

## BOOK REVIEWS

**An Ansoms, Aymar Nyenyezi Bisoka, and Susan Thomson (eds.). 2021. *Field Research in Africa: The Ethics of Researcher Vulnerabilities*. Rochester: James Currey. 175 pp.**

In the foreword of *Field Research in Africa*, the editors share that the goal of research is to render the world intelligible. All the contributors stick to this theme very effectively as they try to make intelligible the discomfiting and the personally challenging. *Field Research in Africa* is written with clear narration, articulation of deep concepts, and practical considerations for readers.

All eight contributors are brought together from across area studies, religious studies, political science, peace and conflict studies, humanities, and environmental studies. All of these fields are, by their nature, likely to prompt researcher discomfort and challenges, as they deal with conflicts and contested ideas. Moreover, as climate change is expected to exacerbate ethnic and national conflicts, all the contributors are aware that their work will increasingly prompt researcher discomfort over time.

Taking a qualitative approach, the contributors consider the ambiguities and inconsistencies that emerge at all stages of fieldwork, noting that researchers can never be truly separated from the research which they produce. Moreover, researchers cannot be separated from the collection and production of data. The text starts with the recognition that research is a satisfying process—otherwise we probably would not engage in it. Yet at the same time, conducting research leads to a loss of innocence because of its moral dilemmas; it is exacting to be a conscientious researcher.

The book recognizes the emotional effects of field work on not only the researcher, but also associated research participants, intermediaries, gatekeepers, and community members. Therefore, the text's scope encompasses questions about morality and responsibility, as each naturally results in emotional products and experiences. Complicating the analysis and recognition of participants' emotional states is the ethical and ethnological importance of not assuming that we can truly know the emotional states of those we work with. Consequently, the contributors advocate developing emotional intelligence in holistic professionalization.

Contributors are frank about their struggles to bridge public, academic, and private life. They are also honest about the state of higher education and its limited institutional support for researcher and faculty mental health. Communities of care can be very different from one researcher to another. In this way, the idea of the self in research, while hidden and obscured in the world of academic authority, remains centered in *Field Research in Africa*.

The text's chapters progress in a solid logical flow. In the Introduction, the editors address "Fields of Vision, Emotion as Reflexivity." Chapter 1 ("Skin Connections: Negotiating Institutional Ethics alongside Insider Identities") by Gino Vlavonou deals with institutional barriers on clearance. Emery Mushagalusa Mudinga in chapter 2 ("Conducting Sensitive Research 'At Home': A Matter of Responsibility") examines the challenges of engaging with researcher protocols as an insider. In chapter 3 ("A Gendered Research Journey: Ethical Dilemmas of an Algerian Immigrant Recovering the Memory of 'Home'"), Ghaliya N. Djelloul considers identity as a multi-situated factor that requires mindset shifting—an emotionally

taxing experience. Chapter 4 (“Establishing Kinship in Diaspora: Conducting Research among Fellow Congolese Immigrants of Cape Town”) by Rosette Sifa Vuninga offers a case study on navigating status and intersectional identity. Aymar Nyenyezi Bisoka’s chapter 5 (“‘If they find out, we’re dead’: Intermediaries, Self-censorship, and Anxiety in Research as an Outsider-insider”) considers an intimate and emotional case study to discuss how personal tragedy in research can shape individual senses of safety and security. At this point of the text, the reader is concretely “in the field” as they consider practical and reflective considerations of research. Chapter 6 (“Looking Behind the Screen: Ethical Quagmires when Accessing Hidden Discourses”) by An Ansoms moves into the responsibilities of being a researcher in analysis and reflection. Susan Thomson takes a long view approach in chapter 7 (“Scholar-Activist? On Relational Accountability and an Ethic of Dissemination”), sharing that even when research activities are concluded, effective emotion management can have lasting and reverberating impacts on the way we think about ourselves. While emotion can certainly prompt challenges—particularly as it reveals deficiencies and discomforts to us—emotion benefits interdisciplinary work and should be embraced. The editors then pull the chapters together in a conclusion entitled “Theorizing Self as Ethical Research Practice.”

There is no denying that the book itself is heavily emotionally evocative. Contributors are honest, sometimes in raw ways. Readers are rewarded with knowledge and insights into a broad range of methods in compassing critical decolonial, feminist, and interpretive theory. Researchers are given tools with which to think about the politics and ethics of findings and research dissemination long before they conduct field work. Each chapter ends with recommended reading, a particularly useful tool for educators or those seeking to incorporate chapters into course curricula. While some of the stories do not contain explicit recommendations of what the results mean for practice, they do implicitly guide readers in what practices the writer found helpful, and which they would forego again, much in the tradition of local, indigenous, and traditional knowledge. Qualitative researchers and mixed methods researchers will heartily benefit from this book, as it advances the idea that it is commitments that enhance the sense of wonder of discovery in research.

Ellen A. Ahlness. *Education Maqсад (Seattle)*

**Cynthia J. Becker. 2020. *Blackness in Morocco: Gnawa Identity through Music and Visual Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 275 pp.**

Cynthia Becker’s *Blackness in Morocco* examines Gnawa performances as aspects of Gnawa cultural expression. This book is a significant addition to a nascent literature on the culture of the black minority and the question of minority identity in the Maghreb. Becker illustrates the way Blackness has changed into both an identity marker linking Gnawa identity with sub-Saharan origins and a sign of authenticity, especially with the growing commodification of Gnawa culture, namely music. Becker relies on interviews, case studies, inside research, and photography to explore the elements of change and continuity in Gnawa performances and Morocco’s policy vis-a-vis Gnawa, the Black minority, sub-Saharan immigrants, and Sub-Saharan Africa at large. Structurally, *Blackness in Morocco* is focused on Gnawa construction of

identity, Gnawa women, Gnawa performances, spirit possession, Blackness and authenticity, the marketing of Gnawa, and Gnawa musical instruments.

Becker examines in chapters 1 and 2 the way photography helped in the development of Gnawa as a racialized black identity, and, at the same time, the way photography represented black women. She finds that black women were “omitted from the early twentieth century photographic archive in Morocco” (p. 79). Nevertheless, existing evidence shows that dark-skinned women were stereotyped and negatively represented as servants in elite circles. Becker maintains, however, that photography was shunned by Gnawa female performers for reasons pertaining to the desacralization of a sacred spiritual space, while simultaneously driven by a quest for the preservation of the spirit possession experience.

