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# African Studies Quarterly

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# Echoes of Secession: The Hero, the Rebel, and the Rhetoric of Might in Nigerian Civil War Pictorial Propaganda

ETIIDO EFFIONG INYANG

**Abstract:** This article evaluates the nature of images that negotiated and sustained secession propaganda during the Nigerian Civil war between 1967 and 1970. More specifically, it examines the character and disposition of the constructed image of the secessionist leader Emeka Ojukwu through a variety of photographs, cartoons, and posters used during the war in order to assess his role and tendencies in the politics of the thirty months war. By studying pre-war ancillary traits of politics and political elites in Nigeria, this article relies on the earlier studies of class conflict in Nigeria to argue that the images offer insights to lingering mutual suspicions and understanding of the war.

## Introduction

... if the power of images is like the power of the weak, that may be why their desire is correspondingly strong, to make up for their actual impotence ... what the picture awakens in our desire to see ... is what it cannot show. This impotence is what gives it whatever specific power it has.<sup>1</sup>

The failed secession bid of Biafra from Nigeria in a civil war that ended after thirty months of military hostilities, internal displacements, starvation, and civilian deaths has remained a topic of painful reminiscences. As a result, its discourse has drawn more debates and literature than perhaps any other event in the history of the Nigerian nation. The interests of these reflections on the dark event in the country's history and the polemics it stimulates have become increasingly varied in substance and facts. Many themes of the war tend to dwell on the reportage of war events and the varying roles of the major players in the conflict—Yakubu Gowon and Emeka Ojukwu, who were both contemporaries in the Nigerian military.<sup>2</sup>

On the one hand, the stories of the war bear striking similarities to a typical pros and cons debate raising more fundamental questions than it often sought to explicate. On the other hand, causative explanations for the war are extended to include the rigged national census and its attendant controversies in 1962 and 1963. Others are the national election crises of 1964 and the slide into total anarchy in the Western Region in 1965 culminating in the open call for the restoration of law and order by the military. Beyond this, the lopsided assassination of eleven prominent politicians including the Saduana of Sokoto, Ahmadu Bello, and Prime Minister Abubakar Balewa in a coup d'état of January 15, 1966, led by Major Kaduna Nzegwu and other

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v17/v17i3a1.pdf>

colleagues who were mostly from the Igbo ethnic group, was considered as a fundamental misstep. A series of events that followed the total takeover of governance by the military leader and Head of State, Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi also provided grave antecedence that fertilized the war. Prominent among these events was the abrogation of the federal structure of government in favor of a unitary structure by force of a decree.<sup>3</sup> This structural change by the military regime fanned a general atmosphere of mutual suspicion and led to the assassination of Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi in the second coup, this time by Northern Nigerian military officers. The slide into anarchy was further aggravated by the spiralling riots and retaliatory killings of Easterners in Northern Nigeria bringing together a defining narrative that amplified the polarization of the new nation back to ethnic, regional, and religious lines. The other critical event, at least to a section of the military in the East, was the controversial installation of Gowon as the supreme commander and head of the Federal Military Government, which led to Ojukwu's open rejection of Gowon's leadership as the Head of State.<sup>4</sup>

The varying perspectives that have inundated the Biafra literary discourse seem traceable to the large pool of biographical notes and media propaganda on the war. More problematic are the images that accompanied the war propaganda and the inconsistencies they fanned. A panoramic understanding of the civil war seems impeded by the paucity of scholarly discourse on image construction throughout the war and perhaps more especially among the *dramatis personae* in the conflict. This essay, therefore, draws on discourses of the power of images to suggest that the Nigerian Civil War was at the core of its offering essentially an image war driven by constructed stereotypes of class and power. The desire for an "image enquiry" becomes even more strengthened when the war propaganda is assessed on the template of being the first in Africa to utilize the modern technological gadgetry of radio, television, and print media. It proposes that the combination of the media blitz on the war aided the delivery of a coordinated propaganda campaign that projected not only the heroic ventures of the war personalities but also the alleged atrocities caused by them during the war. According to Nzimiro,

... the Civil War of Nigeria as one of the world upheavals which should be seen in the context of the class structure of Nigeria which is part of the world capitalist social order. Liberal western intellectual writers who see the African problem in terms of "tribalism" alone have divested the entire phenomenon of one essential approach and analytical tool which could be of help in putting the whole exercise in its historical perspective. That essential approach is the class analysis.<sup>5</sup>

The telling strength of the images evident in the thirty months and sixteen days of conflict between 1967 and 1970 amplifies Nzimiro's assertion and invariably illustrates a need for their singular and collective appraisal. This paper, then, is concerned with establishing a framework for understanding the contestations of might in the context of the obvious, the hidden, and omitted facts of the civil war in Nigeria, from the essential structure of the use of images as a propaganda device. It seeks by this understanding to establish the fundamental issue of class in the negotiation of power in the Nigerian Civil War. This paper proposes that there is a significant connection between the elite power tussle in the secession polemics and the pictorial



metaphors employed in the selected visual medium for the prosecution of the propaganda war by the belligerent governments in secessionist Biafra and Federalist Nigeria.

Using images employed by both the Federalist (Nigeria) and the Separatist (Biafra) regimes of the time to develop the framework of power rhetoric that propelled the war, this paper examines the assumptions of might as a “political tool” and its consequence as “class rhetoric.” It contends that the desirability as well as the employment of these images in the context of the Nigerian Civil War was based on the variables of propaganda imageries that negotiated them. Elucidating on this in the illustrations that follow, the visual concept of the “personage” and the symbolic representation of the political personalities can be captured in the construction of the visual propaganda of the Nigerian Civil War.<sup>6</sup> These images sourced from photographs, cartoons, and posters that negotiated the war also serve as devices for the construction of meaning commensurate with the iconic status of the projected personalities in the war.<sup>7</sup> Early insinuations in the history of colonial Nigeria seem to prove that politically exposed persons devoted conscious effort to creating acceptable iconic images of themselves. In fact, visual representations as far back as the early 1920s indicate an affirmation of what Coleman refers to as the “Europeanised African” image in the political ascendancy of the Nigerian elite.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, popular arts of the colonial and pre-independent Nigeria, namely illustrations, paintings, photographs, and commercial product advertising, evolved to promote the genre in the country. The Europeanised image and other distinct stylistic traits of the African elite became a necessary part of the complex web of iconic constructions deemed desirable for acceptability among the people. The followers and well wishers of these African elites variously saw them as heroes of colonial emancipation and nationalism. It was therefore not unusual for national leaders/politicians to construct mythical, larger-than-life qualities to distinguish themselves from the ordinary masses. Prominent West African and national leaders who created distinguishing images through dress and personality code include, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, and Festus Okotie-Eboh of Nigeria.<sup>9</sup> It is, therefore, in the context of elite persona and the corresponding understandings that the visual construction of the Ojukwu image as the *dramatis persona* of the secession bid from Nigeria shall be examined.

### **Ojukwu: The Hero-Rebel of the Nigerian Civil War**

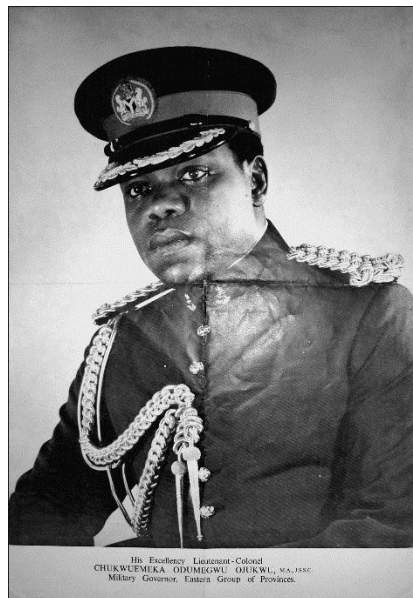
Pictorially, the image of Emeka Ojukwu as a secessionist leader of the Biafran Republic presents a binary personality of the hero-rebel of the Nigerian Civil War. This conjoined attribute is captured in the perception of the artists who made photographs and illustrations of Ojukwu on the one hand and the management of his persona during the period of the war on the other. Viewed from a panoramic perspective, these pictorial representations of Ojukwu significantly set him apart as the icon of the Nigerian Civil War and situate him within the discourse of class that governed the contestations of the political space in Nigeria before, during, and after Nigerian independence in 1960.

