the author analyzed two long and controversial post-apartheid works: *No Cold Kitchen: A Biography of Nadine Gordimer* by Ronald Suresh Roberts and *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred* by Mark Gevisser. Twidle argues that anyone turning biographer commits himself to lies, concealment, hypocrisy, flattery, and even to hiding his own lack of understanding for biographical truth is not to be had, and even if it were it could not be used (p. 99). Chapter 7, titled "In Short, there are Problems," focuses on the literary journalism in the postcolony. Here, Twidle discusses Jonny Steinberg's works like *Little Liberia: An African Odyssey in New York City* and *A Man of Good Hope*, which address more geographically dispersed and transnational stories. They also deal with one of the most vexed and defining problems of the 21st century nation-state such as on the question of armed conflict, trauma, and collective memory in Liberia and the Horn of Africa, chronic insecurity and xenophobia. The next chapter focuses more on the immersed rural worlds of *Midlands* and *Three-Letter Plague: A Young Man's Journey Through a Great Epidemic* written by Jonny Steinberg.

The author also discusses the work of other writers such as Adam Ashforth, Dugmore Boetie, Breyten Breytenbach, Liz McGregor, and Charles van Onselen.

Chapter nine, "A New More Honest Code," the title of which represents one of many possible starting points for tackling emergent, re-designed forms of self-expression and truth-telling during a moment of deep political, economic, and epistemic ferment. The chapter consists of a range of memory works and personally inflected critical essays by writers like Panashe Chigumadzi and Thabo Jijana. The author in also discusses *Memoirs of a Born Free* by Malaika wa Azania, which stages the tension between a necessary self-assertiveness (as political tool or posture) and a limiting self-importance (as autobiographical method). The final chapter points out the certain key areas that the author fails to address. For instance, he wanted to explore life writing by women in more detail, particularly the recent wave of radical black feminist autobiography which reflect on inter-generational continuities and tensions within the political family, both literal and figurative.

The absence of a chapter specifically devoted to the question of literary or creative non-fiction is a notable gap. But the book is an interesting scholarly piece consisting of a multi-author collection untended as a comprehensive reference work. Therefore, Twidle's book is an important contribution to the study of literature and democracy.

Deepika Dehiya, *University of Delhi*

Aribidesi Usman and Toyin Falola. 2019. *The Yoruba from Prehistory to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 496 pp.

While Yoruba history and culture in recent times has received much scholarly attention, only a few works have dug into the diversities of a people as has *The Yoruba from Prehistory to the Present*. Authored by Aribidesi Usman and Toyin Falola, this book would appear to have brought fresher insight to understanding the history, culture and sociology of the Yoruba people in Nigeria. As the authors themselves aver, "there are few general volumes portraying the Yoruba's past as a narrative stretching forward from prehistory, long before European contact, through the present day" (p. xvii).

Aside from the introduction, the book is divided into six broad parts, with each part further sub-divided into chapters. In the introductory section, chapter one, the authors provide a general overview of the *raison d'être* behind the book as well as issues addressed in the book. In part one, comprising three chapters (pp. 31-114) with the theme "Long Historical Formation," the authors, deploying largely archaeological evidences, undertake a prehistorical excursion of the Yoruba. As a corollary to the introductory chapter, the authors' arguments would seem to suggest that the people that were later identified as Yoruba by the European missionaries in the 18th century had a history of social formation embedded in migration and wars. The totality of all of these, as the authors affirm across many passages in part one, spurred the emergence of many political states, with the Oyo empire before the 19th century being the most dominant.

The second part of the book consists of two chapters (pp. 117-57). While the first explores the emergence, dominance, and decline in Oyo power prior to the 18th century, the second focuses in the entry of the Yoruba social-political formation into the Atlantic World in the 18th

century. In both chapters, the authors informed the readers about the dynamics that shaped Yoruba politics in the 17th century. In part three, with four chapters (pp. 161-239), the authors' preoccupation was with the exploration of the roles played by wars, trades, Islam, and Christianity in the transformation of Yoruba's socio-political and economic landscape in the 19th century. In the seventh and eight chapters, for instance, the authors, using specific wars as reference points, identified the endogenous and exogenous forces that made wars inevitable among the various Yoruba clans in the 19th century. While berating these forces, the authors would seem not to have lost sight regarding the effects of the slave trade and external religions on the people prior to colonization.