In chapter 3, Becker traces the *Fraja* performances back to Sudan. She argues that *Fraja* performances give space for the representation, construction, and negotiation of racial identities. In this regard, Becker found that these performances reify the experience of displacement by creating the narrative of Sudan as a homeland before enslavement. Becker concludes, however, that this experience of otherness appeals to other audiences especially those on the fringes “who find their struggles reflected within them” (p.121) especially as many of the Gnawa performances showcase, according to Becker, hierarchies within Moroccan society. Chapter 4 considers the way Blackness is used to “claim legitimacy and spiritual power” (p. 126). Becker explores Gnawa performance as a journey that invokes spirits, but concomitantly creates a Gnawa agency that takes these rites, in particular, and Blackness in general, from marginalization and despondency into agency and potency. Becker establishes that the stress on marginalization and otherness has helped the Gnawa spirit possession survive despite the fact that several of these practices continue to be associated with primitiveness, paganism, and animism.

The author deals with the process of cultural marketing of Gnawa performances in chapter 5. She contends that Blackness has become a “source of cultural self-empowerment” (p. 184). In this context, she considers the tension on the control of Zawiya of Sidna Bilal a standing testimony to the way the “commoditisation and festivalization” (p. 184) of culture help in sustaining Gnawa artistic expression. This topic is further elaborated in this final chapter with emphasis on the way *guinbri*, a musical instrument, for too long “a taboo ... associated with Blackness and otherness” (p. 221) has come to be an “expression of Morocco’s African history” (p. 192). Becker maintains that this instrument, and Gnawa music in general, are a challenge both to Middle Eastern and Moroccan music. Nevertheless, she concedes that *guinbri* became associated with marginalization and this explains, according to Becker, the adoption of *guinbri* and Gnawa music in general “to protest and proclaim identity” (p. 221) by those left on the sidelines of the Moroccan society at large, simply because of “its very connection to alterity” (p. 221). The increasing visibility of *guinbri* and Gnawa music in general, Becker concludes, entailed a turn of Moroccan foreign policy towards more integration into Africa, despite the continuation of racist practices in Morocco against immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa.

A minor criticism of this book is that the author overly relies on Bruce Hall’s (2011) *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960* when referring to Islamic law on slavery. Despite this minor reservation, *Blackness in Morocco* is a valuable contribution to the field of

North African studies. This book heralded a shift from the mainstream focus on the Black minority and racism to a focus on culture as means of empowerment.

Mohamed Chamekh, *University of Technology and Applied Sciences (Oman)*

**Ahmed Aboul Gheit. 2020. *Egypt's Foreign Policy in Time of Crisis: My Testimony*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press. 473 pp.**

Ahmed Aboul Gheit was Egypt's minister of foreign affairs 2004-11 during the latter part of Hosni Mubarak's presidency. This memoir provides Gheit's perspective on Egypt's foreign policy decision-making during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Apart from the forward, introduction and conclusion, the volume has thirteen chapters.

The first two chapters are mainly the author's autobiography. Chapter three highlights the diplomatic history of Egypt, especially with the Middle East and Africa. Here Ahmed imparts his personal perspective of Egypt as an important player in the affairs of its neighborhood and the wider world. The fourth chapter concerns developments after the Cold War era, working with the United States of America, and the challenging movements Egypt itself has faced in maintaining its stature as both a Middle Eastern and an African country as well as leader of the Arab world. The diplomatic struggle undertaken by the author and other Egyptian officials to include Egypt in the proposal to be member in the UN Security Council is the subject of chapter five. Chapter six focuses on the Nile River issue, which is priority number one for Egyptian national security. Gheit deals extensively with the unfinished agenda on the justifiable use of the Nile water and diplomatic efforts and negotiations among the various authorities from both the upstream and downstream countries. Chapter seven highlights the author's assessment of the status of Egypt's political and diplomatic role in African affairs, briefly recounting Egyptian government efforts to improve relations with the various states of Africa. The Sudanese civil war and Egyptian concern is extensively covered in chapter eight. Chapter nine focuses on Egypt and the Arab world. The "burden of Egypt" as leader of the Arab world, the unresolved conflicts between Palestine and Israel, Egypt's national interest over the Gulf States, and the author's effort to deal with all these are major issues in this particular chapter.

Chapter ten explores Egypt's relation with the wider Islamic world. Gheit discusses how important it is for Egypt to strengthen its relations with regional powers such as Turkey and Iran as well as more distant Muslim countries such as Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Chapter eleven examines post-Cold War developments, the triumph of western liberal ideology in the globalized world, and this ideology's eventual clash with Islam. The need to moderate all these challenges in local, regional, and international levels is the subject of this chapter. Chapter twelve highlights the challenging and still unsettled peacemaking attempts made by Egypt together with the US regarding political issues in the Middle East. The last chapter recounts the details of the "revolutionary" days of 2011 in Arab world, especially in Egypt that brought about the downfall of Mubarak's regime.

The volume is written from Egyptian nationalist viewpoint. Accordingly, it can be referred to as a ground-breaking personal reflection on Egypt's diplomatic and foreign policy. The book is comprehensive and an in-depth contribution to navigating and understanding the complexities of international politics and diplomatic history from the perspective of a

prominent former Egyptian diplomat. The author also evaluates critically and convincingly why it is important for countries like Egypt to work systematically with all countries and especially with superpowers such as the US. To emphasize this claim, Gheit writes "why didn't the Egyptians and their rulers try to support their ambitious projects through a more profound study and thorough understanding of international developments and conditions?...why did not we seek to ally ourselves with these global sea powers at the beginning of all our geopolitical projects..." (p.20). Furthermore, due to the author's extraordinary concern for his country, he is indeed critical of President Mubarak's reluctance to participate in all meetings of national and international matters, especially concerning Africa and the rest of the world primarily for the benefit of Egypt ( pp. 27, 34, 40). Generally, the volume is indeed full of insights for both academics and statesmen along with a wider set of readers. Moreover, *Egypt's Foreign Policy in Times of Crisis* is an engaging volume and appropriate reading for those interested not only in Egyptian diplomatic and foreign policy but also wanting to understand wider diplomatic issues pertinent to Africa, the Middle East, and indeed the rest of the world.

