

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Emeka C. Anaedozie. 2019. *Nuwaubian Pan Africanism: Back to our Root*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. 144 pp.**

Emeka C. Anaedozie explores the Pan-Africanist group Nuwaubian Nation with an incisive level of detail and compelling historical contextualization of Black nationalist movements in 1960s, relaying how Nuwaubian Afrocentric philosophy both aligned with and differed from these movements. Anaedozie's book chronicles the mutations of the group's ideology from the 1960s until the 2000s, which entailed combating Eurocentrism through a return to African epistemologies and systems of thought as a means of improving the lives of Black people in the United States. Such goals presented shortcomings and contradictions, however, which Anaedozie discusses but does not fully address while unearthing the intriguing history of the Nuwaubians.

The most thought-provoking instances of Anaedozie's investigation occur when he conveys nuance to his research by exposing some of the group's incoherence. Nuwaubians employed Pan-Africanism to claim independence from Western systems thought (p. 55). As the author points out, Nuwaubians fostered self-affirmation by attempting to recuperate Africa's glorious past and history, evinced in the explanation of their name: "Currently, Nubia is known by its imperially imposed Sudan, which is Arabic for country of blacks. Thus, by referencing 'Nubia' they placed emphasis on purity of African culture prior to debasement via slavery and imperialism" (p. 19). Buttressed by a Pan-Africanist worldview, they based their principles on a reductive idealization of Africa, stripping the continent from its intricate history. Anaedozie adequately highlights this issue when he states that Nuwaubians "minimized the impact and legacy of European (...) colonization" (p.19) and overlooked the role of Arabs as one of the civilizations who enslaved and colonized Africans before Europe. Such instance demonstrates how Anaedozie's study highlights the importance of the group's philosophy in combating systemic racism alongside a disclosure of their problematic stances. In chapter 2, the most balanced and thorough chapter of the book, Anaedozie discusses the concept of Nwaupu, Nuwaubians' emancipatory ideology to accord freedom to Black people by countering negative Eurocentric notions of Black inferiority, which was also inspired by other Black Power movements. Thus, in the 1960s Nuwaubians prioritized secular reason over religious beliefs, since religious dogmas prompted "individuals to trust without proof" (p. 50), according to their leader Malachi York. However, Anaedozie swiftly criticizes Nuwaubians belief in extraterrestrial bodies without any evidence, meaning that they replicated the same problem they contested (p. 50). This chapter adroitly covers Nuwaubians philosophy of Black empowerment, its progress to an Afrocentric theology in the 1980s, and more of their discrepancies in the end of the chapter. For instance, Nuwaubians challenged Christian monotheism because they argued that this word derived from Greek "*mono* which means one and *thethos* or *theos* which stands for theory" (p. 74), but Anaedozie classifies their claim as deceptive, considering that "*Theos* is Greek for God and *mono* stands for one or single" (p. 74). These examples evince Anaedozie's potential to examine with a nuance that does not

undermine his goal of discussing this Pan-Africanist movement that has yet to receive more serious scholarly attention (p. x).

Anaodozie nonetheless shies away from Nuwaubians' problematic views on gender roles and surveillance of women's bodies. Nuwaubians criticized the inherent sexism of European Christianity but denoted a similarly prejudiced stance in their principles by preparing Nuwaubian girls to "provide a supportive environment" for their families (p. 65). Moreover, Nuwaubians instructed men not to pursue romantic relationships with women at parties and clubs (p. 64), implying they were unsuitable for marriage, going to the extent of conceptualizing women that appealed to the male gaze as "female devils" who would lead men to perdition (p. 89). Anaodozie partially acknowledges their deployment of Western patriarchy in chapter 3 and yet does not offer the same degree of nuance when he addresses Nuwaubians' views on African history and culture. Even though Anaodozie claims that chapter 3 would be devoted to examining how Nuwaubians articulated the concepts of race and gender in their society, the author leaves the misogyny that undergirded these gender dynamics mostly unscathed with a somewhat simplistic exposition.

This book offers a concise and well-grounded historical contextualization of Black Nationalist movements, its influence on Nuwaubians, and will be useful for scholars who are interested in the guiding principles as well as the flaws of Pan-Africanism. Throughout its short length, it occasionally repeats the history of the group and Black nationalism unnecessarily, and exemplifies successful separatism by referring to Chinese Americans, a digression which does not fit well with the subject matter. However, these issues do not hamper Emeka C. Anaodozie's efforts to foreground the engrossing development of Nuwaubians and Pan-Africanism as a whole.

Cristovão Nwachukwu, *University of Florida*

**R.A. Joseph Ayee (ed.). 2019. *Politics, Governance, and Development in Ghana*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 339 pp.**

Ghana's complex political history and status as the champion of Africa's nationalism, post-colonial strong state, as well as its recent record of democratic progress since 1992 have been praised on the continent and the international community. On March 6, 2017, Ghana celebrated six decades of independence with euphoria from ordinary Ghanaians on the country's post-colonial journey as an independent state. As part of the celebration to mark this important milestone, *Politics, Governance, and Development in Ghana* was published by some distinguished Ghanaian scholars to reflect on the country's socio-political journey. The volume, edited by the renowned Ghanaian scholar Professor Joseph Ayee, could best be described as a "one-stop book" for scholars, students, policymakers, and others interested in exploring Ghana's political history that covers key themes on politics, governance, and development over the last sixty years. The book's fifteen chapters along with the introduction and conclusion are very well-written with persuasive analyses on Ghana's political history. The introduction summarizes the main arguments of the fifteen chapters and discusses major themes on Ghana's politics as well as the rationale for writing the book. While acknowledging the inability to cover topics on Ghana's legislature, foreign policy, and gender issues, the editor did an excellent job by

examining the categories of the scholarship on Ghana's political history. According to the editor, the scholarship on Ghana's political history since independence can be categorized into four thematic areas of politics, governance, development, and the rule of different regimes (p. xvi). Drawing on his expertise as one of the leading scholars on Ghana's political landscape, Ayee captures the changing trends, sub-themes, and scholars who have written on the four main areas.

Chapter 1 examines the post-colonial state and its relationship with the political class and the citizenry. It provides insights on the prospects/challenges faced by the Ghanaian state in building a strong capacity that would serve as a powerful agency in providing welfare services to Ghanaians. Exploring the social and economic policies from the 1960s to the 1980s, Kwame Ninsin argues that the leading role and prominence of NGOs in providing basic public services the state is expected to provide could be the strongest indictment on the state for its inability to provide services to its citizens (pp. 14-15). Chapters 2, 3, and 4 expand the discourse on the post-colonial state, political/traditional actors, and civil society groups. In chapter 2, for example, the authors examine the complex role of traditional rulers throughout Ghana's political history. Tracing the relationship between chiefs and political actors from the pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial successive governments to the Fourth Republic, the authors provide the intricacies of the relationships that have existed and continue to exist between chiefs and politicians. While acknowledging the important role of chiefs in community/national development, Siaw and Frempong argue that the institution of chieftaincy has also been a major source of instability in communities across the country (pp. 21-37). The theoretical discussion of liberal democracy and the political accountability role of civil society groups in limiting state power examined in chapter 3 is intellectually stimulating. Drawing on the classical ideas of ancient and modern political thinkers, the authors wonder how Ghana could embark on a dependable pathway to democratic development. While recognizing the significance of the country's democratic advancement, the authors caution that Ghana's electoral democracy is not only being threatened by neopatrimonial and other corrupt practices, but the pervasive partisan politicization of all aspects of the Ghanaian society should be concerning to everyone. The authors argue that a radical model of democracy of active participation of the citizenry – which they claim is more harmonious with African traditional views of democracy – should be encouraged. Chapters 4 and 5 expand on the idea of democratic spaces vis-a-vis the role of civil society groups in policy/or regime change in Africa (p. 71) as well as the role of the military in politics. The emphasis in chapter 4 on how civil society groups influenced Ghana's healthcare reform since 1992 is particularly insightful. The overview analysis in chapter 5 of the military's involvement in the politics of Ghana since independence is another useful chapter.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 are slightly different in content, but they have similar themes on transnational actors/policymaking, transnational political activism, and Ghana's relation with external actors. In chapter 6, for example, the author explores the trajectory of Ghana's policy landscape and the role of transnational actors in shaping policy outcomes. Bob-Milliar's excellent piece in chapter 7 provides readers with novel ideas/insights on how transnational political activism in the diaspora is a strong force in shaping Ghana's political discourses, party activities, and political mobilization. Chapter 8 adds a significant dimension to the idea of transnationalism and Ghana-Asia relations. This is another valuable chapter that explores six

decades of Ghana's strategies, challenges, and successes with its Asian counterparts. It is an important area of study given the limited scholarly attention on Ghana-Asia relations. Four chapters (9, 10, 11, and 12) delve into the echelons of the public sector, policymaking, civil service, and decentralization in Ghana. Ayee devoted much of chapter 9 to examine the changing trends in the public sector. While underscoring the sector as a catalyst to Ghana's development, he observes that the public sector has not been able to effectively perform its functions in the delivery of public services to Ghanaians (p. 171). Chapter 10 focuses on the executive dominance of policymaking since Ghana's independence in 1957. The author's argument that the executive branch has dominated the policymaking process regardless of the types of government (democratic and non-democratic) in power is another instructive aspect of the book. Chapter 11 by Ohemeng examines the relationship between political and bureaucratic heads in the civil service. Highlighting problems such as mistrust, over-politicization of the bureaucracy, organizational disloyalty, and high administrative turnovers, Ohemeng observes that the failure of political and bureaucratic heads to understand their roles in public governance might offer a persuasive explanation for the unhealthy conflict between the two key actors in Ghana's civil service (p. 228). Chapter 12 concludes this thematic phase with a discussion of the pitfalls and prospects of decentralization in Ghana. Like other chapters, the historical overview of decentralization programs from 1957 to 2018 is very well-captured in terms of the key actors, changing trends, local dynamics, as well as the gains/deficits of Ghana's decentralization.