Emeka Ojukwu’s background reveals that he was born at the peak of this transformative consciousness in 1933 in the famous railway town of Zungeru in Northern Nigeria to an enterprising Igbo father. The rising fortune of his father, Sir Louis Phillippe Odumegwu Ojukwu, a businessman from Nnewi in South-Eastern Nigeria, may have contributed to his

ascendancy in Nigerian political history. As one of the wealthiest men in colonial Nigeria, Emeka's father had set his son on a path into the elites of colonial and postcolonial Nigeria. The younger Ojukwu did not disappoint. He maximized the educational opportunities that lay at his disposal and earned a graduate degree in history from Oxford University. Ojukwu's desire for public service made him one of the first university graduates to join the Nigerian military where his elite background and sound education guaranteed his promotion to higher ranks. This was preceded by a brief stint in the civil service in 1957 shortly after his return to Nigeria.

Emerging from this background, images published in the media reveal the visual transformation of Ojukwu's personality. At the early stage of his appointment as the military governor of the Eastern Region in January 1966, he was represented as a clean-shaven officer/gentleman whose "honorific portrait" by tradition adorned offices in the region of his command.<sup>10</sup> The official portrait, in traditional grayscale, represents him as an officer of the Nigerian army whose youthful zest and striking gaze of seriousness affirm the traditional oath of defense of his fatherland that his uniform symbolizes (Fig.1a). In this military regalia, the individual personality of Ojukwu needed to be sufficiently appropriate to his status as a senior military officer in command of one of the country's richest and most enterprising regions. The half-length photographic image is interrupted at the base of the frame with a verbalized legend that approximates to a condensed advertorial of the Ojukwu personality (His Excellency, Lt Col Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, MA, JSSC, Military Governor, Eastern Group of Provinces). Whatever seems lost by the measured gaze of his asymmetrical photographic pose appeared to have been restored and reinforced by the rare combination of codes which his intimidating family name, graduate education, and rank in the Nigerian military on the only text component within the picture frame affords the reader. This guided intervention in the photographic message is what Barthes refers to as "a contiguous but not homogenised" message.<sup>11</sup>

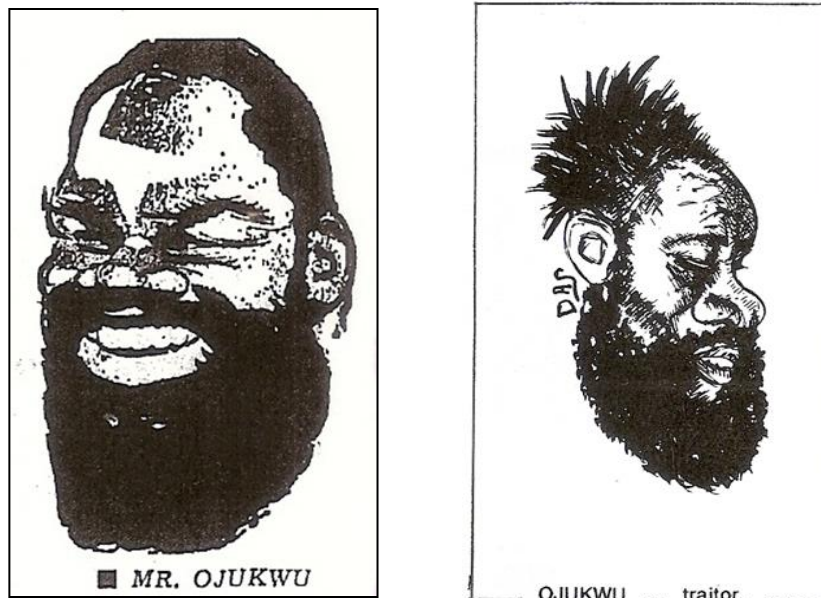
**Fig. 1a: Lt. Col. C. O. Ojukwu, Official Portrait. [1966]. Fig. 1b: Lt. Col. C. O. Ojukwu**



**Source:** Fig. 1a, Onuma Ezera Collections, African Section, Michigan State University, East Lansing. Fig. 1b, Press Photograph (1966?)

Ojukwu earned his appointment as Military Governor of Eastern Nigeria from the Nigerian head of state, General Aguiyi Ironsi, for frustrating a coup plot in January 1966 at his area of command in Kano, and this was despite pleas for his support from Major Nzeogwu, the coup's leader.<sup>12</sup> This act of military discipline stood him out as a young independent-minded, scrupulous, and conservative officer. The unmistakability of the clean shaven officer gentleman seem enforced in yet another widely circulated press photograph of Ojukwu at the time where he adorns a peaked military cap with a Nigerian army crest (Fig. 1b above). While the practised convention of honorific photographic portraiture in public offices in Nigeria seemed a privilege which the head of state and the regional governors understandably earned, the formal portrait as commanding officer and the press photograph of Ojukwu contrasts with his image as a "bearded revolutionary" throughout the era of secession. This curious transformation between the clean shaven and the bearded military officer presents a binary assessment in the stylistic representation of the Ojukwu personality. One immediate assumption for this new look was that it served as a cultural and symbolic show of indignation against the spiralling riots (aptly tagged the Nigerian Pogrom) in Northern Nigeria, which is variously recorded as leading to the massacre of over 30,000 Easterners on May 29, June 29, and September 29, 1966. Whatever the reason for this transformation, the bearded look fitted the revolutionary posture not only because it had a cultural connection with the mourning of the dead from Eastern Nigeria, but that it also offered him a unique visual identity that many artists of that era found irresistible (Figs. 2a and 2b). The bearded pose and well-defined facial physiognomy seemed an instant iconic symbol for the Ojukwu personality.

**Fig. 2a (left): "Mr Ojukwu; " Fig. 2b (right): Ojukwu ... Traitor."**

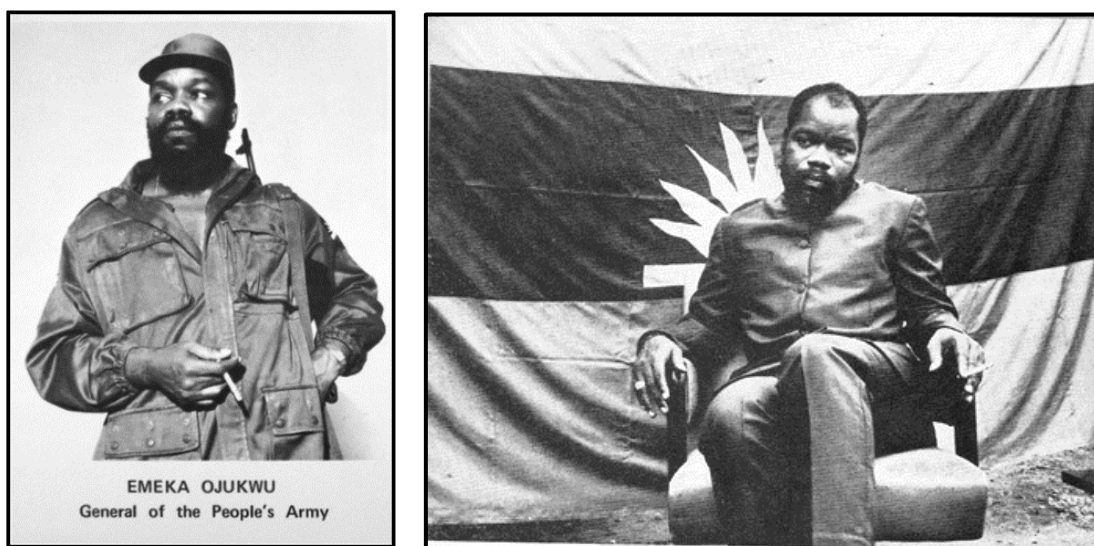


**Source:** Fig. 2a, editorial cartoon in *Daily Times*, Nigeria, Sept 28, 1968; Fig. 2b, editorial cartoon in *Drum* magazine, Nigeria, January 1970

Ojukwu assumed a different image in a popular portrait used for the declaration of the principles of Biafran revolution at Ahiara, near Owerri, in the heartland of Biafra. His pose of the combat-ready “General of the people’s army” evinces a connection to popular revolutions in South America and thereby insinuates a link to a widespread interest in guerrilla engagements of that era (Fig. 3a). What is notable here is the construction of another identity for the Biafran leader expressed through his new dress code and demeanor, and their social, ethical, and political significations. This regalia seems to associate Ojukwu’s image with that of the Cuban revolutionary Fidel Castro and his ally Che Guevara.<sup>13</sup> Posing casually in military gear, with eyes piercing askance into a distant sight and a nozzle of his rifle jutting out above his left shoulder, the photograph of Ojukwu in hands akimbo, with the right hand released and thrust slightly forward to reveal an unlit cigarette, attempts to project an unnerved but alert leader. Among the surviving artefacts which this image adorn is the pamphlet for the Ahiara Declaration announcing the secessionist Biafra’s resolve to challenge all vestiges of neocolonialism as well as pursue self-determination with the expediency and vigour it demands.<sup>14</sup> To achieve the connection with the ordinary people of Biafra, Ojukwu needed to shed the characteristic honorific pose in the earlier pictures above.