Ebrahim Damtew Alyou, *University of Gondar*

**Mai Hassan. 2020. *Regime Threats and State Solutions: Bureaucratic Loyalty and Embeddedness in Kenya*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 284 pp.**

The power of African state bureaucracies to support authoritarian regimes is oft referenced, but rarely considered as a subject for research in its own right. *Regime Threats and State Solutions* is a trailblazing overview of the role of state bureaucrats in neutralizing popular and elite threats to Kenyan leaders. Hassan reminds us of a basic fact too often neglected: "States and formal institutions do not act: bureaucrats work through the state to carry out the leader's demands" (p. 3). Rather than simply assume Kenyan leaders exclusively relied on packing bureaucratic posts based on ethnicity (such as Jomo Kenyetta selecting top officials from his own Kikuyu ethnicity), Hassan exploits archival reports, statistical data, and interviews with officials to show how leaders recruited bureaucrats from a wide range of ethnicities while still favoring particular ethnic affiliations.

To judge the interconnected relationships between bureaucrats, the president, and the ruled, Hassan posits a three-sided relationship based on loyalty, embeddedness, and alignment (p. 7). Alignment describes the relationship between a leader and a region based on ethnicity. For example, President Daniel arap Moi relied on the Kalenjin ethnic coalition. By this standard, provinces with few Kalenjin would either be opposed to Moi (misaligned) or neutral (non-aligned). The level of an individual bureaucrat's support from his or her assigned region is defined as embeddedness. Finally, a bureaucrat's relative support or opposition to the leader qualifies as loyalty.

Hassan traces the development of the state administrative bureaucracy from the colonial period through the administration of Mwai Kibaki in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Bureaucrats differed wildly from the local level to the provincial level, even as many saw their careers both as a means of personal enrichment and serving the nation. Rather than dwell on any particular administrator, this study examines them collectively. This approach reveals how bureaucrats distributed patronage (especially through land access) and punished opponents of the regime



over the course of over four decades. While this may hardly seem surprising, Hassan's detailed analysis highlights specific strategies of leaders and bureaucrats in particular administrations. Frequent reshuffling of bureaucrats helped ensure an individual administrator would never develop a power base from which to challenge the president. Although Kenya transitioned from single-party rule to a multi-party liberal democratic model, administrative bureaucrats continued to serve the ruling party. For example, Mwai Kibaki's government pushed for reforms that on the surface sought to depoliticize the administrative bureaucracy. Yet Kibaki and his top officials used the reforms to rid themselves of personnel loyal to the previous government of Daniel arap Moi.

This study is exemplary in how it weaves together interviews with past and current officials with quantitative approaches. Admittedly, this reviewer's lack of mastery of quantitative methods makes it difficult to assess possible weaknesses in Hassan's statistical analysis. However, her transparency about her methodology and her analytical approach would make researchers more versed in quantitative approaches able to judge her arguments. For historians who tend to be skeptical about the reliability of statistics produced by post-colonial African states, Hassan's effectiveness at collecting data on thousands of bureaucrats is a sign that indeed there is reliable numerical data available, such as on the rates of individual bureaucrats being transferred from one post to the next. Just as historians like Nana Osei-Opare have punctured the assumptions of researchers of how African state archives are not particularly accessible, Hassan demonstrates the richness of post-independence government records in Kenya for quantitative as well as qualitative research.

This study would be an excellent assigned reading for upper division undergraduate and graduate courses on African politics. First, it is well-written and well organized. Secondly, Hassan's combination of research methods would expose students to multiple approaches in which qualitative and quantitative research work together rather than belong to rival camps. The author discusses methodological questions in an engaging way.

Is the Kenyan administrative bureaucracy typical or not? With very little research on African administrative bureaucracies, it will take a great deal of new work to answer this question. On the surface, Kenya resembles other African states in the crucial importance of ethnic affiliation, its weak political parties with limited ideological appeal, and the continued dominance of the executive branch even after the end of single-party states. How would this compare with military regimes where rival civil and army bureaucracies might compete with one another? Would the specific origins of a country's bureaucratic model make a difference or not? This book undoubtedly will inspire other works for years to come for its innovative methodology and research questions.

Jeremy Rich, *Marywood University*

**John Hatchard. 2020. *Combating Money Laundering in Africa: Dealing with the Problem of PEPs*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing. 301 pp.**

Emeritus Professor of Law John Hatchard has held senior academic positions in Zambia and Zimbabwe and has "witnessed an appalling impact of the abuse of power, corruption and money laundering by many political leaders on members of my extended family as well as on

the lives of millions of ordinary people.” Yet, he also recognizes “that there are so many committed public officials who seek every day to carry out their responsibilities honestly and honourably” (p. viii). His experiences lead him to ask whether there is still hope for Africa in the fight against money laundering activities of Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs). In answering this question Hatchard adopted professional, personal, and academic approaches to argue that Africa urgently needs effective anti-money laundering (AML) laws and institutions; institutionalization of vigorous AML investigation, prosecution and asset recovery legislations; and uncompromising pursuit of bribe-payers who illegitimately permeate government/business transactional processes in the continent.

For easy comprehension of the complexity of money laundering as a global crime, but for which Africa is the focus here, Hatchard systematically organized his materials. He approaches and defines an aspect of money laundering and provides contexts and verifiable examples of its locale. He then discusses the legal or constitutional provisions of the particular countries that address it, weighs it against the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations and assesses the countries’ compliance with particular section(s) of FATF on the basis of Mutual Evaluation Reports (MERs). He then points to countries that have demonstrated salutary efforts toward AML and suggests ways to enhance the fight against money laundering. Of pertinent interest is the repeated suggestion that no matter how well crafted a country’s laws are, the political will of the senior government officials and economic threats to PEPs and their cohorts are irreducible measures to combat money laundering. In order to achieve this, he argues, with considerable zest and legal clarity, that African countries need to be more serious about their AML postures and reach out to other climes, the safe havens where the proceeds of crime are housed, so that they might be able to ameliorate the frightening rate of money laundering in the continent. “It is the political will on the part of countries to take action against even the most powerful corporate entities coupled with the economic threat that produces real results” (p. 256). It is against this backdrop that he heavily criticized the African Union’s Malabo Protocol (established in 2014) as not only in many instances ambiguous and non-definitive, which may result in unnecessary delay before an actual trial, but also for not being far reaching enough in comparison with what obtains in the West. There, through strict legal crafting and application, there have been significant recovery of proceeds of crime by PEPs.