The last three chapters (13, 14, and 15) focus on electoral politics, the politics of oil discovery, and Ghana's post-colonial economy. Chapter 13 explores the change and continuity in Ghana's electoral politics by revealing that the country's electoral trajectory has undergone phases of different political systems, intra-party rivalries as well as regional and ethnic voting patterns. The emergence of Ghana as an oil producing country and the debates on whether the new oil wealth might become a blessing or curse for the country is well-articulated in chapter 14. Chapter 15 takes readers on a voyage on Ghana's economic policy in terms of growth indicators, sector reforms, foreign aid, and public debt issues. The editor concludes the book by noting that the various scholarly works in the book show gains and deficits in the Ghanaian political landscape and society since independence in 1957. To Ayee, scholars on Ghana have done well in advancing the general knowledge on Ghana, but more works need to be undertaken to further extend the frontiers of knowledge on Ghanaian politics, governance, and development (p. 326).

There are some drawbacks of the book worth mentioning. It appears that it has limited African-centered concepts and theories although the focus of the book is on the African/Ghanaian agency. Critical efforts need to be made by scholars on Africa, including the reviewer of this book, to move beyond the application of Eurocentric-driven concepts and theories in the study of the African phenomenon. It is also important for African scholars to decolonize our scholarly engagement by making deliberate efforts to develop and integrate African-centered concepts and theories in our scholarly endeavors. Another drawback, as already admitted in the book, is its inability to cover important areas of Ghana's security/foreign policy, women/gender issues, parliament, human rights, and the court system

(judicial politics). Notwithstanding, the book is an excellent work and a great resource on politics, governance, and development in Ghana.

Felix Kumah-Abiwu, *Kent State University*

**Serawit Bekele Debele. 2019. *Locating Politics in Ethiopia's Irreecha Ritual*. Leiden: Brill. 209 pp.**

Promoting decolonising within academia requires increasing the number of voices from the Global South in research and analysis. Debele's research on the political-religious dynamics of Irreecha among the Oromo people is a positive step forward in this endeavor. The book provides a detailed examination of the traditional practices of Irreecha, which can best be described as a traditional holiday of thanksgiving of the Oromo people, and how the current Ethiopian government utilizes the celebrations for its own political, social and development objectives.

Through Ethiopia's recent history, Irreecha has been at best marginally tolerated under the regimes of Haile Selassie and the Marxist government under Mengistu Haile Mariam. Since 1991, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government has been more open to promoting the holiday with the caveat of utilizing it to promote its public policies for development and ethnic federalization. While in the past, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Islamic institutions have been wary of the indigenous holiday thanking spirits, it has been the newfound religious freedom in Ethiopia which has led to evangelical groups condemning Irreecha as a pagan holiday.

Utilizing anthropological ethnographic research methods, the book comprises five primary chapters along with the usual introduction and conclusion chapters. These primary chapters can be divided into two sections that examine Irreecha and the injection of the festival with political practices. The first few chapters, specifically chapters one, "Irreecha at Hora Arsadi," and two, "Oromumma: Re/shaping Discourses," focus on establishing the cultural and historical context of Irreecha among the Oromo population. Within these chapters, government engagement within the festival is rather minimal. The primary focus is explaining the historical and religious importance of the holiday within traditional indigenous beliefs. The following chapters shift the focus away from Irreecha's practices to instead examine the role of the state, under the control of the EPRDF, during the festival. Here we are provided with historical insights on the relationship between the state, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and Islamic institutions with Irreecha.

In these later chapters, specifically chapter five, "Displacing the State," the reader learns about how the EPRDF uses the festival to justify its ethnic federalism policies, illustrate the nation's new religious freedom, as well as to promote economic development by situating Irreecha as a tourist spectacle. While the Ethiopian government perceives itself as more progressive in its promotion of religious freedoms within society than past regimes, the author describes how it abuses religious rights through authoritarian mechanisms such as mass arrests and hijacking of Irreecha's practices to promote its own interest and political security. Illustrations such as signs, stories, songs, and roadside posters are included to provide a more

visual description of how the Ethiopian government injects itself into the festival as well as the reaction of these practices by the Oromo population.

This book will be a great resource for those interested in Irreecha and its role of politics in religious affairs. The book's objective of uncovering how the Ethiopian government utilizes Irreecha to promote its agenda is concentrated only in the last two chapters of the book rather than discussed throughout. Its research methods and analysis will also be beneficial for political anthropologists trying to better understand the role of public policy through its political leaders in society. It will be difficult for it to reach a greater audience, however, as the focus is very specific to the Oromo's religious practice of Irreecha. While it tries to provide a point for greater understanding of Ethiopia's wider context of government relations with society, it does not leave the purview of the Oromo population or provide a more detailed examination of other religious indigenous practices. The lack of greater theoretical analysis or establishing of themes that can be used for comparison makes the book seemingly isolated from other areas of African research for those outside the realm of anthropology. Additionally, it would have been interesting to read more about the author's self-reflection of her identity as both a researcher and a member of the Oromo community.

Despite these problems, the book is a valuable addition to the study of Ethiopia, the practice of Irreecha, and how the Ethiopian government uses the holiday to further its own agenda. It is a critical examination of ethnic federalism through the case study of the Oromo community and its practice of Irreecha that provides valuable insights into how the Ethiopian government is promoting not only religious freedom, tourism, and justification of its policies but also how it engages with Ethiopians.

Jonathan R. Beloff, *School of Oriental and African Studies*

**Toyin Falola, R. Joseph Parrott, and Danielle Porter Sanchez (eds.). 2019. *African Islands: Leading Edges of Empire and Globalization*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press. 442 pp.**

The editors of *African Islands* argue that islands and island chains, like Bioko and Seychelles, often do not receive adequate attention from historians when compared against scholarship that concerns the African mainland. The editors—Toyin Falola, R. Joseph Parrott, and Danielle Porter Sanchez—and authors of the volume seek to recenter African islands from the margins of history and simultaneously to highlight African connections to global networks and flows of people, goods, and ideas. Political expansion, commercial networks, and creole identities precipitated in shared ways on select African islands in comparison against other islands and the African mainland. The chapter contributors demonstrate through well-developed case studies that African islands played unique and essential roles in history.

The volume includes an introduction by the editors and fourteen chapters that investigate one or more of four themes: "Bases for Intervention and Expansion," "Plantation Agriculture and the Reinvention of Island Economies," "Acculturation and Creolization," and "African Island Identity in Continental Context" (pp. 12-28). Thus, select cases address specific settings as they relate to broader intersections of economy and identity, imperialism's influence on political cultures, cosmopolitanism, slavery and later labor migration, or consumer culture. Part 1 of the volume examines particular Atlantic Ocean islands in seven chapters, and Part 2 investigates

Indian Ocean islands in an equal number of chapters. The primary landmasses addressed include the Canaries, São Tomé and Príncipe, Canhabac, Bioko and Annobón, Cabo Verde, Zanzibar, the Mascarenes, Madagascar, Comoros, and Mayotte.

The editors seek patterns of “islandness.” Islands may be “inshore or offshore” (e.g., Mombasa Island and Bioko), in the “foreland” (e.g., the Canaries and Comoros), or in “distant-waters” (e.g., Caribbean islands and Indonesia) (pp. 245-66). Islands are relatively isolated and small (Madagascar is an exception) and they tend to have limited natural resources with sparse human populations. Islands can be held in the mind’s eye and can serve as effective “laboratories” for scholars to query and engage social, economic, and cultural topics and developments through time. Island societies depend on internal and/or external influences linked to other communities and commercial areas defined by their specific settings and shared circumstances. Yet, the character of people and cultures on islands is “fluid.” The editors and authors argue convincingly that islands often had a centripetal effect that drew together and entangled people, goods, and power from both outside and within Africa to islands. The dual instability and porousness of islands meant that islands could be made anew through influences of empire and commerce, which made islands invaluable (pp. 11-12).