The bearded style and its attendant transformative pictorial conduct in the Ahiara Declaration regalia was one in an arsenal of posturing that provoked several disapproving cartoons from the Federalists.<sup>15</sup> The memory of what appears to be an associative “guerrilla-style” dress sense in the Ojukwu photograph and unconventional traits of terror that this type of warfare offers added to the apparent rhetoric of despair in the illustrations of and the defensive campaign led by the Federalists.<sup>16</sup> The advantage of this campaign informed by the persistent failure to meet military datelines by the Federal Military Government (FMG), despite the abundance of a massive hardware support from its international allies, equally engendered an enormous confidence building for a war of attrition as captured in the visual campaigns by the Biafrans.

**Fig. 3a: (left) Emeka Ojukwu; Fig. 3b: (right) Ojukwu and the Biafran Flag**



**Source:** Fig. 3a, Courtesy Onuma Ezera collections, Michigan State University; Fig 3b, St. Jorre 1972.



The voluntary devaluation of Ojukwu's elite status into a willing warrior for his people did not appear to be new to the political class in Nigeria. It seems to bear some well-worn tendencies of early self-acclaimed colonial emancipators. What appears curious is the accompanying theatricality that the verbal code employs in short circuiting an unbiased interpretation of the photographic message by stripping Ojukwu of his intimidating credentials and imposing it on an alliance with "the people." This kind of adulations becomes understandable when juxtaposed against classical traits of the early intelligentsia and the political class who often rode on the crest of the mass popularity for the actualization of personal gains.<sup>17</sup> Following the mannerisms of the early political class and the disposition of the masses towards the elite class, Ojukwu was, according to Tamuno, seen in "moderate circles, as a champion, spokesman, and defender of the aggrieved people of Eastern Nigeria."<sup>18</sup> The methodical style of Ojukwu's October 4, 1966 speech can be well appreciated when placed against the choice of phrase which secures the belief that the pogroms were "well planned and efficiently executed."<sup>19</sup> It seeks to describe the fixed position of the Northerners in their intense dislike for the Easterners. Accordingly, the manner in which the coordinated killings were executed and the dispatch of bodies of the dead and wounded only became glaring testaments in a web of hostilities in judging the veracity of Ojukwu's argument. This concern for the unacceptable treatment of the common folk of Eastern Nigerian origin in other parts of Nigeria and the later perception that he sacrificed his father's wealth for the liberation of the Igbo engendered Ojukwu's mass appeal as their emancipator and hero. The increase in the propaganda of difference between "us" and "them" became an effective mantra for the members of Ojukwu's cabinet. By referring to those Easterners by ethnicity as "thousands of our people," he directly asserted himself as protector of all Easterners regardless of their location, seeing himself not as Eastern Regional Military Governor but rather the leader of all Easterners wherever they were located.

It is, however, unclear if, by reluctantly championing secession, Ojukwu was driven more by a messianic impulse than by the plight of the masses who were ready subjects of an elaborate visual and verbal propaganda when the xenophobic killings of the Easterners dramatically increased in northern Nigeria. But it would be wrong to box Ojukwu into a predetermined and rigid identity frame. As Hall explicitly states: "within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about. If we feel we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story or 'narrative of the self' about ourselves."<sup>20</sup>

In fact, a cursory study of some of the Biafra visual propaganda seems to inadvertently attest to a contradictory associative storyline of moods and gestures in the representation of Ojukwu, therefore opening up an array of interpretations. One illustration that fits this ambiguity is the rhetorical poise of a confident and relaxed Ojukwu in a "safari suit" against the backdrop of the Biafran flag draped horizontally (Fig. 3b). Following the nuances of conventional portraiture in paintings and photography the representation of Ojukwu in a safari suit appears to be one of the few portraits posed in a horizontal orientation, hence raising questions about the rationale for its preferred compositional arrangement.<sup>21</sup> It privileges the beholder with tools for varying deductions from the acts that produced the official picture with the flag backdrop. In the first instance, an apparent desire to unmistakably announce the

centrality of the Ojukwu figure against the symbol of the “rising sun” without compromising the flag dimensions tends to skew the narrative away from what appears to be an “acceptable tradition” and which further seems to have taken root in conventional portrait photography. It is not exactly clear how this photograph was to be published and what purpose it sought to serve, but the sheer animated presence of the horizontal composition with all the trappings of informality seems to hint at the idea for which it may have been designed. With a cigarette in hand, the relaxed and confident pose of Ojukwu in this picture may have been constructed as a psychological boost aimed at neutralizing the rumble of air and mortar attacks. Propaganda posters of the time acknowledge this with illustration and text that reads “bombs or no bombs, Biafrans must stay to fight the foe.”

The other is the cartoon rendering of Ojukwu sharing a cocktail with Charles de Gaulle and aptly titled “Biafra–France Entente” (Fig. 4a). If this inclination was a deliberate detour from the norm, the pandering to a Western etiquette in the “Biafra–France Entente” cartoon by Chuks Anyanwu is fundamentally inconsistent within the locus of the photos discussed above. If anything, it is in contradiction with the diplomatic row that ensued in the hostage-taking of eighteen foreign oil workers on May 9, 1969.<sup>22</sup>

**Fig. 4a (left): Chuks Anyanwu, “Biafra–France Entente.” 4b (right): Oke Hortons, “Italian Hostages”**



**Source:** Fig. 4a, Ministry of Information, Enugu. Dec. 1968. 4b *Sunday Times* May 25, 1969.

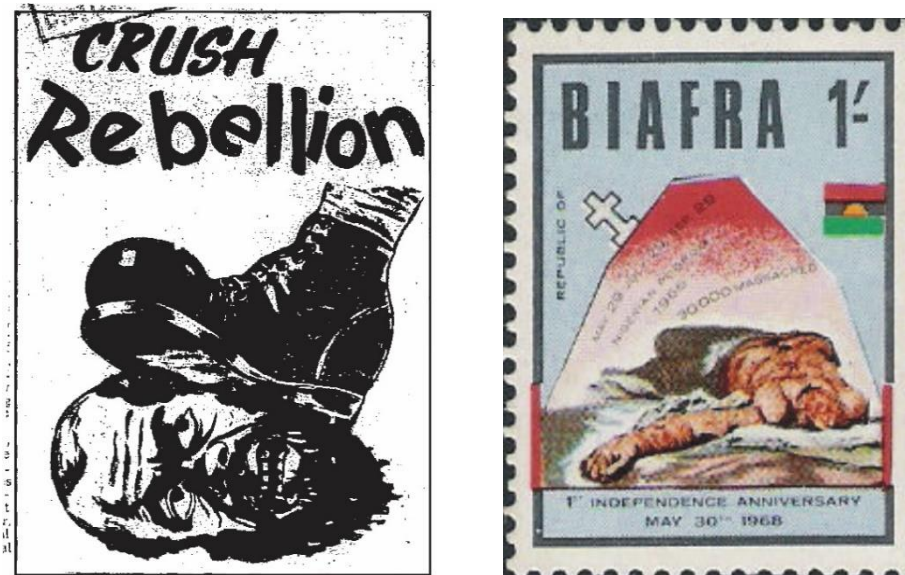
Another assumption that this photograph affirms is anchored on the suspicion which attended the consistent Federalist campaign that saw Ojukwu as being inseparably tied to the Biafran concept. The evidence in the transposable use of Ojukwu and Biafra by the international community of journalists and politicians abound. One key example is the front cover portrait of Colonel Emeka Ojukwu in the *Time* news magazine of August 23, 1968.<sup>23</sup> It is the artistic rendering of the Biafran leader in their usual tradition of using portraits of leaders who have drawn considerable world attention to themselves. Another example appeared in *The New York Times* which printed a story by Lloyd Garrison titled “Odumegwu Ojukwu’s Biafra” on June 22, 1969. If there were doubts about the sincerity of this allusion his declaration that “while I live, Biafra lives” may as well serve to affirm his personification of the Biafran struggle.<sup>24</sup> Ojukwu was not known to act on impulse or swayed by popular opinion. He demonstrated this single-