While the PEPs “control the controls” (p. 50) and sometimes effectively manipulate the system to their advantage resulting in the widespread notion that they are invincible, Hatchard argues that they are becoming increasingly vulnerable. Their vulnerability is most auspiciously exposed when PEPs travel outside their own countries. Many examples abound to the effect that PEPs have been successfully prosecuted outside their countries, and this should engender reinforcement at home. The seeming prowess of the PEPs lies in the combined and cumulative efforts of accountants, lawyers, and others as money laundering agents—professionals who ought to be agents against the very act of money laundering. However, with the rise of effective Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) and super-whistleblowers, much of what has been shrouded in secrecy has been exposed, making PEPs much more vulnerable, though they remain creative in their crime of money laundering. MERs are also becoming strengthened documents to assess how individual countries fare, and to persuade them to comply with agreed standards of

legislation and operation with the aim of making it difficult, if not impossible for PEPs to perpetrate their crime.

Hatchard's analysis of the (ab)use of the constitutional power of pardon is a veritable source of concern for political will and commitment to AML. He argues that unexamined granting of pardons to PEPs has a way of setting back the fight against money laundering since PEPs may have opportunity of coming back to government. It is an established fact that PEPs are either in government, or their proxies are in and out of government. Having the assurance of a presidential pardon can jeopardize AML efforts: first, it contests or interferes with the independence of the judiciary, and second, and much more sadly, it is a colonial heritage that most African governments have refused to drop from their constitutions.

Finally, Hatchard foregrounds his analysis with the brutal fact of the demand and supply ends of money laundering, wherein he argues that although African countries are rated as most corrupt, even the "cleanest" (p. 28) countries in the West are also corrupt. It is in fact these cleanest countries that pay huge bribes to African countries. They also help facilitate and indeed house the proceeds of financial crimes, thereby impoverishing the victim states. With the Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA), however, there is a wide range of possibilities for African countries to pursue AML. Although Hatchard believes strongly in 'hatching' stringent laws to combat money laundering, the place of morality cannot be underestimated.

Benson Ohihon Igboin, *Adekunle Ajasin University*

**Stuart A. Marks. 2020. *Life as a Hunt: Thresholds of Identities and Illusions on an African Landscape*. Oxford: Berghahn Books. 504 pp.**

This book is, arguably, one of the texts which historians of marginal communities and post-development thinkers should use to understand history and development from the voices of the 'marginal' people. The eleven thematically sectioned chapters illustrate the history, exclusion, identities, and illusions in the Valley Bisa of Zambia's central Luangwa Valley. Marks contextualises cultural cosmopolitanism tracing the Bisa chieftaincies, identities, and belonging. The author uses interviews, life history, observation, and participant observation to explore the everyday lives, identities, and illusions of the Valley Bisa people. He participated in stalking animals, illustrating the centrality of indigenous knowledge systems in hunting. The life history approach is used to capture the histories and cultures of hunters who were particularly important before the coming of the churches and modernity. Marks highlights how polygamy enhanced and accorded independence to women by creating a continuum of matrilineality. Marks shows how women challenged the consecrated notion of second-class citizenship by not allowing their husbands into their houses after having married a second and younger woman (p. 112).

The author illustrates how the Administrative Management Design for Game Management Areas (ADMAGE), a conservation program, exacerbated poverty and marginality among the Bisa. Corruption shrouded as clientelism and favouritism characterised ADMAGE; people lost control of their resources and there was no infrastructural development but increased human-wildlife conflicts. Marks interacts with the question: are animals more important than people? Wardens responded late to human-wildlife clashes, which mostly ended up with dead humans.



People were not allowed to kill animals in defence of their crops, and there was no compensation for being killed by an animal, as the author notes about a specific case (p. 131). Marks illustrates the everyday politics in the Bisa valley using the 'sell-out discourse.' After hunting was outlawed, selling out to the wardens became ubiquitous in the zones, and it went beyond poaching or getting caught in possession of game meat. In curbing 'poaching,' wardens meted unjustified arrests for reasons ranging from having an unlicensed gun to being caught with meat in your household. Marks explores the brutality of game wardens as residents reported a 'beat first and ask later' approach. The sell-out discourse illustrates politics of belonging—visitors and newcomers to the valley had the highest chance of being 'sold-out.' The harassment of locals by game wardens led to the discontinuation of some Bisa cultural activities.

Whilst the bush was a communal area and anyone could visit the forest to gather firewood or medicines, hunting was only for a few. Marks alludes to the centrality of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in the hunting process. For one to become a hunter, he had to dream of a deceased relative giving him a gun or bow and arrow. Life histories of hunters from three generations underscore continuities and discontinuities, influenced by the western philosophy on animal cruelty. Marks reveals that the introduction of guns made hunting more difficult and dangerous. Hunters were not expert marksmen to start, but one got better at shooting after a few trials, which saw some lose fingers. The author alludes to traditional hunting methods to kill elands, lions, elephants, and rhinoceros; this contradicts the widespread belief that Africans could not kill large and dangerous animals. However, when a novice hunter killed a large and dangerous animal, he had to consult elders for cleansing. It is against this that Marks brings the mysticism of hunting and conservation shrouded in witchcraft, superstitions, and taboos.

Marks provides a history of guns, their origins, and naming. People named guns after near-death experiences or famous hunters. Most guns in Bisa were obtained from pre-colonial trade, whilst some hunters bought theirs from the plateau region. In addition, towards the mid-20th century, Europeans had better guns, thus gifted the muzzleloaders to Africans. The gun powder was locally manufactured, using sodium nitrate bought from the plateau, meaning that the firearms could misfire and injure the hunter. Marks introduces a phenomenon that was not privy to the public domain—Africans saluted with guns on happy occasions and during burials of hunters, headmen, and chiefs.