In part four, incorporating three chapters (pp. 244-319), the focus is on Yoruba socio-economic and cultural practices, some of which have snowballed into the contemporary milieu. Deploying a rich array of pictorial evidence, the authors put forth the various cultural features that defined the Yoruba people. In the fifth part, themed "Colonial Yoruba" with two chapters (pp. 323-58), the authors narrate the character of colonial rule in Yorubaland and how the emerging nationalists engaged it. What seems clear from the passages in the two chapters is that the character of colonialism in Yorubaland was not markedly different from those in other jurisdictions within the Nigerian colonial state.

Part six with five chapters, including the conclusion (pp. 361-450), focuses on Yoruba politics, culture, and identity in post-colonial Nigeria. One common theme in all the part six chapters is that the Yoruba have responded in various ways to the changing dynamics of Nigeria's complex society. For instance, the authors demonstrated how perceived marginalization in the country's power structure spurred the emergence of a self-determination group—the Oodua People's Congress.

The Yoruba from Prehistory to the Present has taken Yoruba historiography to the next level of scholarship. The Yoruba, irrespective of where they inhabit, are a highly mobile people with pride in their culture and heritage. This book attempts to explore the background forces that over the centuries shaped such dynamism. In their analysis of the Yoruba in contemporary Nigerian politics, however, the authors did not engage much with the theoretical literature. Engaging such literature extensively would have further strengthened some of the arguments in part six of the book. Notwithstanding, the book is a timely contribution to the literature on Yoruba studies. It should be a worthy reference material for historians, political scientists, sociologist, and non-academicians interested in Yoruba history, culture, society, and politics.

Adeniyi S. Basiru, *University of Lagos*

Olivier Van Beemen. 2019. *Heineken in Africa: A Multinational Unleashed*. London: Hurst & Co. 256 pp.

The rise of Africa has been a popular refrain among those who study the region. Their studies like to foretell virtues of growing spending power that attracts international companies. However, the history of how those companies, owners, and managers, often in the form of multinational corporations, treat the people and their environment is not all together a positive one. Oliver Van Beemen focuses on the history of the Netherland-based

beer company, Heineken, and its long history in Africa. The book is a critical examination of Heineken's dealings in eight African countries: Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Burundi, Congo, Rwanda, and Mozambique. The structure of the book alternates between chapters on specific countries and research on the business practices of Heineken. Beemen is a Dutch investigative journalist, and the work is part exposé and part academic thesis. He brings together fact-based reporting from interviews, newspaper reports, and company documents, combined with academic research to reveal the impact of this multinational on the African continent. This is important because as state donor aid declines, the turn toward big business and international trade intertwined with development has not been sufficiently examined.

Multinationals, such as Heineken, promote a discourse of African development, but practice aggressive market expansion into what they call "the international business world's best kept secret" (p. xi). Beemen details that in the case of Heineken, their success is often at the expense of ordinary citizens and the local businesses of African nations. Many of the governments of Africa are dealing with problems of finance, healthcare, violence, and corruption, but simultaneously subsidize international companies like Heineken. Heineken actively promotes these unbalanced government agreements. Instead of furthering state development, Beemen demonstrates that Heineken contributes to underdevelopment in its narrow focus to ensure profit.

Each chapter makes numerous arguments concerning Heineken's business practices that some may consider questionable. The author presents these examples not as isolated incidents but as a way of doing business on the continent. Early on Heineken is described as having indirectly contributed to the apartheid regime of South Africa: "the company contributed to the regime's fiscal revenue and —according to critics— its international standing" (p. 23). Later in chapter seven, Heineken is shown to be battling for hegemony in South Africa over other more localized beer companies utilizing marketing and ruthless business practices in order to foster dependence on their products among the poor, encouraging them to spend much of their limited income on beer (pp. 91-96). Beemen argues in chapter eight that little effort is made on the part of Heineken to encourage responsible drinking in these contexts. Early on in the book, Beemen uses Ethiopia as an example of how money flows to Heineken in the face of other humanitarian needs. As one banker put it, "we have been given the order to prioritise the needs of beer producers, to the detriment of those who import life-saving medicines" (p. 8).

Furthermore, according to Beemen, Heineken works off questionable connections. In Burundi, for example, they worked closely with the undemocratic government through their direct ties to former President Nkurunziza (pp. 118-19). This is a country that routinely expelled election monitors. Beemen is crafting a presentation of Heineken that indicates they will sell beer at any cost including engaging in political corruption and continuing to work during the presence of human rights abuses. These questionable corporate implications of irresponsibility are described in chapters nine and thirteen on Burundi and Rwanda respectively (pp. 117, 133, 195-215). Beemen lays out a pattern of behavior: "ties with authoritarian regimes to violating advertising codes, from engineering mass redundancies to

pressuring authorities to reduce taxation” (p. 218), all of which harm rather than help the local populace who consume their products.