mindedness in his decision not to join Nzeogwu's January 15 coup by refusing to assist with logistic support. It may, therefore, follow that his decision to prosecute the war was borne out of his convictions to which the popular Federalists poster in Figure 5a below narrates.

### Civil War Artists and the Construction of the Ojukwu Imagery

The tenacity and talent invested in developing Ojukwu's iconic figure as a hero or villain by a handful of visual artists in the support or repudiation of the secessionist cause are noteworthy. While photography accounted for the early development of the Ojukwu imagery, the league of visual artists in both the Federalist and the seceding regimes provided the desired animation required for propaganda. This imagery, often rendered with austere linearly black and white brush strokes, was fundamental to the illumination of this iconic figure for frontispiece commentaries in newspaper houses in Lagos and Kaduna on the one hand, and the Chukwumerije-led Propaganda Directorate in Biafra on the other.

**Fig. 5a (left): Crush Rebellion, Ministry of Information, Enugu. Dec. 1968. 5b (right): "Nigerian Pogrom 1966," Biafra 1st Independence Anniversary Stamp, May 30, 1968**



**Source:** [Http://worldstamps.com/2009/10/Biafra.html](http://worldstamps.com/2009/10/Biafra.html). Accessed July 2015.

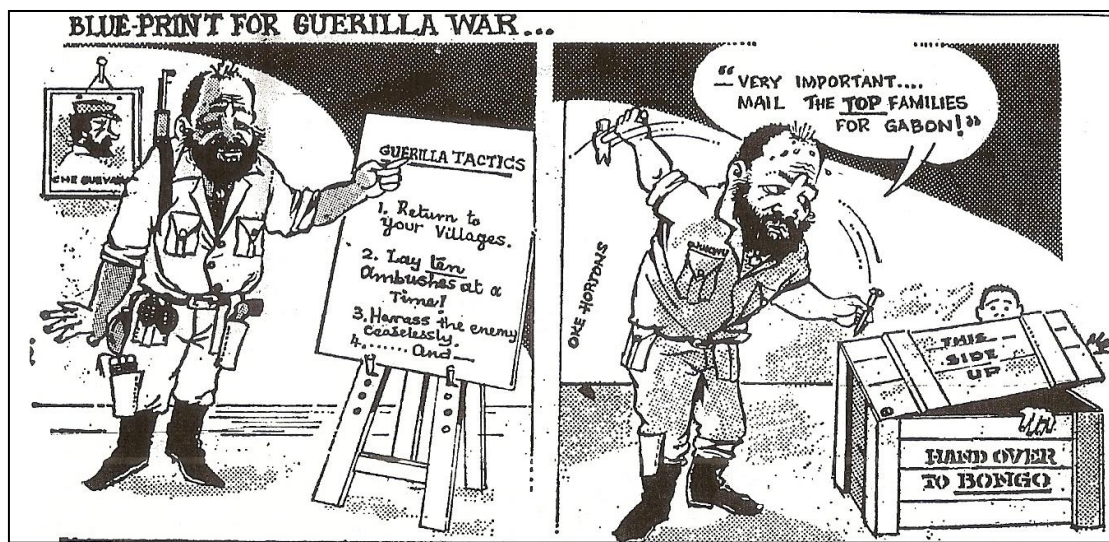
Prominent artists like Chuks Anyanwu, Ndubuisi, Chinwe Ezeani, Paul Ibuanugo, and Joe Maranzu, who were cartoonists in secessionist Biafra, and Ayo Ajayi and Oke Hortons on the Nigerian side took turns to develop a consistent conception of Ojukwu as a hero or a villain. For the Federalists, the artistic representation of Ojukwu in editorial cartoons and illustrations was clear and unambiguous. He was singled out as a rebel who must be crushed. These artists variously depicted Ojukwu as a misguided, ambitious, and clannish rebel, whose "bearded" persona was to be exaggerated at will and rendered synonymous with a man with a troubled state of mind.

Internally, pictorial publicity relied on the sensitivity of the general masses to sell the sentiments of the war in varied themes to enforce the acceptance or rejection of both federal and secessionist campaigns. For instance, the martyr concept afforded Ojukwu through its beheaded



image by the visual campaign of Federalists may have been an exaggerated evaluation of this Biafran leader that ran contrary to the grains of emotional logic for the Easterners (Fig. 5a). The beheaded picture and “jackboot symbolism” which first appeared as an editorial illustration on a Federal government owned newspaper, *The Morning Post*. It was later adopted as a major campaign poster as a euphemism for the “quick kill” police action announced by Gowon.<sup>25</sup> For the Biafrans, it only seemed natural to assume that such a grisly illustration of a beheaded image of Ojukwu would evoke the memories of systemic massacres and countless beheadings occasioned by the earlier pogroms in the northern Nigeria in the months preceding the civil war. The commemoration of the act of mindless beheadings during the pogroms in the north in the Biafran philately offers an inkling of how grievous, such sarcastic symbolism meant to the people of the Eastern Region (Fig. 5b).

**Fig. 6:** Oke Hortons, “Blueprint for Gue[r]rilla War”



**Source:** Editorial cartoon, *Sunday Times* October 13, 1968

Other artistic constructions of Ojukwu by the Federalists, however, tend to show him as insincere and megalomaniac leader who has invested more on propaganda for a misguided adventure of secession. For example, the two-panel cartoon, entitled “Blueprint for Guerrilla War” by Oke Hortons attempts to highlight the insincerity of Ojukwu’s secession campaign (Fig. 6). While on the one hand, he is mobilizing Easterners for a war of attrition against Nigeria, he is on the other hand secretly parcelling his family members for shipment abroad and away from the conflict zone.

For the Separatist Biafra, a predominant style of a revered mythical and heroic figure was established for the construction of the Ojukwu Image. Chuks was undoubtedly one of the most prolific artists during the Nigerian Civil War. He pioneered the “Gulliver” narrative in his rendering of Ojukwu always towering over Gowon (the military head of state of a federal and united Nigeria) whose assured place is that of the Lilliputian in most of his single panel cartoons featuring the two of them.<sup>26</sup> There is no clear conceptual basis for these visual representations in Biafra, but the early allusion to these quickly point to the myth of Ojukwu’s family wealth in direct contrast to Gowon’s relatively humble parental background. While the



variation in size, especially in Chuks' cartoons, tended to place Ojukwu always at an advantage in a duel of personalities between the two, the logical consistency with other propaganda themes which demanded the projection of a people fighting against annihilation by the Nigerian forces seem to devalue these illustrations and associated propaganda in the world media.

**Fig.7a : Chuks Anyanwu "The Boxing Match" cartoon; Fig. 7b: Chuks Anyanwu "Give me your oil .. I quit the fight."**



**Source:** Anyanwu 1968.

Other qualities which seem to influence the construction of the Ojukwu image was his demonstration of persuasive skills during the roundtable negotiations at Aburi, Ghana at the conciliation efforts before the war. Verbatim copies of the Aburi tapes of the negotiation added to the confidence that he needed to lead the Easterners away from Nigeria. His education and membership of the "Oxbridge Club" was also a source of pride for Biafrans' deserving of the amplified visual status accorded him.<sup>27</sup> Ojukwu's broadcast, "away with the old guard" after the January 1966 coup may have also served as a tacit announcement of his readiness to take charge of the new opportunity of leadership that the coup has bestowed on him and affirmed his predilection for power.