The book is an ethnographic product but the author did not give enough information about his methodology to allay the fears of subjectivity. Additionally, Marks does not show how he associated with the residents of Valley Bisa (positionality). Can we sufficiently say that Marks was considered an insider, or is there a chance that the observed everyday forms of life were rehearsed for an audience? Methodology is the dent that one finds in an otherwise exciting book.

Neil B. Maheve, *Rhodes University*

**Robtel Pailey. 2021. *Development, Dual Citizenship, and its Discontents in Africa: The Political Economy of Belonging to Liberia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 235 pp.**

Within the context of ongoing global debates on identity, nationality, and origin, *Development, Dual Citizenship, and Its Discontents in Africa* aptly examines contemporary questions based not only on socio-politics, but also on historical development, migration trends, and social identity. Pailey dives into questions that essentially analyze the contemporary questions: Who gets the legitimate claim to citizenship? Can someone truly belong to a country without residing in it? And, for those who reside in a country but do not identify with it, what version of citizenship can they claim? From this discourse emerges ponderings on the deeper implications of identity and belonging: Do people get to decide what they and how they identify in terms of nationality and citizenship? To what extent does an individual's choice factor into their citizenship? And in cases where the 'choice' of dual citizenship is proscribed or essentially assigned by country constitutions, what agency do individuals have?

Pailey discusses the political economy of belonging to Africa from a Liberian perspective, presenting a thorough analysis of identity and citizenship, and essentially offering a framework to understand contemporary "Liberian-ness," "African-ness," and by extension, citizenship in a globalized world. This is a world where some may possess citizenship from a country without residing in it, some yearn to maintain citizenship as a form of identification to their roots via dual citizenship, and yet where others are summarily barred from the option of dual citizenship. Pailey explores citizenship conceptually, as a passive identity, manifesting dynamically through participation, hence positing the notion of citizenship as both a relational and interactive mode of identity and belonging. In part, the book argues firstly, that citizenship can be asserted passively, through identity, and actively, through grassroots and individual action, and interactively—as a dynamic process of negotiation. Secondly, it argues that the 21st-century impasse on domestic citizenship reflects struggles over Liberian citizenship, rooted in its historical and conflict experiences. Thirdly, the book maintains that domestic and diasporic citizens conceptualize citizenship differently.

Chapter one introduces us to the conceptualizations and iterations of the dual citizenship question through interviews with Liberian citizens both in and out of the country, conducted in Freetown, London, and Washington, DC. Chapter two discusses the current concepts and applications of Liberian citizenship, arguing that citizenship "sits on a continuum between identity (passive citizenship) and practice (active citizenship)" (p. 19). The third chapter examines the interaction between globalization, dual citizenship, and the impressions around dual citizenship for those within and outside the country, revealing the discontents of current ascriptions, particularly as Liberia's current law does not permit dual citizenship. The fourth chapter traces the historical and contemporary origins of Liberia's citizenship law—the 1973 Aliens and Nationality Law—while placing it within the context of the country's past conflict. It analyzes the implications of socio-political conflict and the utilization of citizenship as a tool, driving frictions between local, diasporic, and repatriated Liberians alike. Chapter five focuses on migration, reflecting upon how cycles of expatriation and repatriation have impacted the circumstances, standing, and choices of Liberians worldwide. Chapter six challenges the idea that the African diaspora may be the panacea to the continent's development challenges. This final chapter gives an optimistic analysis of the synergy between the political, the economic, and

the development works within the context of the Ebola outbreak in Liberia. It explores the active citizenship of Liberians, displayed across the country, despite belonging to a post-war nation, and highlights lessons and implications onward for the rest of the continent and for the world.

In taking an African perspective and a global worldview into the analysis of citizenship, Pailey delivers a pivotal contribution to the study of contemporary Africa—particularly Liberia. The book aptly navigates the contemporary and the historical, pin-pointing valuable insights into the varying perspectives and implications of citizenship, migration, and social impacts, particularly to that of a post-conflict nation, hence enriching the discourse on the political economy of contemporary Africa.

Hyeladzirra Banu, *Howard University*

**Brian J. Peterson 2021. *Thomas Sankara: A Revolutionary in Cold War Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 333 pp.**

Many African countries became independent during the Cold War. Consequently, this had an indelible impact on the course of sociopolitical and economic events within the continent. Inevitably, the quest for global dominance between the superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, led to their competition for the hearts and minds of political leaders in post-colonial Africa. Against this background, Brian J. Peterson's biography, *Thomas Sankara: A Revolutionary in Cold War Africa*, focuses on the vicissitudes of Sankara as the president of Burkina Faso (1983-1987) within the context of the Cold War.

Peterson's chronological narrative style, with some photographs depicting relevant events, sets the stage for the sociopolitical and economic events that shaped Thomas Sankara, not just as Burkina Faso's president but also as a unique personality during his era. In the introduction, Peterson creates the background for his narrative by giving an overview of events leading to Sankara's presidency, followed by his stance against neocolonialism. Meanwhile, many African countries were either securing foreign loans or becoming indebted to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the 1980s. Concurrently, sociopolitical and economic problems such as poverty, bribery and corruption, repressive political regimes, and civil wars hampered development prospects in many African countries during this period.

In each chapter, Peterson examines how different sociopolitical and economic events in Burkina Faso shaped the evolving phases of Sankara's political career and personality. For instance, chapter one, which spans from 1947-1960, provides a detailed background about the advent of colonial rule and its impacts on Upper Volta. During this period, the incidence of famine, hard labor, and onerous taxation, based on his parents' recollections, were vicarious experiences that kindled Sankara's consciousness on how these issues affected the commoner in society. Subsequently, during the post-colonial period, Burkina Faso confronted sociopolitical and economic problems such as the Sahel drought, food insecurity, corruption within the army, a boundary dispute with Mali over the Agacher strip in 1975, and the emergence of Marxist-Leninist proponents in Ouagadougou in the mid-1970s. The book's author subtly uses these events to portray some of the major formative influences on Sankara's personality and political ideologies.