*African Islands* suffers shortcomings. The “island” concept deserves a more robust discussion by the editors. In the framework of engaging “islandness,” “islands” also might have been considered as isolated mountain ranges or desert oases, for instance. For a volume guided by a geographical concept (i.e., islands), it is surprising that the editors’ introduction does not detail the character of Africa’s continental shelf, coastlines, and oceanic currents and winds. For much of its history, for instance, Africa’s narrow continental shelf (e.g., in southern Africa and parts of eastern Africa) prohibited deep sea ventures and deep-sea fishing. Such aspects of geography are essential variables important for case-specific and comparative interpretations of resource accessibility and interaction at different scales. Also of concern, chapter cases lack the cross-referencing that would have better supported the volume’s proposed comparative approach to topics such as migration, creolization, empire, and consumer culture. Curiously, the authors almost exclusively highlight cities and towns. Rural settings and communities receive scant attention in the text, as if empire left less of a stamp on hinterlands.

Overall, the volume will inspire critical conversations about African islands and their unique roles in later African and global histories. *African Islands* deserves a place in the libraries of historians, geographers, anthropologists, and those interested in African area studies.

Jonathan R. Walz, *SIT-Graduate Institute*

**Melissa Hackman. 2018. *Desire Work: Ex-Gay and Pentecostal Masculinity in South Africa*. Durham: Duke University Press. 195 pp.**

David Maxwell’s 1999 *Journal of African History* article “Historicizing Christian Independency: The Southern African Pentecostal Movement c. 1908-60” provided a typology of the South African Pentecostal movement. Many other scholars like Allan Anderson, Ogbu Kalu, Ruth Marshal, Afe Adogame, Gaiya Musa, Matthews Ojo, and Paul Gifford, among others, have studied and made a taxonomy of Pentecostal movements and its globalism. What calls our attention to these works is not what they included but what the excluded. Melissa Hackman

includes the voices of the “other” Gay-Masculinity—a categorization of new Pentecostal coping strategies very often condemned and excluded in many studies. She shows that Pentecostal churches like Cape Town’s Healing Revelation Ministries (HRM), begun by Brian, an ex-gay white American, in 1997, instead of condemning homosexuality seeks to find spiritual solutions to the issue.

Hackman undertakes an in-depth participant observation study and places herself between masculinity and feminism to study the issue. She notes, “homosexual behaviors and relationships have a long history in Africa that predates colonialism” (p. 23) but that this relationship was neglected or ignored once the dominant discourse became that of European or white sexuality. The author accordingly painted a picture that white concepts influenced understanding gays in South Africa. HRM is a new attempt to “cure” homosexuality. Although there have been multiple local interventions by various healing sites on the matter of homosexuality, HRM is unique and most of the HRM members had visited other sites for healing before coming to HRM. “They felt that it was only through God’s help that they could achieve new heterosexual masculine selves” (p. 19).

The study begins with a well-crafted story of Adrian and his efforts to transform his sexuality through the HRM, and how men attempted to change their sexual desires. Hackman brilliantly discusses the historical, social, racial, and political context of LGBTI in South Africa in sync with Pentecostalism and its global connectedness. Chapter one begins with the timeline step program and self-work for recovery and self-esteem (spiritual and not religious) method, testimonies, utilizing Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) methods as tools (detailed admission of painful feeling and experience). Examples include the SAA (sex addicts anonymous) where the ex-gay men hope to track their sexual desires and faith-based counseling where psychology is mixed with Christianity in the hope to achieve new heterosexuality (p. 53).

The second chapter illustrates how HRM and other healing sites claimed among other factors that same-sex attraction could be as a result of poor parenting and lack of a father figure, and she shows how HRM provided that father figure by re-fathering those it attracted. God was seen as a safe figure to love and trust (p. 65). Chapter three introduces a rather controversial angle where HRM claimed that the childhood experiences led to same-sex desires and thus opened doors to demonic forces (p. 88) and the struggle to release oneself from this supposedly demonic desire. Demonic possession in unseen worlds in Africa is mostly controversial, more psychological, and a theology used by popular Pentecostal Christianity typical of the HRM typology. The author shows how HRM fought this perceived demonic possession, citing the case of Lettie’s erratic behavior as demonic possession. Using ministry tools such as specific prayers, spiritual mapping of space helped to destroy the demons possessed through sex and also assisted in locating the demonic places and locate and avoid possessed locations. Resorting to such processes are likely one of the reasons the HRM ministry failed.

The fourth chapter examines the approach of mastering romance to move towards heterosexuality, drawing on the story of Tristan and his supportive wife Bianca (p. 115). Masturbation was one of the processes used to master desire for women through pornography, which HRM approved. Dating women was encouraged as a means of mastering heterosexuality, using heterosexual touch, touching women in a sexual manner, as in the case of



Jaco and Yolandi (pp. 132-34). Marriage was the ultimate realization of mastering self-desire, with Frederik and Willa viewed as a success story (pp. 135-38). These case studies show that the HRM was a more psychological healing process than spiritual.

The fifth and final chapter concludes with the death of HRM in 2010. Several factors account for this failure and collapse of the ministry: the return of its founder Brian to the USA; the lack of sufficient finances to run the ministries; a return to gay sexuality by much of the leadership and others; as well as spiritual abuse and manipulation by Brian. The author is emotional about the way Brian handled the HRM, and she acknowledges this (p. 147). HRM presented a mixed bag of frustration, dissatisfaction, and more as it failed. In the end, the HRM ministry failed.

Melissa Hackman's book is a significant contribution to the growing literature on popular religiosity and its dynamics. She opens a new frontier to the discourse around Pentecostalism and gay masculinity, especially in Africa. Her research is very thorough and she paid attention to details, she has offered a new reading to this discourse in South Africa. Her work is a must read. Thus, this book is highly recommended, especially for scholars of religion and the social sciences.

Clifford Terhide Gbasha, *Federal University of Kashere*

**Rahmane Idrissa. 2020. *Historical Dictionary of Niger*. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield. 585 pp.**

Niger Republic is frequently in the news and often for jihadist attacks and its boisterous elections, which is why this fifth edition of the *Historical Dictionary* is timely and relevant. It is a huge and socially complex country with Black African, Arab, and Tuareg as its population, who adhere to various religions, and of course speak multiple languages. The mosaic that is Niger is therefore almost unique in the Sahel. To this potpourri of ethno-linguistics can be added the numerous political tendencies that have developed since the country's First Republic (p. 220), making writing a reference book on the country a hazardous undertaking. Indeed, as I write this review, the country is voting in elections that could usher in the first peaceful handover of power since 1960, meaning that several entries may already be in need of revision!

These hazards notwithstanding, the fifth edition is a superb work of reference. First, entries are more in number than in previous editions. The author has entries on people outside of politics; notably on the lively Niger artistic scene of writers, painters, singers, and diviners, which is hardly known to outsiders. Music stars Saadou Abodan (p. 26), Omara Moctar, 'the Tuareg bard' (p. 351), Moussa Poussi Natama, and Yacouba Moumouni (pp. 352-53); writers like Alfred Dogbe, who can be called Niger's Dambudzo Marechera for his prodigal profligacy; the wasted writer Seydou Mamidou (pp. 334-35); and Hawad, the highly un-Nigerien Niger poet of Tuareg ancestry; film makers, dancers, and press personalities also get fresh mentions. Indeed, this edition is not overly dominated by politicians and politicians or coup-makers and coup-crushers from Hamani Diori to Seyni Kountche and from Ali Saibou to Salou Djibo.

But it must be said that as people in politics frequently make it to the headlines, a work like this must have a heavy dose of politics and politicians. The editor, however, does not give them equal treatment so to speak. For example, the entry on Sawaba leader Djibo Bakary (p. 83)

seems too short judged against his monumental role in liberating Niger from colonial rule, including his brief but brave tenure ‘as vice president of the Executive Council,’ a sort of prime Minister from 1957-1958 (a tenure so extensively written about by Klaas Van Walraven).

This edition is refreshing in that it gives suitable mention of achieving Niger women ranging from the diplomat Aichatou Mingdaoudou (p. 347); the journalist and news reader Mariama Keita, and the Sufi leader Saida Oumoul Khairy Niass. The sad fate of despondent songstress Bouli Kakasi (p.299) shows the fragility of women in a deeply patriarchal society like Niger.

The volume successfully exposes the beauty of Niger. There is more to this country than uranium (pp. 485-87), a very long entry but well deserved noting the heavy dependence of Niger on exports of this strategic mineral; or the mercilessly hot Sahara that covers most of the country. The numerous entries on Niger’s tiny but well accomplished intellectual class, e.g. Boubou Hama (pp. 263-64); Abdou Moumouni Dioffo, the pioneer scholar on solar energy in Africa; and the mathematician Chaibou Abache (p. 21) are particularly refreshing. Regrettably, countries like Niger usually get tagged not with such accomplishments, but by what is negative.

The 5<sup>th</sup> edition does give a unique account and description of the many coups Niger has had since independence. The author has not only given a complete list of them starting from the botched putsch of 1963 (p. 151) to hopefully the last, of February 2010 (p. 155), but also the names of the various juntas that executed and led them and of course, their *dramatis personae*, some of whom—like Amadou Ouarou *dit* Bounkano (p. 381)—have become mythical figures in Niger. Coups beget constitutions. This is nowhere the more so than in Niger. From pages 145 to 148, the author clearly explains the eight Constitutions that have emanated from the four successful coups Niger has endured since 1960. These pages give a good snapshot of the very long struggle for democracy in Niger, usually by a tiny group of dedicated activists, but always under the watchful eye of a vigilant military elite.