A summary of the visual of the Ojukwu image shows him as a dynamic maverick whose image as a mythic figure adapted to all phases of the war. Ojukwu however not only fits as the Biafran icon but also "dispersed among pre-existing, competing symbol systems ...[with] multiple kinds of allegiance and at the mercy of diverse forces pulling it in different directions."<sup>28</sup> He was at once, a respected officer gentleman, an intelligent negotiator, an aristocrat, a comrade revolutionary, a hero, and a villain. Since the development of visual archetypes of the kind that fitted a figure in Ojukwu's mould was in its infancy in Nigeria of the 1960s, coupled with an increasingly disadvantaged and itinerant propaganda machinery, the thirty-month period may have been too short to fully define Ojukwu's mythical personality based on the collections available. However, the transformation Ojukwu's image into a coordinated scheme for an elaborate propaganda may have been accelerated by the masses perception of his concern for the wellbeing of every easterner within and outside the secessionist region.

### **The Concept of Strategic Might: Mineral Wealth, Human Resources, and Infrastructure**

Whereas Ojukwu's education, wealth, and aristocratic disposition, disarming personality, tact, rhetorical persuasions, and providence were the necessary determinants of his ascendancy to power as a hero of the Eastern Region in Nigeria, his strength and weakness as a rebel lie deeper and bestride other considerations. Some of the distinct factors are immanent in the frequently cited literary and iconographic assumptions in the visual narratives that the posters and the cartoons analysed earlier demonstrate. The Ojukwu regime may have been bolstered for secession by its perceived enormous might in terms of skilled human resources, strategic infrastructure, and mineral wealth. The harnessing of these resources and the sheer resilience it brought to the struggle bears a significant direction on the activities of the scientists and engineers at Research and Production (RAP) and its contribution to the sustenance of the Biafran secession attempt.<sup>29</sup> Another permutation that may have accelerated the "might rhetoric" was the independent access to the international community via air and sea transportation. Biafra had access to the sea from Port Harcourt and Calabar. There were also functional airports in Enugu and Port Harcourt. The feasibility of the direct access to shipment and international trade and the perceived infrastructural and human resource capabilities from returnees who heeded the "home call" messages may have principally informed the direction that the conflict took and served as the conceptual basis for the visuals employed in the war propaganda.

Basking in the dynamics of delicate balancing of a seeming contiguous people with the same regional destiny, Ojukwu began the secessionist struggle from a slow, steady, and methodical approach. He seemed patient enough to allow the sensibilities to attain a crescendo before declaring his ostensible position of collective strength, i.e. that "No power in black Africa can subdue us."<sup>30</sup> By this proclamation, the authority of class dynamics appear to have been determined since the decision to engage in a war to secede was sealed at the level of the Biafran establishment and not the lower class used here as an alibi. It highlights to a large extent the presumptuousness of the elite class within the Eastern Region that led to the excruciating debacle of secession.

The declaration of secession was not oblivious to the numerical and hardware strengths of its military against that of the Federal Military Government (FMG) in the event of any repudiation.<sup>31</sup> It was rather based on the presumed comparable self-sufficient intellectual and material endowments of the amalgamated peoples of Eastern Nigeria whose sense of homogeneity needed to be cultivated gradually and not assumed or enforced by fiat. Were this to work, national indoctrination for Biafra was a process that required time that the establishment did not seem to have. Presumptions were also rife about the Easterners' emotional rejection of the Nigerian nation-state based on the residual memory of the past pogroms in the North. The recollection of the determination of the Easterner who brought the pugilist art of boxing into its visual iconography is perhaps also instructive here of the seeming general assertion of an intolerant individual superiority.<sup>32</sup> The evidence of Ojukwu's claim of superior might by this pugilism "know how" as celebrated in the cartoons of Chuks ultimately points to the historical antecedents that may invariably have encouraged Biafra and also destroyed it.

While it may be difficult to fully bring Nzimiro's illustration above to bear on the direct, descriptive rendering of the visuals in Biafran propaganda, the contextual iconographic references in the pictorial publicity of the Nigerian Civil War provides an attestation to the above analogy. It seems ironic that the same placard carrying masses celebrating the perceptive exploits of their known hero on their behalf end up as those exploited to whip up the sentiments of their hero's misadventure (Figs. 8a and 8b). In such symbolisms, the identifiable head becomes that of a hero or the villain who can be rendered to invoke hateful revenge. The hero, like the villain/rebel, is therefore classically identified by readily acceptable archetypes which vary with each intended visual narrative.

Whereas the Biafran propaganda often highlights the strengths of Biafra, on other occasions, those controlling the propaganda found it more effective to emphasise Biafra's weakness and vulnerability. This ambivalent posturing is at the core of the Biafran rhetoric. While this depiction—Biafra as simultaneously strong and weak—seems on the surface to be

contradictory, Allison Gluck believes that “the two images were in fact interconnected and mutually supportive.”<sup>35</sup> This paradoxical image was, in some cases, helpful in prompting different reactions from different “audiences.”

Thematised to present a dual posture of the weak and strong, some of the illustrations that echo this subject seem contradictory to the Biafran myth, having in another illustration demonstrated the single-minded determination of the Northern hegemony in the “Awo’s Turn” cartoon (Fig. 9a). By the very structure of its conception, the “Awo’s Turn” cartoon adumbrates the issues of elite conspiracy in the weakening of the Nigerian project. It provides renewed evidence that demonstrates the Nigerian government’s reliance on the old contentious political tactics of strength by numbers and therefore in accordance with its policy to set aside issues that brought the process of estrangement about in the first place. It frames the colonial politics of divide and rule as an essential structure for the development of conflicts and tensions by the elite class in Nigeria. It is on this template that one may view the animation of the recurring problem of the “stranger and the settler” phenomenon within the Nigerian nation which had suffered repeated unprovoked attacks in a part of their country that they had always known as their home as unfortunate. The role demonstrated by Ojukwu in the protection of lives and properties of the peoples of the Eastern Region seem to derive from the reluctance of the stakeholders in Eastern Nigeria to define better ways other than secession for conflict resolution. As Uwechue argues, “What Biafrans lacked and what produced the present bitter and unfortunate conflict therefore is not sovereignty. It is security.”<sup>36</sup>

Fig. 9a (left): “Its my turn General.” Fig. 9b (right): “Hands off Africa.”



Source: Anyanwu 1968. Courtesy Biafrana Section, University of Nigeria Library, Nigeria.

### Negotiation by Foreign Might

Another significant element in the power negotiation of the civil war connects directly to the nostalgic reliance on or mortal phobia for the White man as the “Hands off” cartoon by Chuks illustrates (see Fig. 9b). This imperialist hangover made immanent in the conceptual notion of a supervising white man’s hand in the woes of Biafra becomes the implied rhetoric in most of the visual propaganda employed during the Nigerian Civil War. Quick pointers to imperial sabotage in the UK, USSR, and the US were raised to explain military failures as much as its affiliation with another imperialist, France, served as a morale booster for the secession



campaign. It can, therefore, be argued that the obvious weakness of the belligerents as highlighted in the visuals lay in its lip reading and claim as to where the support of each Western power favored. Ojukwu was therefore projected through visual propaganda as the gifted leader imbued with the wisdom to reject all forms of neo-colonialist antics from unfriendly western powers and the hegemonic influence of northern Nigeria. It seems reasonable to assume, that, the apparent conciliatory gains arising from Decree 8, which gave effect to the Federal government version of the Aburi Accord in 1967, became unattractive to the Biafra establishment because of the appealing chances for an unrestrained political ascendancy of an ethnically cohesive Igbo elite if secession succeeded. As Siollun states, Decree 8 gave Ojukwu 90 percent of what he demanded in his confederation option of the Aburi Accord and could have been considered to save the lives and needless loss of property of the Easterners.<sup>37</sup> Canvassing for Western allies to buy into the issue of insecurity of the lives of Easterners in other parts of Nigeria and provide logistical support for secession from the Nigerian Federation, shadows Biafra's unwillingness to accept political undercurrents that have played a predominant role in the Nigerian political realm far before its independence.