Afterwards, upon becoming Burkina Faso's president on January 10, 1983, Sankara's sociopolitical and economic policies differed from the conventional trend. His domestic fiscal policies aimed at the wealthy provided the revenue used in assisting the impoverished. In contrast, many African governments implemented economic austerity measures as a means of revitalizing their economy. By doing so they increased taxes on essential goods and services such as education, food, and health affecting the standard of living of many of their citizens, especially the poor. Meanwhile, Sankara's revolutionary policies and his forthrightness against neocolonialism galvanized the popularity of his regime not just in Ouagadougou but in different parts of the continent. This led to his recognition as 'the Che Guevara of Africa.' Although the virtue of his policies appealed to the masses, they also entangled him in the complexities of the Cold War era.

Against this backdrop, during Sankara's regime Soviet interest in Africa dwindled. Nevertheless, its ally Libya under the leadership of Mu'ammarr Gaddafi vied with the US in extending its clout into different African countries. Despite Sankara's rhetoric against neocolonialism, Burkina Faso needed and received foreign aid from Western countries to resolve some of its socio-economic problems. Meanwhile, Gaddafi orchestrated how to use Ouagadougou as a conduit for arms and ammunition in sub-Saharan Africa. Unfortunately, the Central Intelligence Agency's awareness about this situation coupled with the presence of Libyan military advisers in Ouagadougou placed Sankara within the Cold War's quagmire. Peterson uses these events to portray how the Cold War determined the course of events in Burkina Faso, which culminated in the assassination of Sankara by his archrival Blaise Compaoré. Although the narrative style is an exemplary feat, a more thorough background on how Libya's influence in Cold War politics in Africa, shaped as it was by the decline of Soviet influence in the continent, would have reinforced Peterson's arguments. Nevertheless, the relevancy of this narrative to contemporary sociopolitical economic events in Africa is invaluable as it depicts how Sankara's unconventional ideas and pragmatism made him a timeless leader.

Yusuf Oluwaseun Sholeye, *University of Calgary*

**Jurgen Schraten. 2020. *Credit and Debit in an Unequal Society: Establishing a Consumer Credit Market in South Africa*. New York: Berghahn Books. 199 pp.**

The establishment of a consumer credit market in South Africa caused a fundamental change in money lending. Traditional money lending depended on the interaction of lenders and borrowers; it could be understood by examining their social ties. But today the market economy has changed because lenders and borrows now turn into participants of a complex and stabilized infrastructure. Schraten conceptualizes development of market societies in general and the institutionalization of consumer credit markets in particular. According to him, there is the transformation in the original meaning of property as a demonstration of political power into a secondary support of symbolically performed monetary transactions. Such economic progress suffers from its embedding in a landscape of backward political institutions.

The text is organized into five chapters in addition to the introduction and conclusion, each representing a distinct yet complementary view. Chapter one describes the South African

consumer credit market. The first part takes the perspective of the demand side by considering a single loan offer. It shows that consumer credit—and therefore money itself—has turned into a consumerist commodity that can be bought in different forms and at different prices, is advertised in glossy promotion materials, is easy to access, and is intended to be used up quickly (p. 17). The second section presents the overview of credit supply in South Africa. The third section of this chapter deals with the consumer credit crisis which occurred between 2012 and 2014. According to the author, there are three important conclusions to be drawn from this. First, at any one time more than half of all credit active consumers were unable to service their instalments on time. Secondly, the share of borrowers unable to service their instalments grew faster than the share of credit active citizens, that is to say that a constantly growing number of customers received loans they could not afford. Thirdly, in spite of a growing population, the percentage of citizens with longer term financial obligations increased disproportionately (p. 36). The chapter ends with a summary market overview.

The second chapter outlines the historical overview of the development of the monetized economy of South Africa from the foundation of a central bank in 1921 to the implementation of the National Credit Act in 2005. Schraten divided the history of consumer credit in South Africa into three stages: first stage (until 1992), second stage (1993 to mid-1999), third stage (1999 to 2005). The free consumer credit market that came in existence from 1993 regulated neither the products nor the procedures of debt collecting. The ruling relations between creditors and borrowers were shaped by the direct power relations according to their economic conditions.

The third chapter analyses how the political system of South Africa implemented a law, and a consideration of this from a sociological perspective. The chapter begins by focusing on different institutional actors like the National Consumer Regulator (NCR), the National Consumer Tribunal (NCT), the credit bureau, and the payment system. Schraten also explains the function of debt counsellors. In the process of debt counselling, the two basic mechanism of the NCA were applied: “over-indebtedness” as the limitation of the free market procedures and “reckless lending” as the limitation of freedom of contract (p. 89). The last section deals with the intended introduction of a debt discharge option, which was finally drafted in 2018 but was still being debated at the time of writing.

The fourth chapter, titled “Legislators’ Reactions to the Consumer Credit Market Crisis,” reviewed the implemented and envisaged changes along with the reforms to the basic framework outlined earlier and compares them to the various types of consumer credit legislation internationally. Schraten argues that the description of the financialized consumer credit market, the historical reconstruction of its development, and the sociological analysis of its legal framework have all showed the firm adherence of the government to the idea of a self-regulating consumer credit market. The next chapter reviews the writings of classical theorists such as Adam Smith, Georg Simmel, Max Weber, etc. that are still referenced today when a justification of free market economies is required. The chapter also offered an institutional analysis of the South African consumer credit market from a reflexive level of observation. The theoretical conclusion to this study is that understanding the South African consumer credit market as a politically created institutional setting of “distributed agency” also allows us to extrapolate modifications and a change in its legitimization.



Schraten's book is an important contribution to the study how the economic setting produces a complex network revolving around distributed agency. The book has not focused primarily on offering a general examination of credit and debt, but rather on the contemporary construction of such a market. Political scientists, legal scholars, and policymakers alike should pay attention to this book.

Priya Dahiya, *University of Delhi*

**Max Siollun. 2021. *What Britain Did to Nigeria: A Short History of Conquest and Rule*. London: Hurst and Company. 390 pp.**

Aside from serving as a viable tool of enlightenment about significant past events, historical narratives are also important in the present. Some historians of Nigeria are of the opinion that the only way to understand the country's complex present reality is to locate the root causes of the wide-ranging problems confronting the country in its distant history. The presumption is that the problems of ethnicity, extreme corruption, insecurity and violence, poverty, and fiscal irresponsibility are strongly linked to systems handed down by colonial authorities. As such, the solution is how well we comprehend these problems.