All said, the very best of Niger in terms of stunning landscapes, brilliant academics, and men and women of the arts come out in this book. Yet so do the dodgy and the devious, such as the cutthroat jihadists, rebel leaders, and the ever speculative businessmen like Souley Dan Gara (p. 169). What is missing are entries about Niger culinary cultures. When I visit Niamey, for example, the first thing I asked for is a supply of the *clichi*, beef roasted in pepper and cut in shreds, which is a delicacy by all measure. However, I do not intend to allow what is missing to take the shine out of what is present in this dependable and highly engaging reference book on Niger.

Hassoum Ceesay, *University of The Gambia*

**John M. Janzen. 2019. *Health in a Fragile State: Science, Sorcery, and Spirit in the Lower Congo*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 288 pp.**

COVID-19 has placed a heavy burden on health systems around the world. Even the US, the world’s leading economic power, has been struggling to provide universal health care to its citizens and maintain the delivery of routine health services. COVID-19 poses more threats to fragile states in the Middle East and North Africa. In countries such as Afghanistan, Lebanon, Iraq, and even Tunisia, which is commonly celebrated for its post-Arab Spring “success story,”

state authority is particularly weak. In these fragile settings, infectious diseases spread amid critical shortages of medical doctors, hospital beds, and hand-washing facilities as well as a lack of clean water and poor sanitation. John M. Janzen's recent book *Health in a Fragile State: Science, Sorcery, and Spirit in the Lower Congo* thoroughly analyzes this impact of state fragility on public health and health care.

At first glance, the book's major argument that "a fragile state produces fragile health" (p. 3) seems unoriginal. Preeti Patel, Brian Godman, Alexander Finlayson, and others have highlighted that fragile states pose enormous challenges to the health of their people. Nevertheless, Janzen brings thoughtful attention to this thorny question by examining public health and health care following the collapse of the Zairian/Congolese state in the 1980s and 1990s. Based on ample evidence drawn from extensive field research in the Manianga region and various sources, Janzen deftly explores "the range of efforts at maintaining life, addressing disease, and producing and reproducing health" (p. 112) in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The book has three main parts. The first consists of two chapters. It offers interesting background information on the fluctuating population and the disease categories prevailing during the pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial eras. Janzen notes the steady decline in mortality rates in the latter half of the colonial era and the doubling of the population in the postcolonial period (1960-2012). He explains this by the improved maternal and child care, clean water sources, improved sewage facilities, and eradication and reduction of some diseases such as leprosy, smallpox, polio, and sleeping sickness. Janzen clearly identifies a central paradox to the entire volume: the persistence of diseases such as malaria, severe diarrhea, tuberculosis, and severe respiratory infections despite the availability of great knowledge about them, medical supplies and experts, and relative peace in the region (p. 76).

Part Two contains three chapters. Drawing on the concept of social reproduction, Janzen investigates how households, families, clans, institutions, and public health programs contributed to the health of individuals. He highlights the hybrid nature of the various structures that took the "vestigial functions of the state" and their relationship to each other (p. 112). The World Health Organization (WHO) and various NGOs played a prominent role in developing a decentralized health system. Janzen notes the role of regional elites in supporting health and well-being through the Luozi waterworks project of 1993. Interestingly, he emphasizes that the "continuing absence of the state in shaping health and health care" (p. 144) gave birth to a strong local government. He throws light as well on some of the popular understanding of health.

The third part falls into three chapters. It examines the legitimation of power and knowledge in a fragile setting and its impact on combating diseases, especially what Janzen calls the "nine principal diseases" including malaria, typhoid, and tuberculosis (p. 215). The author pays close attention to the ritual of *dumuna* in order to show the connection between this social rite and the production and reproduction of health. Janzen points out also the complementary role of the scientific and the spiritual in the preservation and improvement of health. The final chapter provides an insight into the different disease categories in the Manianga region. It reiterates the book's major argument that although the emerging public health and health care institutions succeeded in the eradication of some diseases, the lack of or the shortcomings of institutional legitimacy led to the persistence of others.

I wish that Janzen would have dealt with the multifarious definitions of the term ‘fragile state,’ which is central to his analysis. There is no denying, however, that the book amply demonstrates the entangled relationship between fragile state and fragile health. It also provides an epidemiological narrative of the diseases that spread in the Manianga region of lower DRC, their causes, methods of transmission, and treatments. In this respect, the book is a valuable resource to medical historians and scholars seeking to better understand the structures and complexity of public health and health care following the collapse of the Congolese/Zairian state in the 1980s and 1990s.

Amina Marzouk Chouchene, *Manouba University*

**John Laband. 2020. *The Land Wars: The Dispossession of the Khoisan and the AmaXhosa in the Cape Colony*. Cape Town: Penguin Random House. 492 pp.**

The broad view, humanity, and style of *The Land Wars* is evident from the opening chapter which positions the author and the reader in a 21st South African century present by evoking the exhumation of the body of Paramount Sandile of the AmaXhosa (1820-1878) on a remote Eastern Cape farm in 2005. While the exhumation disproved the legend that Sandile had been decapitated and his head taken as a trophy to England, the event recalled other atrocities committed during the two centuries of war against the AmaXhosa in the course of which they were dispossessed of their land, their spiritual home, and their way of life was destroyed.

In general outline the wars of colonial expansion and conquest may be familiar to many (the Eastern Cape Frontier Route is becoming a tourist focus), but John Laband’s book should be on the reading list of all South Africans. The century of conflict—of nine ‘flare-ups’ which are the focus here—was continuous with that which began with the Khoikhoi-Dutch war of 1659-1660, and both the autochthonous San and the Khoi were caught up in the frontier wars, as were, in addition to the AmaXhosa, the Mfengu, Thembu, Pondo, and other peoples. Dutch protection of a swelling waystation gave way to British, as the Cape grew from an outpost to a colony to a province of empire. The process was exacerbated by both piecemeal and programmatic colonization, by world politics (Britain’s other wars abroad), and by technological change and determining events such as the coming of the 1820 Settlers, the Cattle-Killing, the discovery of diamonds, and British moves towards South African federation. Gallant and initially humane resistance by the African peoples went along with occasional alliance (or alignment) with imperial and colonial forces, but the advance of the frontier, from van Riebeeck’s almond hedge to the Fish River, the Kei River and beyond, was inexorable.

Nonetheless, there is a story to be told. It involves many people, some of whom stand out as individuals (not always to their credit), and people whose ways of life may be easily forgotten now. Their battles were fought with particular tactics in particular landscapes at particular seasons. To all these details, John Laband’s meticulous but imaginative narrative is grippingly attentive. He is sympathetic and fair to all, informative about weaponry, military practice, the African and the settler economies, able to capture in a few strokes the dimensions of character and circumstance that may determine history.

In the nineteenth century, the British called the Cape colonial wars by the opprobrious term “Kaffir Wars.” Some historians invoke rather “the Wars of Dispossession and Resistance in the

Eastern Cape" or "the Cape–Xhosa Wars." John Laband refers to "the 'Cape Frontier Wars' because the indicative term 'frontier' is central to [his] interpretative approach." For the colonial and military authorities, the frontier became an absolute boundary, protecting "the vulnerable, thinly settled colonial population" and excluding the Xhosa, increasingly seen as "irredeemably savage." Humanitarians and missionaries saw the frontier as a zone of assimilation in which the Xhosa would gradually be culturally assimilated. The settlers, both fearing and trading with the Xhosa, needing their labor, "perennially sought to extend the limits of settlement eastwards for their own material advantage, while denying any Xhosa movement westward." Together with "frontier" the other key themes of war here are "dispossession" and "land." *The Land Wars* reminds us that ruthless imperial appropriation of colonized land and peoples is a world-wide phenomenon (e.g. see Danny Keenan's recent work on New Zealand's land wars).

As John Laband says, this story from the South African past reminds us that "The ownership of land...remains as much an emotive as a material issue." The 18<sup>th</sup> amendment to the South African Constitution, passed in 2019, justifies accelerated land reform on the grounds of "the historic wrongs caused by the arbitrary dispossession of land." John Laband warns against "the state's comprehensive confiscation of all privately owned land as has been carried through by Marxist regimes and which remains the aim of the EFF." But the questions of how the land is possessed (and is to be possessed), how else peoples and societies have been dispossessed, remain. The traditional societies of Southern Africa would not have accepted the concept of private, exclusively individual, ownership of land. As this powerfully moving and eloquent book suggests, land reform in South Africa may well involve wider social change than re-allocation of land.