## Conclusion

An analysis of the frontal and ancillary issues drawn from the images in this study privileges the rhetoric of messianic might of the typical Nigerian elite that Ojukwu represents. It highlights the hero-rebel polemics in the civil war discourse as a delicate appellation variously presented in the visual propaganda to the advantage of Ojukwu as far as the politics of secession and its tendencies in the Nigerian nation-state is concerned. The inventiveness of the cartoonists, poster artists, and photographers who scouted for poignant clichés that hover within the social milieu to establish the conceptual frame for their artistic statement only answered to the immediate needs of the time and helped to extend the propaganda discourse beyond the radio and the written text. By gauging the barometer of societal sensibilities, it is possible to determine when to appropriate the strength of Biafran ingenuity, boxing prowess, togetherness, inventiveness, legitimacy, and what needs to be highlighted to stir social action. The materiality of human action is not often foolproof, and these failings also manifested in visual form and are, therefore, essential in illuminating new positions on the war that may have been taken for granted or overwhelmed by the sentiments at the time of the war. Such visual reawakening falls into the unravelling puzzle that offers a unique strength to the image. The power of the images of the Nigerian Civil War serves to add insightful narratives to the body of the war discourse. The Biafran propaganda echoes "the image of the weak" whose evocation of weakness seems foregrounded in the political forces of the elite to achieve their desire for power at the expense of the masses they sought to protect. Sadly, as the images seem to reveal, the manipulation of images of the weak only ends up as an advantage for the elite political class in their struggle for power among themselves in Nigeria.

## Notes

- 1 Excerpted from Mitchell 1996, pp. 74, 82.

- 2 Various accounts of the Nigerian civil war highlight the fundamental roles played by the principal actors in the crises that culminated in the war that engulfed the country for thirty months. See for example, Kirk-Greene 1971, St. Jorre 1972, Forsyth 1977, Obasanjo 1980, Madiebo 2000, and Saro-Wiwa 1989.
- 3 See Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette no. 51, vol. 53, 24 May 1966, A153 for details on the promulgation of the Unification Decree No. 34 of 1966, and the suspension of the 1963 republican constitution.
- 4 Siollun 2007 provides an interesting account of the power play within the military hierarchy after the death of Ironsi. While Lt-Colonel Gowon was chosen by northern soldiers who planned the second coup, Ojukwu insisted that Brigadier Ogundipe who was the most senior officer should become the head of the Military Government. See also Falola & Heaton 2008, p. 174; Akpeninor 2013, pp. 274-75.
- 5 Nzimiro 1982, p. 13
- 6 The term is used to accommodate the construction of the tenor or mood pictures convey in the depiction of a relatively fixed set of traits that spring from social class, race, and position of power, physiognomy, style of dress, and personality in a picture plane. This concept of personage is highlighted in Barnhurst & Nerone, 2000, pp. 72-73.
- 7 The body of extant visual materials on the Biafran propaganda are largely embedded in the print media and as mementos in private collections across the globe. Studying them together will require the blurring of difference between the major class of images that includes but not limited to wartime Posters, editorial photographs and cartoons. However, Serafini 2011, pp. 342-50, provides a veritable template and theoretical clarifications for the reading, interpretation and understanding of the multimodal statements that constitute this engagement.
- 8 Coleman 1986 pp.146-47.
- 9 There seems to be an interesting co-relationship between identity, power, and dress and personality code of African leaders of the colonial and early post-colonial period that requires psychoanalytic investigation. The examples highlighted in this study only serves to broach an extensive area of what appears a fascinating but uncharted research area. Studies by Hansen 2004, pp. 369-92, and Roach-Higgins & Eicher 1992, pp. 1-8, may well provide the direction for such engagement.
- 10 The concept of photographic portraiture serving both honorific and repressive functions was popularised by Allan Sekula. See for example Sekula, 1989 pp. 344-90. The tradition of hanging the official portraits of the head of Federal and Regional/State governments alongside the Coat of Arms at government establishments preceded the military intervention to which Ojukwu was a beneficiary and has remained the practice in Nigeria today.
- 11 Barthes 1977, p. 16.
- 12 Uwechue, 1971, p. 30.
- 13 The trademark olive-green military fatigues, beret, cigarette and rifle seemed an irresistible revolutionary symbol in Africa of the mid-60s following the Cuban revolution. Ernesto “Che” Guevara (1928-1967) was an Argentine Marxist guerrilla leader who was in the Congo in 1965 to facilitate a revolutionary war against what they termed neo-colonialism and “Yankee imperialism.” See also, Salas-del Valle February 2003.
- 14 The Ahiara Declaration was a document that sought to streamline the principles of the Biafran revolution with and the ideology of “non-alignment.” Generally agreed to be authored by a group of intellectuals under the auspices of the National Guidance Committee of Biafra, it

- was presented as a speech by the Biafran leader Emeka Ojukwu in the town of Ahiara on June 1, 1969. See Nzimiro 1982.
- 15 It still remains a potent argument that the symbolic association and predilection towards a communist styled revolution in Biafra through the principles set out in the Ahiara Declaration may have hurt its relationship with ideologically opposed would-be friendly nations in Africa and the West leading to the non-recognition of Biafra as a sovereign nation.
  - 16 A study of the Nigerian civil war seem to show a mutually opposite approach to their propaganda campaigns. While the Secessionist campaign tended to be proactive, the Federal government campaigns were either passive or reactive in style.
  - 17 Excerpts from Ita 1949, p. 15; Solarin 1963, p. 234 ; Protest committee of Nigerian Youths 1955, p. 9 as quoted in Zachernuk 1991, pp. 333-44 allude to the self-image of the elite and political class in pre-independent Nigeria.
  - 18 Tamuno 1989, p. 26.
  - 19 Ojukwu 1969, p. 49.
  - 20 Hall 1992, p. 277.
  - 21 While the study of portraits of heads of the government and political elites in Nigeria is yet to constitute a full area of scholarly inquiry, the representational traits are anchored on a rich western convention adopted since early portrait renderings by the foremost Nigerian painter, Aina Onabulu. The introduction of the flag as an accessory in the composition of post-independent official photography in Nigeria may have originated from the contradictions that the narrative of the Ojukwu imagery by the transition from “personage to person” illustrate. The exchange of temporal narrative for immediacy and emotional impact conflicts with the index of authority which the flag backdrop offers the photographic composition. For details on the “personage to person” narrative in visual studies see, for example, Barnhurst and Nerone 2000, pp. 72-74.
  - 22 Following a drop in the public opinion about the genocidal claim at the twilight of the secessionist Biafra regime, their commandos kidnapped foreign workers of the Italian oil firm AGIP drawing yet again world attention to itself. As illustrated in the cartoon, Ojukwu may have been portrayed as unreliable in his dealings with perceived friends since Italy and the Vatican was at the forefront of sending relief to Biafra. See also Doron 2014, pp.137-56.
  - 23 See cover page image at <http://content.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,19680823,00.html>
  - 24 See text of Ojukwu’s call from exile, issued through the Biafran Information Agency in Geneva and reproduced verbatim in *The Times*, 16 January 1970. <http://www.dawodu.com/ojukwu2.htm>. Accessed 12 February 2015.
  - 25 See further analysis in <https://www.africanstudies.northwestern.edu/docs/publications-research/working-papers/etiido-inyang-2013.pdf>
  - 26 It is interesting to note how the artists managed classic literary characters and converted them to visual metaphors for propaganda purposes. It stands therefore to reason that most of these visuals were largely meant for the literate reading audience that had become opinion leaders in their various communities. According to Zachernuk 1991, the population of this educated class had peaked significantly in the early 60s.
  - 27 According to Charles Perry Trumbull, “the Oxbridge Club, a fraternity based at Oxford and Cambridge University, had active circles in Nigeria. These men were considered special and highly respectable. Therefore, instead of being bitter or resentful in case they did not have

similar opportunities, they were proud that their leader fit the Igbo ideal.” Quoted in Trumbull 1973.