In *What Britain Did to Nigeria*, Max Siollun provides a gamut of arguments that connects some of the country's present realities to its violent colonial past. Siollun argues quite strongly that the history of the British in Nigeria is characterized by themes of violence, total disruption, and annihilation. Very early in the book, he presents reasons for readers to believe that the only way the British could execute its ambitious colonial projects in Nigeria (as it was in Africa) was to exercise extreme force and cruelty to bring the people and leaders of the diverse polities they encountered to do their will. To a large extent, this book places a judgment and, indeed, a heavy yoke on colonialism and the British Empire for truncating a process that would most definitely have ended up as something entirely different from what we currently have on the continent. By flipping through the pages of this highly illustrative and expository historical scholarship, most readers would see the need for African past encounters in the hands of its colonial masters to be brought into context when negotiating development issues on a global scale. To look away from some of the rare historical accounts in this book is to approach Africa with blunt tools. It is to neglect an obvious reality. Beyond that, this could bring to question the intentions of African stakeholders as to whether they actually want to effect a change or pursue business as usual.

The book is structured around five thematic sections comprising a total of twenty-one chapters. Siollun was conscious about writing a history that would capture the diverse areas and peoples of Nigeria. In each chapter, he provides insights into interests pursued by the British when they encountered these places. This way, Siollun believes he could reveal the less popular episodes in Nigerian history; incidents that are not yet in the public domain. The first section of the work (chapters one to three) highlights the precursory episodes of the British colonial project. It reveals how the quest to explore areas less known to the British public intensified trading interests in the area during the nineteenth century. The second section (chapters four to seven) shows how British exploration activities transformed into an economic extraction project in the nineteenth century. The emphasis in the chapters is the maneuvering of British businesses in grabbing lands that belonged to Africans. This was executed through the

signing of ambiguous treaties. Siollun believes that the British interest in these treaties was to scare off speedily advancing French expansion into territories bordering the Niger. This laid the foundation of the British colonial project, which gradually became noticeable at the end of the nineteenth century.

The third section (chapters eight to thirteen) focused on how the British laid the foundation of the colonial state by resorting to the continuous use of force. Siollun argues quite strongly that the British invasion of Nigeria was not an instantaneous process, but one that took on a permanent character, lingering all through the colonial period. The fourth section (fourteen to sixteen) is a follow-up to the previous one. It explores episodes of continuous resistance by Africans against colonial rule. Siollun reveals here that Africans executed these acts of rebellion even while they knew and acknowledged British military capabilities in wreaking havoc on any affront against their imperial and commercial interests. The final section (seventeen to twenty-one) explores the repercussion of the British invasion of Nigeria on the entire fabric of the society—most especially the displacement of the cultural, political, and religious lives of the Nigerian people. Siollun believes the British colonial project led to a convergence of contradictory cultures, further heating up the post-colonial polity and distracting it from hitting its mark in its quest towards nation-building and development.

For avid readers and teachers of Nigerian history, this book is very instructive for the ways we imagine the British colonial project in Nigeria. Siollun consciously probes into the personal archives of major stakeholders involved in the day-to-day running of the empire. In clear terms, he situates their personal enterprises within the overall mandates of the British colonial office. Specifically, he examines how their agendas coincided and aligned with the interests of the colonial state and how it dispensed an unimaginable assault on the lives they encountered from the nineteenth through to the twentieth centuries. Siollun believes that colonialism was an intermingling of personal and national interests; the convergence of personal ambitions of British men to aggrandize wealth and influences and the unrepentant pursuit by the British Empire to outshine other European competitors. One interesting aspect of Siollun's work is the way he brings to effect 'coincidences,' especially how the individual lives of these men facilitated the colonial project. This speaks clearly in the sixth chapter, where Siollun narrated the quests and ambitions of George Taubman Goldie through the United African Company (UAC) and the Royal Niger Company (RNC) in capturing communities along the River Niger. It was the resilience of Goldie's ambition that inspired the eventual invasion and colonization of Nigeria. Also in this connection are the ways the overzealousness of James Philip triggered the armed invasion, looting, and conquest of the Benin kingdom.

Adedamola Adetiba, *Rhodes University*

**Robert Springborg. 2020. *Political Economies of the Middle East and North Africa*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 267 pp.**

In this compact volume buttressed by economic data from the World Bank and other international institutions, Springborg identifies four categories of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) states, in which he includes Turkey and Iran: failed and fragile states, royals,

authoritarian republics, and two ‘outliers,’ Israel and Tunisia. He uses the term “political economies” in the sense that he examines the choices elites in each state have made to take them on specific economic paths. He grants that there was a colonial past and that foreign interference continues, but contemporary MENA leaders still make choices. Springborg focuses a critical gaze on those choices. He sees reasons for concern, even alarm, and few reasons for complacency.

Springborg calls MENA states ‘limited-access structures,’ where most of the population is unable to penetrate the ranks of government or is unable to communicate effectively with it, and where there exist “deep states” of favored and entrenched officials and civil service personnel. I wish the author did not use the deep state term, which in North America is frequently used by a writers of a certain persuasion to denigrate the civil service, and suggest the federal workers blindly defend central governmental power to the detriment of state and lower-level authority. One difference is that in most sectors in North America the civil servants can be investigated, sanctioned, or recalled. But Springborg presents good points in examining MENA state employees. Who is hiring them? Is there accountability? Are certain groups favored to participate in the government structure? If so, which ones? All useful inquiries.

The MENA exhibits regionalism (the people interact across borders, work in neighboring states, share cultural traits) but has achieved little integration: states are at loggerheads or even engaged in low-level conflict. Consequently, regional customs unions, the Arab League, and other entities achieve disappointing results. The author warns this is a bad combination. Paradoxically, the near-simultaneous eruption of the Arab Spring in several countries, the subsequent overthrow of several regimes, and the wrecking of several countries suggest that there is such a thing as an “Arab world” spanning twenty-three countries. Hopes for regional cooperation, however, are repeatedly dashed. The Gulf Cooperation Council is derailed by distrust and competition between Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and others. The Arab Maghrib Union, formed in 1989 between Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia gives a sign of hope, but it is troubled by friction between Morocco and Algeria. What Springborg calls the “MENA civil war” refers to continuing interference of multiple regional and extra-regional players in Yemen and especially Syria, precluding cooperation among neighbors on many levels. Calling this situation, a “civil war” seems excessive, but no one would call it promising.