Tony Voss, *Independent Scholar (Sydney)*

**Peter Martell. 2019. *First Raise a Flag: How Sudan Won the Longest War but Lost the Peace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 320 pp.**

On July 9th, 2011, South Sudan hoisted its flag amidst wild celebrations. Africa's largest country was splitting into two, and the South Sudanese people were tasting freedom for the first time in their history. The raising of the flag in Juba ended more than two decades of a civil war that had claimed millions of lives. Yet the frenzy of independence would not last forever. To the disappointment of many, South Sudan descended into another deadly civil war about two years later. Peter Martell's *First Raise a Flag, How South Sudan Won the Longest War but Lost the Peace* explains why.

Martell's work is an exposition on how the pursuit of nationhood and statehood became a struggle for survival. He writes that "beneath the rhetoric of democracy, freedom, equality, and justice, there was no social contract between the government and the people" (p. xx). Rather than the consciousness of nationhood and apparatus of statehood, South Sudan has a "simple system where the military men in charge [buy] the loyalties and services they [need] from cash taken from oil." Instead of developing the nation, South Sudanese oil money funds a "brutal capitalist dictatorship of greed where the people's dreams [are] squandered for power" (p. xxi). Ethnic loyalties became means of attaining regime-security at the expense of a consolidated state.

Ten years before independence, Martell had been a BBC correspondent in the Horn of Africa. This account derives from historical archives, eye-witnesses accounts, interviews with foreign agents, ex-British colonial officers, aid workers with colonial attitudes of Africans, and well-meaning citizens caught in the struggle for a better life amidst bleak prospects. Despite his lengthy resume of work in Eastern Africa, Martell is a *Khawaja*, South Sudanese for “foreigner.” While Sudanese elder Joseph Bading allowed him to tell the story to the world (p. xix), *First Raise a Flag* remains an African story told by a British correspondent. Martell has an undoubtable right to compile the narrative, but few Africans would write this type of history. While the focus on civil war is heavy and uncomfortable, the honesty of his report and the credibility of his sources appeal to the reader’s ethos. In *First Raise a Flag*, Martell pens what is perhaps his magna opus in telling and showing why South’s Sudan’s pursuit of statehood, nationhood, and peace descends into conflict.

The narrative of *First Raise a Flag* evokes Adam Hochschild’s *King Leopold’s Ghost*, in which Hochschild explores the greed and savagery of colonial Africa in a manner that is accessible to scholars and the public alike. Another historical journalistic work of equal measure is Peter Gourevitch’s *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families*, which highlighted gruesome details of a family afflicted by the Rwandan genocide. Like these two, *First Raise a Flag* is revelatory, engrossing with insight on Sudan’s racial identity crisis, and unflinching in energy and elegy.

Martell’s retelling of South Sudanese and, by extension, Sudanese history, reads like a complex novel because of its character expositions. He also tells alternative narratives that go-between time and space contrasting the past and present versus space and time. He navigates Sudan, Europe, and the Middle East, and the United States tracking down key actors while grounding their accounts to events as far back as the time Anglo-Egyptian rule. In Sudan, southerners developed a shared identity from centuries of war, slavery, and violence by defying the outsiders who committed ills (p. 10). Yet their oppositional identity was not salient enough to create a nation. When the war for independence was at its cusp, fissures in ethnic identities emerged, and the political class began to scramble for power. As self-rule approached in 2005, tensions arose. Cattle rustling, sponsored and aided by enemies and local elites, became commonplace. The guns that had won the war on freedom now turned on the people they had helped. According to Martell, the “bond was based more on what South Sudan was not—its enemies—than what it was, its people. Not Arab was useful for recruitment in the liberation war, but it was a thin and dangerous bond to unite a new nation” (p. 162).

The crux of Martell’s *First Raise a Flag* is that South Sudan was set to fail. Everyone pretended that South Sudan would be an exceptional democratic experiment. There was ample evidence, however, that the country was hardly ready for independence and self-rule (p. 4). The desired outcome was simply not feasible because South Sudan lacked the expertise, structure, nationhood, and resilience necessary for independence. The country’s leaders were victims of war and inhuman treatment who had never witnessed better governance. In South Sudan, it paid to become a rebel and claim a spot in the “big tent” (p. 187). Corruption in Sudan is a function of history in which collective traumas pass through centuries of brutalization and neglect. South Sudan’s journey as a nation will be facilitated by the exuberant energy of ordinary folk, the hopefulness of children, and the bravery of citizens. Despite Martell’s

commitment to South Sudan, a better future will not be the work of outsiders but the voices of indigenes about their stories and aspirations. *First Raise a Flag*, adds to the count of African stories told by foreigners.

Cliff (Ubba) Koderu, *Florida International University*

**Mildred P. Mortimer. 2018. *Women Fight, Women Write: Texts on the Algerian War*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press. 284 pp.**

This hefty volume is a thick description of recasting women's history of war and is a proof of their valor and heroism. The aptly titled *Women Fight, Women Write* decolonizes the dominant discourse of age-old patriarchy and proves how women assert their identities through active participation during war and conflict—a role that has historically been overlooked and trampled by powerful male discourses and narratives of bravery.

Mortimer's sociological analysis of novels, documentaries, fiction work, memoirs, and historical accounts of women as active combatants against the French regime in Algeria and during the Algerian war (1954-1962 plus the civil war of the 1990's) show how women participated to liberate their country from the French colonial yoke. The work shows women in the Algerian war of independence by highlighting the writings of Djamila Amrane, Maïssa Bey, Assia Djebar, Yamina Mechakra, and Leïla Sebbar, Zohra Drif and others over five decades from 1962 to 2016. Mortimer puts women as equal liberators of modern Algeria and treats them heroes on par with men—the kind of positioning that women never received despite their active role and contributions. The author has boldly traced Algerian women's accounts of violence experienced and violence perpetrated, along with the narrated war stories of ALN (Armée de Liberation Nationale) women militants.

The book provides a useful primer for both specialists and non-specialists on Algeria's colonial past and maps the usual invisibility of women and their resilience in times of adversity. The author has provided this 360-degree perspective of destructing patriarchal myths by distributing the panorama between various writers who had covered the role of women in different capacities during the war and aftermath through women's war narratives which are powerfully telling, deeply sensitive, and widely varied in their themes. For example, there are the lesser-known works of Zohra Drif and Safir Lavalette. The author has successfully combined depth with breadth with her crisp and dense analysis.

All too often, historical accounts of war chronicle the stories of men and silence women's voices, portraying war and conflict situation purely as a collection of masculine triumphs while women are painted as the victims and passive collateral damage of war. However, Mortimer proves that the Algerian war and Algerian independence have an equally significant female perspective that plainly refutes the conventional gendered binaries and finely portrays women as an equal party to Algerian freedom and Algerian history.

Mortimer's work deserves serious recognition in the literature of conflict and war writings because it lucidly brings forth women's lived realities amid patriarchal power. It also portrays women's disappointments, losses, and achievements. Her writing style is not loud and proclamatory, but her narratives are about sensitive people especially women struggling with revealing their inner selves to mark and retain their visibility in today's world of gender bias

and dominant male discourses. These stories are capable of touching the life of many women today who are working, writing, and even reporting in such perilous contexts. Her tracing of women's fight to write and to become the chronicler of their own history gives a strong boost to feminist scholarship that proposes the need for rewriting history from a gender-neutral perspective.

The noticeable thing is that these narratives are very easy to read and the worlds they describe even exist today, given the scores of conflicts across all continents. Her work is an effort towards an unmarked anticipation of a better world for women through collective and intellectual struggles against the existing and colonial order as well. She talks about recognition of women heroes, women's identity, and women's demand and resilience for dignity and space in a male dominant discourse of war and colonialism. She talks as well of the role of women both individually and collectively in writing the social history of the violence perpetrated by the French colonial regime and presents a crisp report of women's struggle, trauma, suffering, and their role in the holistic conflict situation. She bursts the historical myth of women having no role in war situations by bringing forth such chronicles and memories.

Even if one does not agree with all the arguments and conclusions Mortimer makes, the book provides a satisfying sense of having looked at colonial Algeria's unsung women writers as fighters. The book is an excellent compilation of gender and conflict literature, the sociology of women and media in conflict zones, and colonial and patriarchal challenges to women writers, along with excellent footnotes and references. This book should find a place in every gender studies library and sociology and media centers across the globe. Given its thematic arrangement and discourses brought forth, the work becomes a compulsive read for all serious students of social sciences.

Adfer Rashid Shah, *Jamia Millia Islamia University*

**Iva Peša. 2019. *Roads through Mwinilunga: A History of Social Change in Northwest Zambia*. Leiden: Brill Publishers. 429 pp.**

Narratives about capitalist development have remained curiously stable over the past 150 years. Colonialist assumptions about tradition and modernity have fluently given way to notions of poverty and wealth, underdevelopment and development, subsistence and market, kinship and statehood, and stagnation and progress. Such binaries and an implicit assumption of linearity still structure our thinking about the world. Coupled with the persistently patchy knowledge of African contexts and localities, such modernization narratives provide the background against which Iva Peša's book offers several tremendously valuable contributions. In *Roads through Mwinilunga*, Peša provides a nuanced and empirically rich analysis of change and continuity from the pre-colonial, to the colonial, and post-colonial periods that powerfully unsettles many established assumptions.