28 Freeman 2010, p. 244.

29 Ukeagbu 2005, pp.1395-423.

30 Uwechue 1972, p. 19.

31 Ebbe 2010, pp. 41-45.

32 Dick Tiger was the middleweight boxing champion of the world after beating Gene Fulmer in October 1962 in San Francisco. He successfully defended the title in Ibadan, Nigeria, on August 10th 1963 to become the second Nigerian from the Eastern Region after Hogan Kid Bassey to win a boxing title, thereby reinforcing its imagery as a euphemism for power within the Nigerian context

33 Tamuno 1970, p. 565.

34 Nzimiro 1982, p. 42.

35 Gluck 2007, p. 27

36 Uwechue 1972, p. 19.

37 See Siollun 2007.

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# Children's Rights Standards and Child Marriage in Malawi

LEA MWAMBENE and OBDIAH MAWODZA

**Abstract:** Child marriages occur when one of the parties is below the age of eighteen. In Malawi, research has shown that most child marriages are a result of cultural practices. To comply with various international and regional instruments, Malawi has enacted different pieces of legislation that can be useful in addressing child marriage. The article, therefore, examines these different pieces of legislation and assesses Malawi's compliance with international standards in addressing child marriages. The authors highlight two imperative issues. First, these laws show evidence of using international children's rights standards as a tool in addressing child marriages. Secondly, they prescribe conflicting approaches that one can interpret as to encouraging child marriages linked to cultural practices. As a result, the article suggests possible recommendations on how Malawi can comply with international standards in addressing child marriages. These include amendment of laws, and more importantly, enactment of a specific law, for example, the Prohibition of Child Marriages Act, which, if enacted, should target all laws and cultural practices that lead to child marriages in Malawi.

## Introduction

Malawi is one of the top ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage in Africa.<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) revealed that 50 percent of Malawian women aged between twenty and twenty-four years old were married before eighteen years of age.<sup>2</sup> These statistics indicate significant gender disparities between boys and girls in child marriages. In 2015, UNICEF revealed that 23.4 percent of female adolescents were already married or in unions as compared to only 2.2 percent of males in the same age group.<sup>3</sup> This position presumably led to the Human Rights Watch predicting that on average one out of two girls will be married by their eighteenth birthday by 2020.<sup>4</sup> More important to this discussion, a study by the Malawi Human Rights Commission has shown that different cultural practices and rules that regulate marriage, marriageable age, and initiation ceremonies predispose girls to child marriage.<sup>5</sup>

The conclusion of a marriage before the age of eighteen is, according to scholars such as Rita Mutyaba, a fundamental violation of human rights as well as a health

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v17/v17i3a2.pdf>

hazard to girls.<sup>6</sup> As pointed out by Chatterjee, child marriage robs girls of their survival and development skills that critically prepare them for adulthood life.<sup>7</sup> In addition, Nour also observed that the resultant outcomes of such marriages include high rates of maternal and child mortality, susceptibility to sexually transmitted diseases, the inability to acquire education, and domestic violence.<sup>8</sup> To sum up, child marriage negatively affects the rights of girls to health, life, education, survival and development, freedom from sexual abuse, dignity and personal integrity, and not to be discriminated against. For these reasons, Cook rightly depicted child marriages not only as a human rights crisis but also as health and social hindrances for girls.<sup>9</sup>

Malawi is party to several international and regional human rights instruments that can address issues of cultural practices that lead to child marriage.<sup>10</sup> In complying with the requirement of enacting legislation as a first step towards the implementation of international standards on the protection of children's rights in general, and child marriage in particular, Malawi's Constitution has a Bill of Rights with specific provisions on children's rights.<sup>11</sup> In addition, Malawi has enacted several pieces of relevant legislation: the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act; the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act; and the Gender Equality Act.

This article critically analyses the above-mentioned national legislative frameworks in addressing the issue of child marriage. The aim is to highlight the compliance or non-compliance of such legislation with international and regional standards on the protection of children, particularly girls, against child marriage. The analysis starts with a brief discussion of the international legal standards that address cultural practices that lead to child marriages and violations of children's rights.<sup>12</sup> Thereafter, we examine Malawi's current legal framework that can be used to address the issue of child marriages.<sup>13</sup> A critical assessment of Malawi's legal response and its compliance with international standards then follows. The last part contains a conclusion in which we recommend that for the national laws to be effective, they must be accompanied by civic education, effective training of different stakeholders, and amendment of out-dated laws. In addition, as proposed by Braimah in the context of Nigeria and child marriages, we also recommend the enactment of a special law that deals with child marriages, for example, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act.<sup>14</sup>

### **International and Regional Law Context on Child Marriage**

As pointed out, Malawi is a party to several international and regional human rights instruments that are relevant for measuring its compliance in addressing cultural practices that lead to child marriage. To address this issue, international law prescribes, in Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), that a child is a person aged below eighteen.<sup>15</sup> Importantly, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) defines a child as anyone under the age eighteen, without attaching any limitation.<sup>16</sup> Thus, as Gose rightly observes, "this definition is unequivocal, it does not allow for any exceptions."<sup>17</sup>

In addition, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) explicitly requires state parties to specify eighteen as the minimum age for marriage.<sup>18</sup> This position is similar to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human

and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), which also prescribes eighteen as the minimum marriageable age.<sup>19</sup> The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) also requires state parties to prescribe a minimum marriageable age and declares that child betrothals and/or marriages shall have no legal effect.<sup>20</sup> The Committee on Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee) also explicitly endorsed eighteen as the minimum marriageable age.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committees have urged Malawi to set eighteen as the minimum marriageable age and make birth registration compulsory for all children.<sup>22</sup> In this context, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee) urges Malawi to provide free birth registrations as their non-registration, among other children's rights violations, extends the practice of child marriage.<sup>23</sup> Given the high prevalence of the non-registration of births in Malawi, Odala noted that this may be a serious challenge to the legal protection of children, particularly girls who physically appear to be of marriageable age when in fact they are not.<sup>24</sup> For the purpose of this discussion, improving the registration of births will help to conform to the requirements of setting eighteen as the minimum marriageable age. Moreover, the 2008 Southern African Development Community Protocol on Gender and Development (SADC Gender Protocol) has also stressed the importance of setting eighteen as the minimum marriageable age.<sup>25</sup>

As noted in the introduction, many of the cultural practices that result in child marriages affect girls more than they affect boys. This is obviously discrimination based on sex. In addressing this, Article 4 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) requires state parties to adopt special measures including legislative, executive, administrative, and other regulatory instruments, policies, and practices to effectively combat discrimination and improve the welfare of women and girls.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, Article 5(a) specifically obliges state parties to "modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct for men and women."<sup>27</sup> According to Sepper, Article 5(a) is both an "interpretive tool" and a "substance-giver" which acts as the guarantor of substantive equality for women.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the CRC Committee, General Comment No. 4 of 2003 also emphasised the importance of interventions to set the minimum age for marriage without discrimination.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the 2014 joint general recommendation No. 31 of the CEDAW Committee and CRC Committee General Comment No. 18 on harmful practices took a position that "child marriage is considered a forced marriage."<sup>30</sup> In addition, the joint recommendation considered the immaturity of one or both parties to a child marriage and concluded that only in exceptional cases will it allow marriages of those who are below eighteen but above sixteen.<sup>31</sup>

Apart from prescribing marriageable age and non-discriminatory provisions in addressing child marriage, the CRC Committee, General Comment No. 3 of 2003 explicitly categorised child marriages as harmful cultural practices since they violate children's rights.<sup>32</sup> In providing guidelines for the protection of girls against child marriages due to cultural practices, Article 24(3) of the Convention on the Rights of



the Child (CRC) is also applicable.<sup>33</sup> It requires state parties to take “all effective and appropriate measures, with the view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.”<sup>34</sup> According to van Bueren, “Article 24(3) advances the rights of children by prohibiting all forms of harmful cultural practices including those which have not been explicitly defined” such as child marriages.<sup>35</sup> Since child marriages are harmful cultural practices, one can read Article 24(3) as calling for the abolition of child marriages.<sup>36</sup>