Domestically, MENA countries face no lack of challenges. The example of authoritarian republic Egypt shows several typical problem areas: stop-gap measures from the Nasser-era continue such as bloated public sector employment (public sector employment is a kind of employer of last resort, keeping a lid on unrest), and large-scale developmental projects often designed by foreign consultants and requiring expensive loans. A “missing middle” economy persists, with on the one hand employment characterized by very small enterprises (two to five people)—shops, in other words—and on the other hand large state-supported firms, with nothing in the middle. Crony capitalism, inefficient initiatives, and lack of accountability are endemic. Even the Arabian Peninsula states have their challenges: Saudi Arabia espouses a long-term policy which hopes to grow Saudi employment, while the UAE continues to endorse employment of high numbers of foreigners. Saudi Arabia with its “Vision 2030” plan identifies a number of high-visibility projects, but they seem capriciously chosen and with unclear

impacts--will they, for example, really result in more employment of Saudi nationals? And why are these projects usually the products of foreign workshops or specialists?

Tunisia, which Springborg recognizes as one of the more successful post-Arab Spring states, also has difficulties, with severe contrasts between the cities and countryside, an aging centrist leadership, and a South African style "Truth and Dignity Commission" which has sometimes been hampered in its work. Israel is a special case with its massive support from the U.S. (not remarked upon by the author) and "two nationalisms in one territory." Although some regional states have recently recognized Israel, the fate of the Palestinians will always be central to the overall fortunes of the territory. Springborg is reluctant to say much about this anomalous state.

At the time of his writing, Springborg does not see significant reasons for optimism regarding MENA economies. The royals are absorbed in "vision"--grand plans with target dates of 2030 or further out. In nearby locales, failed states continue to fail. Springborg laments that intra-regional squabbling and interference continue to hobble the region, an assessment few readers would contest.

Kenneth Meyer, *Western Washington University*

**Rachel Spronk and Thomas Hendricks (eds). 2020. *Readings in Sexualities from Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 357 pp.**

Although scholarship on 'African sexuality' has gone through extensive revision and many critiques for decades, there still exists an entrenched notion of conceiving studies from a particular geographical location in Africa that African sexuality is "a priori category in scholarly imagination and practice" (p. 1). Rachel Spronk and Thomas Hendricks robustly collate an array of both older and newer articles and book chapters that steer away from this homogeneous understanding, and they astutely present them in six thematic sections of their edited book, *Readings in Sexualities from Africa*. At a surface level, the volume reads like collections on sexualities in Africa, but the editors judiciously invest the book with a deceptively small lexicology of "readings in sexualities from Africa" so as to let the selected essays speak to one another and engage in a productive relationship that demonstrates "the multidimensional and comprehensive character of sexuality" (p. 2). The resultant 'dialogue' makes the book an eclectic rather than encyclopedic selection of chapters, manifesting itself in the compartmentalized *sui generis* essays. Their potential impact on texts from other individual parts of the volume reminds the readers to conceptualize these essays neither within the brackets of their individual parts nor the entire volume but beyond the expanding literature on 'African sexuality.'

The editors' wide-ranging expertise on studies in and on sexuality offers a thought-provoking introduction to the individual parts as well as to their general "Introduction" which grounds the arguments that the book captures the contemporary state of the art "dialogue between African studies and sexuality studies, building on and departing from older scholarly accounts and pointing at promising directions for future research" (p. 3). This segues into Part I, the section that collects articles on the politics of representation at the crossroads of African

studies and sexuality studies. It shows how newer studies mainly write back to old stereotypes that had informed and are still informing research on 'African sexuality.' With sexuality foregrounded in Part II as an object of knowledgeability in the biopolitics of sexual health and human rights preoccupations, the selected essays challenge the bureaucratic practices and historical contingencies that supposedly talk about sexual realities. This strategy enables the authors astutely to unearth the deceptive politics alert to medical interventions against some diseases like venereal disease and the dishonesty in Western etiological models that have 'normalized' narratives on rape cases in South Africa as examined by Hellen Moffett. The editors' choice of cultural sociologist Marian Burchardt's pointedly health-wise essay in this second part is an effective guide to those who want to re-orient their studies away from the much-studied same-sex practice presented in the third part. The inclusion of Burchardt's essay does more than just belabor the point that open discussion on aspects of intimate life is a key mechanism that supersedes approaches adopted by public health institutions in promoting public health concerns. It also invites the reader to "re-think the operational dynamics of silences as discursive constructions on which particular strategies that produce sexual openness can be grafted" (p. 130). The editors' selections for Part III lead to some tantalizing choices of excellent texts that point towards the much-needed empirical research on the possibility of cross-sex sexualities to denaturalize heterosexuality as a social institution that regulates social behavior and unearths the existence of queer possibilities. The essay by E.E. Evans-Pritchard offers a striking ethnographic report to frame his arguments on the evolution of boy-marriage practice. The essay imagines the cultural hegemony of imposing hefty fines on adulterous persons as fertile grounds for sexual inversion.

Despite an overwhelming increase in scholarly writing on African sexualities as the two anthropologists note, unorthodox sexuality is hardly represented particularly in its own right. When rendered though, as shown in Part IV, it is chiefly represented as a governmentality project that can only be imagined, contested, and appropriated for nationalist and religious discourses. Part V presents texts that show the commodification of sexuality, while Part VI, "Discrete Pleasures, Defiant Agencies," concludes the volume with surprisingly sparse focus on eroticism, and it mainly presents texts on female eroticism. An important exception in this section is that of Zackie Achmat who, unlike his cohort, presents sex and desire from a male perspective. The huge collection of readings *in sexualities from Africa* dosed with heavy citations, references, and endnotes could give the impression that this eclecticism is an assemblage that elides the more exhaustive analyses of sexualities in Africa. It, however, notes a number of gaps and proposes the way forward.

Charles Kipng'eno Rono, *Moi University*