Focusing on processes of production, mobility, consumption, and social relationships between 1870 and 1970, Peša investigates historical dynamics in one specific locality to highlight their global embeddedness while paying attention to local interpretations and meanings. Substantial changes brought about by colonial rule, the spread of capitalism, and post-independence nation building are shown to having always been appropriated, made sense of,



and reconciliated locally, leading to the simultaneity of the past and the present. For her account, Peša draws on in-depth empirical field research that enabled her to make sense of existing anthropological works and historical sources. The collection and condensation of diverse materials in themselves constitute a huge treasure for anyone interested in Zambia and the region.

The book begins with a sketch of conventional assumptions about linear change as held by colonizers, social scientists during colonialism, contemporary academics and policymakers, and not least many ordinary Zambians themselves. Thereafter, it first provides its own comprehensive overview of developments in Mwinilunga between the 1750s and 1970s and then goes into depth with regards to four overall spheres—production, mobility, consumption, social relationships—to examine to what extent the conventional metanarratives hold. Throughout her account, Peša pays central attention to the perspective of the people in Mwinilunga, not usually authors of their own history, thereby accentuating their agency instead of portraying them merely as recipients of change set in motion elsewhere. The book makes several substantial contributions. Speaking as a political scientist, I will mention three that I have found particularly insightful, but there are many more.

One of the dichotomies questioned in this book is the distinction between pre-capitalist subsistence and capitalist market production. Rather than assuming the need to move from the former to the latter during “development,” Peša shows that agricultural producers have always used a common sensical combination of economic calculation, environmental concerns, and social norms to combine cash and food crop production—before, during, and after the colonial period. Especially the traditional cultivation of cassava ensured a degree of self-sufficiency that enabled the deliberate response to new market opportunities and government policies in the first place (pp. 158-60). Not least in face of the various crises inherent in our current global food system, such context sensitive knowledge, enabling a smart combination of local and regional opportunities, is in dire need of preservation, and not just a relic of a bygone era.

Mobility, too, has occupied a central place in narratives about social change, with a tendency for either-or interpretations. From a positive perspective, urbanization has been associated with developmental progress; from a critical perspective, enforced labor migration during the colonial era has been associated with rural decay and rupture. Peša straddles such binary conceptions by highlighting how movement across and within borders has always been consciously utilized by the residents of Mwinilunga with the aim of seizing (temporary) economic opportunities, thereby contributing to identity formation, integrating rural and urban places, and ultimately enabling individual and collective “self-realisation” (p. 224). While certainly influenced by state policies, residents of Mwinilunga made their own analyses of expected costs and benefits, independently of changing conceptions of how boundaries and belonging should be organized.

Equally complex is the story that Peša tells about so-called traditional authorities. Village headmen and chiefs still play crucial intermediary roles between localities, national policies, regional and international structures, and they have done so in varying ways throughout different historical eras. Here, the blurring between change and continuity becomes especially visible as they constitute a long-entrenched institution, which, while undergoing constant changes, all the while continued to realize collective norms and shape societal meanings. Those

contextually grown meanings, it becomes clear, always impact the ways in which changes are appropriated, communicated, and navigated. To trace the continuities of collective meaning must hence be a crucial part of social analyses.

Overall, how we write history matters not only for understanding the past but also for our interpretation of the present, and for formulating visions for the future. This book succeeds in paying tribute to the complexities that are inherent in any place's history; it offers new conceptual frameworks, and all the while makes central the perspectives of those whose history is being told. It thereby not only contributes to our understanding of Northwest Zambia but demonstrates how fruitful and important it still is to carefully uncover long-term social processes from within rather than prematurely buying into conventional narratives about social change.

Anna Wolkenhauer, *University of Bremen*

**Ramzi Rouighi. 2019. *Inventing the Berbers: History and Ideology in the Maghrib*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 270 pp.**

"Berbers, Maghrib: the people, their country. Everybody knows that, and that is what everybody knows" (p. 1). However, Ramzi Rouighi (currently Professor of Middle East Studies and History at the University of Southern California) argues this has not always been the case. Indeed, no one was a Berber in northwest Africa before the seventh century. The first time anyone thought that the inhabitants of northwest Africa belonged together or represented a single unit was in Arabic. Consequently, the book examines "Berberization," or how "the Arabs began to populate their Maghrib with Berbers" (p. 2) from the seventh century to the present. This book is neither a history of the Berbers nor a history of what happened to the Berbers. Rather, it is a history of "how it became possible to think that something happened to Berbers in the first place. The only claim this book makes is that the process was and remains historical" (p. 9). This was a very deliberate choice by the author and his analysis of Berberization offers a compelling and necessary discussion of how Berber emerged as a distinct category and how different groups, for over a millennium, have imagined and portrayed the Berbers.

*Inventing the Berbers* contains three parts, each containing two chapters. Part I, "Medieval Origins," closely examines Arabic sources on the Berbers. Prior to the Arab conquests, political conditions in northwest Africa meant that inhabitants of this region were hardly a single people with a common ancestry and past. Nevertheless, as Rouighi argues, "starting with zero Berbers in northwest Africa, Arabic authors gradually populated the region they called the Maghrib with Berbers. They did not do so instantly or uniformly, but after a few centuries, there was no doubt that there had always been Berbers in the Maghrib" (p. 15). Thus, within two centuries, "a historically new category, Berber came to describe a wide range of groups and individuals who did not imagine belonging together" (p. 44). Indeed, as Rouighi wryly observes, "the category Berber was like a ghost haunting the lives of people in the Maghrib. For a long time, most of them did not even realize it" p. (45). Part II, "Genealogy and Homeland," continues analyzing the development of two central ideas—the Berbers as a people and the Maghrib as their homeland—and focuses on Ibn Khaldūn's *Kitāb al'ibar*. Khaldūn contributed to Berberization "a systematic organization of the past in genealogical terms, which, for the

Maghrib, meant a history of the Arabs and Berbers who founded notable dynasties" (p. 78). The chronological period covered by this book reinforces the important point that Berberization was not a short process and that these ideas took centuries to form.

Part III, "Modern Medieval Berbers," examines Berberization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the nineteenth century, a modern form of Berberization emerged that was "grounded firmly in the realities of French colonialism in Algeria" (p. 135). The translation and modernization of Ibn Khaldūn's work had major implications for Berberization. As Rouighi contends, "modern French colonial Berberization was implemented through a Khaldunization of the terms of knowledge on the Maghrib" (p. 135). William McGuckin de Slane's *Historie des Berbères* (four volumes, 1852-56) introduced new ideas about the Berbers that went beyond Khaldūn. Specifically, de Slane understood the Berbers as a race. It is important to note that his text quickly became the principal reference for anyone working on the medieval Maghrib and that many scholars accepted his ideas. Rouighi concludes by examining a century of historiography on the medieval Maghrib. "Rather than build on their awareness of the category's medieval origins, and develop a systematic rejection of anachronism," he contends, "medievalists have tended to maintain the status quo" (p. 190).

*Inventing the Berbers* successfully establishes Berberization as an object of historical study, one of the central objectives of the book. Rouighi skillfully demonstrates not only that Berberization has been hidden in plain sight, but also that the work of Berberization occurred for centuries and involved a broad array of scholars and intellectuals. This well-researched and engagingly written book will appeal to anyone interested in medieval history, African history, Middle Eastern History, the history of empire and colonialism, and historical methods.

Evan C. Rothera, *University of Arkansas – Fort Smith*

**Max Siollun. 2019. *Nigeria's Soldiers of Fortune: The Abacha and Obasanjo Years*. London: Hurst. 325 pp.**

In this excellent sequel to his previous work, Max Siollun examines the chaotic and violent decade from 1993 to 2003 in Nigeria's history and reveals the various power struggles and political transitions between three central figures of this important era: Moshood Abiola, General Sani Abacha, and General Olusegun Obasanjo. Readers interested in Nigeria's military, the country's complicated politics, and the important yet oftentimes fraught relationship between the two will find much to glean from this superbly nuanced and lively telling of a pivotal moment in Nigeria's difficult past. This book builds upon the solid foundation of Siollun's two prior masterpieces on this topic: *Oil, Politics, and Violence: Nigeria's Military Coup Culture: 1966–1976* (2009) and *Soldiers of Fortune: A History of Nigeria: 1983–1993* (2013). This current volume carries the complex story of the ebb and flow of military rule in Nigeria forward from 1993 to 2003.

In 1993, southerner Moshood Abiola prevailed in Nigeria's presidential election. In response, a northern-led military government voided the outcome, thereby inaugurating a most critical epoch in Nigeria's history. Siollun's subject, however, is much more than just this one election, its problematic aftermath, or even this decade as a whole. Instead, he delivers many valuable insights about far broader topics, including the military's role in post-colonial Nigeria,

the intricate nature of Nigeria's politics, the problematic influence of military rule in the country's history, and indeed the essence of civil-military relations in a country where for better and for worse the military has at times commanded and at other moments commandeered tremendous authority. Siollun's purpose is two-fold. First, the author strives to highlight the vast sway that Nigeria's military has held on the country, continuing and reinforcing themes from his earlier essential books. Siollun persuasively contends, "Nigeria's military has altered and influenced the country's development and history more than any other institution." Second, the author seeks to dispute traditional narratives portraying this particular era from 1993 to 2003 as "a dark age for Nigeria," instead characterizing this time period as a "transformational, watershed era" (p. xiv).