Beemen’s work provides an important evaluation that needs to be conducted into the business practices of other multinationals operating in Africa. These companies deserve scrutiny as to what role they have played, continue to play, and will play in future development initiatives. *Heineken in Africa* provides a level of scrutiny, but only for one company. There are countless multinationals that are operating in Africa under the pretense of contributing to economic development. Scholars and journalists should view this book as a call to action and corporate responsibility. If Beemen’s account of Heineken is any indication, further investigation and research will reveal the true cost of the international business world’s operations on the continent and throughout emerging markets around the world.

Frederick W. Tillman II, *Kennesaw State University*

Leonardo A. Villalón and Rahmane Idrissa (eds.). 2020. *Democratic Struggle, Institutional Reform, and State Resilience in the African Sahel*. Lanham: Lexington Books. 217 pp.

Democratic Struggle, Institutional Reform, and State Resilience in the African Sahel makes an important contribution to our understanding of democratization struggles and state consolidation in West Africa and fills a great gap in the study of Sahelian countries. Contrary to most of the literature on democratization—which treats democratization as the outcome, or dependent variable—this book analyses how democratization politics have shaped state building and institutional consolidation across the region. It combines a detailed historical analysis of each country with comparative discussions over a conceptual overview and theoretical pointers, analyzing the relationship between institutional reforms, democratization politics, and state resilience in the region.

The book consists of country-specific chapters, bounded by useful comparative discussions by the volume’s editors. Leonardo Villalón’s introductory chapter lays out an overall conceptual framework and highlights the common trends and specificities of the Sahel region and the individual countries within it. The following six chapters discuss, in great empirical and historical detail, the dynamics of institutional consolidation, state-building, and democratization processes in each of six countries, from the struggles over political reform and state control in Mauritania (Zekeria Ould Ahmed Salem, Chapter two) to the politics of constitutional revisions in Senegal (Ismaila Madior Fall, Chapter three), the breakdown of the state in Mali (Moumouni Soumano, Chapter four), the struggle around democratic institutions in Burkina Faso (Augustin Loada, Chapter five), the institutionalization of democratic values and the Republic in the midst of political instability in Niger (Mahaman Tidjani Alou, Chapter six), and the limits of institutional reform in Chad (Lucien Toulou, Chapter seven). Rahmane Idrissa’s conclusion pulls together the different case studies and instigates a theoretical reflection about what this can tell us about institutions and democratization more broadly.

The contributing authors provide a rich account of democratization processes and their impact on the state, put in historical perspective. While each chapter is focused on one specific country, they touch upon many dynamics at play across the West African Sahel (and beyond), such as constitution revision attempts, debates over term-limits, military coups, and political

transitions. Though the “messiness of history” (p. 193) into which the authors delve at times obscures the arguments they are advancing, the rich account that they provide is of great value and the volume’s editors carefully pull together the various threads into a cohesive discussion in the introduction and the conclusion.

A common theme in the book is that of paradox. In Mali, what was arguably the apparent democratic success story glossed over the deep erosion of the state, which all but collapsed in 2012. Deconsolidating revisions of the constitution in Senegal fueled resistance and ultimately had a democratizing effect, leading to “alternance.” The democratic institutions of Burkina Faso created to entrench Blaise Compaoré’s power took a life of their own and provided a roadblock to democratic backsliding, and ultimately led to his demise in the 2014 insurrection. Niger’s stable party system endures despite an extremely unstable regime. These paradoxes are best analyzed in a dialectical manner, laid out by Idrissa in the conclusion. Looking at the struggles over political process and democratic institutions across the region, this book shows that democratization is not a linear process, but one that “will hinge, at every juncture, at results of struggles in the political arena” (p. 193). It helps us understand unexpected outcomes, in the recent past such as the collapse of the Malian state in 2012 or the Burkinabè insurrection in 2014, and ponder the future of democratic institutions in a region where the state is, more than ever, questioned and threatened.