Siollun explores the foremost developments of this age through the prism of three major characters who all played vital parts in the resulting drama: Moshood Abiola, General Sani Abacha, and General Olusegun Obasanjo. Through their interconnected experiences, Siollun brings to life the main challenges and opportunities present throughout this momentous decade. In doing so, the author supports his narrative with exhaustive research. Throughout his extensive notes, Siollun leverages a wide array of government documents, personal letters, academic books, magazines, and newspapers. Especially valuable are the author's personal interviews with key authorities and primary participants providing insights into this era, including Dr. Suleiman Wali, Major-General Rabiu Aliyu, Major General Ishola Williams, Major Aloysius Akpuaka, Lieutenant Boniface Ikejiofor, and Kayode Ogundamisi, among others. Siollun organizes his book into twenty relatively short chapters. As an added bonus, he provides several useful appendices that chart the relevant timelines, various leaders, coup sentences, and forced retirements associated with his study. The deft arrangement of this book combines with Siollun's engaging writing and astute perspective to bring the story to life through the personas of Abiola, Abacha, and Obasanjo, while also providing larger insights in Nigeria's past and the troubled role that the military has played in it. Siollun wryly concludes, "Perhaps the military's greatest contribution to Nigeria's democracy was to rule long and badly enough to thoroughly ruin its reputation, and disabuse the public from considering it as an alternative government to civilians" (p. 266). Indeed.

*Nigeria's Soldiers of Fortune: The Abacha and Obasanjo Years* further reinforces Max Siollun's place as one of the leading historians of Nigeria's military. This well written and cogently argued book is brimming with valuable acumens into politics, and indeed, civil-military relations in post-independence Nigeria and thoroughly explores a pivotal decade fraught with both peril and opportunity for the country. Students, scholars, and general readers interested in Nigeria's knotty association with military rule will greatly benefit from reading it. It should be required reading for anyone with a desire to understand Nigeria's recurring periods of military rule and their profound consequences and meaningful implications that still resonate today.

William A. Taylor, *Angelo State University*

**Victoria Ellen Smith (ed). 2018. *Voices of Ghana: Literary Contributions to the Ghana Broadcasting System 1955-57*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Suffolk: James Currey. 276 pp.**

This book is an anthology of poems, short stories, play scripts, and other literary works, which was edited by BBC General Overseas Service producer Henry Swanzy and published in 1958 to celebrate Ghana's independence. V.E. Smith edited and revised this second edition after nine years of quality research, to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the original anthology. With a critical introduction and footnotes, Smith added value, authenticity, timeliness, and quality to this revised edition of the anthology.

The book has a critical introduction and two main parts (the Countryside and the Town). The introduction explains how colonial administrators established radio as an indirect administrative instrument designed to impose order on the colonies. Upon independence, however, the Ghana broadcasting system took advantage of the people's interest in radio to change its purpose from a political tool to an indigenized medium. The book explains that the broadcasting commission encouraged use of indigenous languages and idioms to capture the local audience's attention through music and storytelling. Consequently, Ghanaian indigenous creative writers and media practitioners utilized culturally-bound and deeply-rooted oral traditions to create an independent literary network. Moreover, it highlights foreign missionaries' pioneering role in Ghana's literature system. It explains that Ghana's literary development started in 1763 when 500 Fante words were consigned to writing by Rev. W.J. Muller. The book also insinuates that the missionaries played active roles in establishing African literature because it was an essential tool for their religious enterprise.

The first part of the book, "The Countryside," focuses on rural Ghanaian communication cultures and interactions with the Ghana broadcasting system. Emphasis on Ghana's main languages became the six languages of Radio Ghana: Akan (Twi and Fante), Ewe, Ga-Adangme, Dagbani, and Hausa. The drum was one of the indigenous communication media the book showcased. For example, in Nketia's poem "the poetry of drums," the book portrays the drum as 'vehicle of language' in public art in Africa. However, it cautions that drums are not to compete with human speech but to complement it. The book explains that the drum has other communication functions among Ghana's indigenous populace aside its entertainment roles. For instance, they use it to announce the passage rights (birth, puberty, marriage, and death). Similarly, the rural dwellers use it to reveal emergency news like an outbreak of war or fire and a search party to find a lost community member.

The second part ("The Town") discusses how the Ghana broadcasting system communicated with the urban publics. Prominent among the broadcasted stories were: "The Literary Society," a play by Henry Ofori that captures intercultural difficulties in a small provincial town, and Peter Kwame's "This is Experience Speaking," a monologue read by Bekoe Mfodwo. Kwame's storytelling skill was brought to bear as for instance when he asserts that "I am a Bachelor of Arts (BA), first-class honours in ancient and modern palmwinology." The hilarious opening had the potential to win the attentions of the varied audience regardless of their educational background. Another story was "Tough Guy in Town" by Cameron Duodu that readily created the setting's mental image. Other stories are "Palm Leaves of Childhood" by Adali-Morty, "The Ghosts" by Kayper-Mensah, and more.

Unarguably, Smith has added some brilliant editorial inputs to this second edition, and that is why it has some edge over the first edition. For instance, she included the new version of *adinkra* symbols of the Akan ethnic group, and she explained their meaning at the bottom of the pages. No doubt, this enabled the book to communicate the messages, proverbs, myths, philosophy, and social values initially composed in the Akan language to the heterogeneous readers. Besides, she added the details of the contributors on the content pages for easy identification. No doubt, her editorial inputs have improved the book's contextual depth, concreteness, conciseness, and clarity. If Africa is to revive its cultural values and participate in its development, then this book should be a readily available resource for policymakers and development stakeholders. It should also appeal to students and scholars in communication fields, especially those in specialties of broadcasting, indigenous development, and applied communications.

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**Lynn Thomas. 2019. *Beneath the Surface: A Transnational History of Skin Lighteners*. Durham: Duke University Press. 352 pp.**

In the introductory chapter of *Beneath the Surface: A Transnational History of Skin Lighteners*, Lynn Thomas asks an important question: “Why would people want to alter the color of their skin?” (p. 3)—thus drawing readers into the realm of skin lighteners to create a sense of empathy and understanding for the consumers of this beauty practice. Thomas illustrates how the year 1652 marks the beginning of colorism in South Africa with the arrival of Dutch colonizers who introduced the indigenous population to new “bodily practices and politics” (p. 8) which allowed skin lightening practices to take root in South Africa. *Beneath the Surface* is a comprehensive study that focuses on how Western beauty ideals have negatively impacted those who were under colonial rule. Thomas specifically demonstrates how skin lightening became a commercial success in South Africa and how consumers were chasing the happiness and prosperity they believed would come with a lighter skin color. This book also discusses how beauty and experiences of skin color have been influenced by histories of slavery, colonialism, and segregation. Thomas argues how skin color is a distinctive marker of racial distinction as “pale skin color [was paired] with beauty, intelligence, and power while casting melanin-rich hues as the embodiment of ugliness, inferiority, and abjection” (p. 8). In apartheid South Africa “skin color increasingly became a defining feature of status and respectability” (p. 37).

*Beneath the Surface* is effectively split into two halves: the first half analyses how European body and beauty practices and social class influenced South Africans and how those practices were also used to define feminine beauty and racial responsibility. African beauty practices—such as decorative and protective body smearing/painting was denigrated as “barbaric” and “backward” (p. 44), thus influencing Africans to adopt European skin whitening and lightening practices. The second half of the book analyses what transpired after South Africa became a popular and well-known market for skin lighteners and also addresses the rising concerns of this beauty practice. During apartheid skin lightening was used to reclassify Africans in order for them to fit into “light skin privilege”—it became a means to improve black people’s

appearances. Thomas also draws an interesting parallel by showing how beauty was increasingly associated with white skin. Advertisements in the media ensured that skin lighteners became a commodity in black households; the pale black beauty became a key element of visual culture. However, mercury—and later hydroquinone—was one of the key ingredients of skin lighteners despite several warnings of their negative effects on consumer's health (one of the long-term effects are kidney damage and skin issues). Even though this beauty practice was banned in South Africa during the 1990s, products were illegally manufactured and then smuggled into South Africa, thus ensuring that consumers could continue to lighten their skin. Thomas addresses all these issues and shows readers the negative impact colonialism has on the self-perception of Africans. Through her book Thomas analyses how African beauty ideals were forsaken for more 'civilized' body practices that gave Africans the impression that they would be able to assimilate with white culture. However, their efforts were met with mockery, hostility, and permanent skin and health damage.

*Beneath the Surface* is an important book which illustrates how white beauty ideals were internalized by people of color and continue to impact their lives. Thomas crucially draws attention to the importance of self-love and acceptance by illustrating how movements like 'Black is Beautiful' teach young women to embrace their skin color and heritage. This book is a great addition to the field of cultural history as it adequately illustrates the meaning of skin color and beauty in the African culture. Through Thomas's work a better understanding of black beauty standards and practices will be achieved as it allows readers to gain a deeper understanding of how past racial conflicts and trauma continue to influence people of color. The author's contention is to illustrate the influence of colonialism across the generations and how those skin prejudices have led to internalized dislike for brown skin as some believe that it hinders success, happiness, and self-love. *Beneath the Surface* shows the effects of skin lightening but also teaches readers to embrace their heritage and skin color—ultimately, self-love is the key to happiness and success.

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**Leena Vastapuu (illustrated by Emmi Nieminen). 2018. *Liberia's Women Veterans: War, Roles and Reintegration*. UK: Zed Books Ltd. 214 pp.**

The book is a major effort to bring to the fore the nature, roles, experiences, and challenges of women veterans during and after the Liberian civil wars of 1989-1997 and 2000-2003, respectively. It contains a well written preface and introduction, five chapters, a conclusion, and an epilogue. It also features illustration at the beginning of each chapter that actively engages the imagination of readers in the realities of Liberia's war veterans during and after the civil wars. The introduction and epilogue provide a brief history and nature of the Liberian crises. The author interrogates the role of women veterans not just in scholarship but as propagated in the movie industry where oftentimes women are portrayed as victims of war rather than as veterans and active combat supporters whose services are invaluable, whether to conventional or unconventional forces in warfare. Vastapuu discusses the roles of women in the different factions of the two Liberian wars whether as child soldiers, fighters, or commanders, covering the nature of recruitment, multidimensional roles, challenges, and other overlapping functions

of women in the wars. She elucidates how as social survivors the girls turned women and veterans were able to navigate their ways, accepting their fate, and surmounting obstacles, including physical and sexual abuse, psychological trauma, stigmatization, injuries, disillusionment, and remarginalization. They did so in a system where the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDRR) programs failed to fully comprehend and address their challenges and general needs, but also within a system of structural failure. Insecurity, endemic corruption, poor governance, political rivalries, police harassment, poor justice system, inequality, poverty, poor infrastructural development, instability, injustice, and lack of proper peace building and rehabilitation among others continue to hamper the aspirations of girls and women (ex-veterans) in their daily struggle as they navigate their rafts to survive the rivers of life (pp 142-66). What is true of Liberia is also true of other countries where civil-war, militancy, insurgency, or terrorism has threatened to tear them apart, and this calls for further studies. Written in prose and drama format, the author provides a captivating and revealing but disturbing reality of women veterans and society in Liberia years after the wars had ended.

Despite a few editorial oversights, the volume is a rich handbook and repository of invaluable information on Liberian women veterans and their experiences, before, during and after warfare. It engages with the accounts of women veterans in the Liberian civil wars and provides deep insight to provide a qualitative study on the subject. Specialists in African and international studies—especially related to peace, conflict, and security—will find the book particularly useful for understanding post-war reconstruction and peace building as well as global peace and security. No doubt, the author has made a meaningful contribution to studies in gender, women, literature and history. The book will also be beneficial to the humanities in general. It is a major contribution to scholarship.

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**Kariamuwelsh, Esailama G. A. Diouf, and Yvonne Daniel (eds.). 2019. *Hot Feet and Social Change: African Dance and Diaspora Communities*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 309 pp.**

In *Hot Feet and Social Change*, editors Kariamuwelsh (Professor Emerita of Dance, Temple University), Esailama G. A. Diouf (Founding Director of Bisemi Foundation Incorporated and San Francisco Foundation Fellow), and Yvonne Daniel (Professor Emerita of Dance and Afro-American Studies, Smith College) compile an intriguing collection of stories about the origins and purposes of African dance, and how it impacts descendants in communities of the African Diaspora throughout the Americas. In the foreword, Thomas F. Defrantz mentions that the UN Declaration of the Decade for People of African descent (2015-2024) served as an additional impetus for the first conference of the Collegium for African Diaspora Dance (CADD) in 2014. The conference brought ongoing research to light and contributed to literary works such as this volume. Defrantz opines that the volume remedies the absence of diasporic accounting of influences and legacies of African dance in the Americas. The twenty contributors focus on African dance, which is presented as an important way of knowing. The genre delves deeply into West and Central African dance forms to capture the spirit and aesthetics which evolved over time and space. The contributors offer theories, concepts, styles, and experiences in



different African dance communities. These outstanding scholars and artists—in a scintillating collection of essays—underscore the expression of African dance as an effective socio-political tool.

Structurally, the book's fourteen chapters are divided into three parts: Part One, "Hot Feet and Local Histories," introduces the origin of the African dream through dance in the Americas, with focus on the United States. Part Two, "The Elders' Work and Words," defines and categorizes African regions, dance traditions and their transference into the diaspora. Part Three, "Perpetual Motion in the Aesthetics of Africa," focuses on how rhythm, movement, improvisation, and performances adapted to local, national, and international stages. There are five chapters that were visually stimulating and thus deserve special mention. These chapters offer information that are further elucidated through the lively photographs of dancers in motion.

Esailama G. A. Diouf's chapter, "SAUCE! Conjuring the African Dream in America through Dance," strongly disagrees with the assumption in the media and among cultural policy makers that African dance is homogeneous. Instead, she posits that dancers and cultural policymakers be made to understand the manifold "spirits" of dance (p. 21). African dance is claimed to be an art form that connects the home continent and diaspora by creating a vine of energy that spiritually stimulates and liberates Africans from the bonds of enslavement, oppression, and impoverishment.

In chapter two, Indira Etwaroo writes about dance movements in New York's Bedford-Stuyvesant. She posits that African dance carried the narratives of African lives on their journey toward freedom. Etwaroo further portrays dance as a tool of community building, which unifies diverse populations in New York. She demonstrates that "At the turn of the twentieth century, six million people of African descent voted with their feet and fled a terrorist South in the United States, migrating to western and northern states" (p. 40). They took their tradition of African dance with them. Etwaroo presents photographs (pp. 45-46) of female and male dancers performing dances in Bedford Stuyvesant. She suggests that the same aesthetic principles found on the continent are also on the streets and in the communities across the world, where the descendants of Africans continue to perform them.

William Serrano-Franklin, uses photographs (pp. 105, 106, 107, 109, 111, 113) to highlight different dances from Central and West Africa. This author claims that these dances are history and musical theater. In another chapter Amaniyea Payne wrote about "Muntu Dance Theatre of Chicago: 1972-2018 and Still Thriving" (pp. 114-22). Payne shows the founder of this dance theater (Alyo Tobert, p. 115) surrounded by Muntu original members. In this chapter Payne also provides pictures of three dances being performed by Muntu dancers: "Kosonde (Balante)" (p. 118), "Manifest" (p. 119), and "No More Trouble" (p. 120). Payne further claims that Muntu Dance Theater perpetuates an awareness, appreciation, and understanding of African dance over the last five decades. Naomi Gedo Johnson Diouf (pp. 166-79) writes from the perspective of an African dance choreographer. In this chapter, Diouf hopes to inspire future generations of choreographers as she claims that African dance is a technique that makes a positive social impact within communities.

One chapter of particular interest to me, as an Afro-Caribbean woman, was that by Yvonne Daniel (pp. 180-202). In "Mentoring Notes on African Diaspora Dance Styles and Continuity"

Daniel suggests a “Dance Continuum” that connected the Caribbean and parts of Latin America as major sites that inform definitions and discussions of African dance in diaspora communities. Daniel also provided maps that charts particular African dance styles from their origins in different African countries to the Americas. These maps are vital to identifying the geographic and cultural connections between Continental Africans and international Africans.

Collectively, the book offers visionary examples of human and community development, in the embodiment of the African spirit through dance in the Americas. Variances and commonalities within the genre from Nigeria, Mali, Ghana, and other countries are explained as having been transported to the United States, the Caribbean, Mexico, and Latin America during the enslavement of Africans. The concept of “diaspora” is given specific and different operational meanings. Additionally, the editors highlight that, “There have been other African diasporas, and all have not been the result of the transatlantic trade in humans” (p. 5). Each author gives his/her experience of African dance’s contribution to the spiritual, social, and political well-being of descendants and their cultural heritage in the Americas.

*Hot Feet and Social Change*, is a strong resource. The collection highlights issues that confront descendants in the diaspora. Unequal power relations, oppression of black bodies, erasure of African cultural identity, poverty, and strained gender relations are addressed through dance narratives. The authors posit African dance as a political apparatus which demonstrates its utility in healing descendants and creating movements for social change. DeFrantz suggests that “Text matters, especially in these times of continued uncertainty for Black people all over the planet” (p. ix). According to the authors, African dance celebrates the past, present, and future of Africans everywhere. The book also identifies numerous dance companies and musicians in the Americas. Unfortunately, no dance notations were included to inform practice. Cultural researchers, anthropologists, choreographers, dance administrators, conflict managers, and enthusiast, can make excellent use of this book.

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