This collection contributes to recent scholarship restoring African institutions as objects worthy of interest and extends the discussion over democratization and state resilience to under-studied countries, particularly in the anglophone literature. It is a timely reading which will provide perspective on recent events and current political dynamics, such as the political transition underway in Mali following the coup of 18 August 2020, or post-insurrection democratic consolidation in Burkina Faso. This book will be of interest to scholars interested in institutions and democratization politics broadly for its conceptual framework and comparative analysis, as well as scholars and practitioners wishing to understand better the individual countries making up the West African Sahel. Importantly, it will also provide a crucial historical and theoretical perspective to analysts and policymakers working on the Sahel and its current “crisis,” who would benefit from this valuable collective endeavor.

Eloïse Bertrand, *University of Warwick*

Brian J. Yates. 2020. *The Other Abyssinians: The Northern Oromo and the Creation of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1913*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press. 236 pp.

Brian J. Yates’s book is an outstanding scholarly contribution on the history of Ethiopia. The volume is structured into five major chapters, excluding preface, introduction, and conclusion. Chapter one provides an analysis on the evolution of the modern Ethiopian state through the continuity of a cultural, linguistic, political, and religious mix among different but related local dynasties, royal houses, and the wider community of lowland and highland Ethiopia. Chapter two is about the position of the House of Wallo and Yeju in the politics of highland Ethiopia from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Accordingly, the rise of Kassa Hailu, the later Tewodros II (1855-68), well highlights the centrality of Wallo province in the politics of Ethiopia

in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Chapter three further imparts the maturity of shared identities of the Oromo of Shawa and that of the Amhara of the same region. The chapter further examines how such shared and intermingled culture and identity of the two communities in the region boosted the continuity of history in reunifying and consolidating Ethiopia in the midst of European colonial aggrandizement on the continent of Africa.

The rise of *Ras* Mikael of Wallo as a regional and national figure, his coalition with emperors such as Yohannes IV (1872-89) and Menilek II (1889-1913) respectively and the short and long-term historical implications for Ethiopia constitute the focus of chapter four. The fifth chapter explores the period of Emperor Menilek II. Accordingly, Ethiopia's relations with adjacent colonial powers are superbly analyzed and historicized.

Brian J. Yates's contribution is truly unique scholarship. His intention to challenge the well-grounded divisive and single lens historical discourse drawn from the colonial mentality about Ethiopia and its people is credible and stimulating. Based on a close scrutiny of internal dynamism, the author interrogates the long-established Eurocentric understanding of Ethiopian history on one hand and that of the relatively recent ethno-nationalist interpretation of the country's past on the other. For the author, the survival of Ethiopia's independence has also been attributed to the combined and shared Ethiopian identity of all diverse communities, such as the likes of the Oromo, Amhara, other linguistic and cultural groups, and Christians and Muslims. The book is full of insights for further academic research especially on ancient and medieval Ethiopia and Africa. It is quite thought-provoking for students and researchers in social sciences and humanities. The study thus admonishes historians and other scholars studying Ethiopia to grapple with the best practices and undertake further investigation in the field. All in all, the book is a must read scholarly contribution for all professionals and the wider public interested in Ethiopian history in order to gain a more nuanced understanding, especially of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

It would be strange for a volume of this scope not to have no some minor flaws. As part of the Eurocentric reading of Ethiopian history, Ethiopia is widely confused with corrupted names such as Abesha or Abyssinia, as opposed to Ethiopia on the ground, which has been different both historically and contemporarily. As the author rightly argues elsewhere, communities in Ethiopia had been diverse but intermingled, shared, and intertwined for millennia. However, the portrayal of Abesha or Abyssinia in literature is ambiguous and full of misconceptions that need thorough research. A scholar needs to see them critically to avoid distortions and misunderstandings surrounded such names.

Ancient and medieval Ethiopia was a political entity believed to hold vast and fluid territory in contrast to the modern state of Ethiopia. In this case, the author's statement "leaders' authority to encompass the largest empire Ethiopia has ever seen" (p. 56) essentially needs revision. In the bibliography section, there needs to be a reconsideration for some minor technicalities. For example, Hussein Ahmed's master's thesis is listed as his PhD dissertation (p. 208). Similarly, Keliklachew Ali's master's thesis is entered as a BA thesis on same page. The father's genealogy of the king maker, *Ras* Ali II (r.1831-1853) is derived from the Yeju House not Mohamedoch (p. 37). He was rather related to the Mohamedoch dynasty in Wallo through his mother's side, Halima Liben, later queen Menen Liben, the wife of Emperor Yohannes III (1841-42). This in fact is correctly noted on page 42. These minor flaws, however, do not take

away the monumental achievement that Brian J. Yate generously provides for those interested in Ethiopian history.

Ebrahim Damtew Alyou, *University of Gondar*