In addition, Article 5(a) of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) requires state parties to take legal protection, and preventive measures to eliminate stereotypes and cultural prejudices against women.<sup>37</sup> The CEDAW Committee, General Comment No. 28 of 2010 emphasised that gender is a social and cultural construction that should change.<sup>38</sup> In this view of child marriage, these measures are useful tools in eliminating cultural practices that specifically target girls.<sup>39</sup> They eliminate stereotypes and cultural prejudices against girls. Additionally, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) obligates state parties to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices prejudicial to the survival and development of the child.<sup>40</sup> This position has been echoed in the Southern African Development Community Protocol on Gender and Development (SADC Gender Protocol) where it “requires state parties to support public awareness programmes aimed at changing behaviour to effectively eliminate harmful cultural practices.”<sup>41</sup>

The principle of the “best interests of the child” found in Articles 3 and 4 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), respectively, is relevant in addressing the matter of child marriage. Most cultural practices, such as *kupawila* (paying off a debt by marrying a daughter) that may lead to child marriage give priority to the interests of parents at the expense of children.<sup>42</sup> One would view the parental interests that surround most child marriages linked to cultural practices as inconsistent with the protection of the best interests of the child.<sup>43</sup> In resolving this inconsistency, the international standard prioritises the best interests of the child at the expense of either her parents or guardians.<sup>44</sup> Article 1(3) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) as read together with Article 4 are vocal in addressing the conflicts between culture and the best interests of the child. It provides that: “Any custom, tradition, a cultural or religious practice that is inconsistent with the rights, duties and obligations contained in the present Charter shall, to the extent of such inconsistency, be discouraged.”<sup>45</sup>

In view of the above provisions, Lloyd has rightly observed that the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) “could be seen as an overriding *lex specilis* aimed at the realisation of children's rights and should, therefore, prevail over harmful cultural practices.”<sup>46</sup> This observation is supported by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) that has recommended state parties put in place legislative, administrative, and judicial measures to safeguard the best interests of the child.<sup>47</sup>

In addition, Articles 12 and 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), respectively, provide for the right to child participation.<sup>48</sup> In principle, child participation allows children to voice their concerns, needs, and views to the extent

that they can challenge cultural practices associated with child marriages.<sup>49</sup> Mezmur and Sloth-Nielsen have also observed that the principle of child participation is useful in the protection of girls against cultural practices that lead to child marriages.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, linked to the best interests of the child principle, “the right to child participation can enable children to achieve their best interests.”<sup>51</sup> In cognisance of this fact, the CRC Committee, General Comment No. 12 of 2009 recommended that state parties give due regard to the views of the child when decisions are to be made that affect them.<sup>52</sup>

Furthermore, Articles 2 and 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)<sup>53</sup> prohibit differential treatment of boys and girls without objective and reasonable justifications.<sup>54</sup> Hodgkin and Newell have then observed that Articles 2 and 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) are relevant in addressing child marriages.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, the principle of non-discrimination becomes relevant because it sends a strong message that parents cannot perpetuate discrimination through preferential treatment of a boy child over a girl child.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, Articles 2 and 6 of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), respectively, reiterated that “women and men enjoy equal rights and are regarded as equal partners in marriage.” The CEDAW Committee, General Comment No. 28 of 2010 recognised that women experience countless forms of discrimination because of their sex and gender.<sup>57</sup> More importantly, the CEDAW Committee, General Comment No. 19 of 1992 has characterised oppressive practices against women such as child marriages as forms of discrimination.<sup>58</sup>

Lastly, the principle of “survival and development” found in Articles 6 and 5 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), respectively, is relevant in addressing child marriages.<sup>59</sup> Kaime has observed that the right to development particularly creates the concepts of equality of opportunity and distributive justice for all.<sup>60</sup> The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) requires state parties to interpret “development” as achieving the optimal physical and mental growth for all children.<sup>61</sup> In the context of addressing child marriages, the right to development is important because it centres on the notion of participation as discussed above.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) held that the child’s right to development “enables children to grow up in a healthy and protected manner, free from fear and want, and to develop their personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential consistent with their evolving capacities.”<sup>63</sup> The human rights standards rightly requires girls to develop into adults who can make their own free choices and enjoy their fundamental human rights, such as the right to choose their own spouses.

What is clear from this discussion is that at the international level there are clear guidelines to measure against state parties’ compliance through the scrutiny of their legislative, policy, and administrative actions. As pointed out in the introduction, Malawi is party to these international legal instruments. In the following sections, therefore, we discuss Malawi’s legal response to child marriages.

## Legal Framework on Child Marriages in Malawi

### *The Constitution*

The findings of Malawi Human Rights Commission revealed that several cultural practices that lead to child marriage disproportionately affect young girls.<sup>64</sup> As a result, these practices discriminate against girls based on sex and gender.<sup>65</sup> Despite this, there are several provisions in the Constitution that are useful in addressing these discriminatory cultural practices. For example, consistent with international standards, section 20 guarantees the right to equality:<sup>66</sup> Section 20 provides:

1. *Discrimination* of persons in any form is prohibited and all persons are, under any law, guaranteed equal and effective protection against discrimination on grounds of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, disability, property, birth or other status.
2. Legislation may be passed addressing inequalities in society and prohibiting discriminatory practices and the propagation of such practices and may render such practices criminally punishable by the Courts.<sup>67</sup>

According to Chirwa, section 20(1) encompasses three aspects of equality, namely, “‘non-discrimination’, ‘equal protection before the law’ and ‘positive measures to combat and eliminate inequality.’”<sup>68</sup> One can interpret these elements as follows: firstly, “non-discrimination” involves equal treatment of all persons irrespective of gender.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, Nyirenda has interpreted section 20(1) as prohibiting any form of discrimination.<sup>70</sup> In this context, cultural practices that force girls into marriage discriminate based on sex. Furthermore, the Court in *Malawi Congress Party & Others v Attorney General & Another* held that non-discrimination prohibits any classification that arbitrarily burdens an individual or group of individuals.<sup>71</sup> This observation is relevant as girls belong to a group commonly affected by cultural practices that lead to child marriages. Hodgkin and Newman argued that girls have greater risks of discrimination because they are relatively powerless and depend on elders for the realisation of their rights.<sup>72</sup>

Secondly, Chirwa asserts that the element of “equal protection before the law” finds its basis on the concept of formal equality.<sup>73</sup> With this interpretation, section 20(1) meets the requirement of formal equality on the protection of girls against child marriage because it outlaws discrimination based on sex. The last element of “positive measures to combat and eliminate inequality” entrenches substantive equality.<sup>74</sup> Substantive equality, as opposed to formal equality, recognises the difference between men and women, but affirms equality between them by placing laws, policies, and programs which address societal inequalities, for example, affirmative action.<sup>75</sup> Fredman identified three aspects that substantive equality aims to achieve: “First, substantive equality redresses stereotype by promoting the respect for equal dignity and worth of all. Second, it gives positive affirmation and celebration of identity within the community, and, finally, it facilitates full participation in society.”<sup>76</sup>



In this context, substantive equality can address child marriages that lead to children's rights violations as it breaks the cycle of perpetual disadvantage associated with girls.<sup>77</sup> The Malawi Law Commission echoed the same sentiments when it interpreted section 20 as providing special protection to women and children because they are vulnerable.<sup>78</sup> In addition, section 20(2) fortifies section 20(1) by purposely obliging Malawi to pass legislation that combats cultural practices that support discrimination.<sup>79</sup> This concurs with the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Sixth Periodic State Report, in which Malawi affirmed its constitutional obligation to enact laws that address societal inequalities.<sup>80</sup> Thus, the Court in *Republic v Chinthiti & Others* observed, "that section 20(2) reinforces section 20(1) in that both formal and substantive equality are indispensable tools in combating discrimination."<sup>81</sup> Thus, section 20(2) envisages affirmative action. Affirmative action encompasses law reform efforts to extend existing benefits, privileges, or rights to a particular group that was previously disadvantaged.<sup>82</sup> Through law reform, such as, the enactment of the Gender Equality Act and the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act, which impose criminal liability on the perpetrators of discrimination, girls can assert their rights and overcome patriarchal discrimination.<sup>83</sup>

Apart from section 20, section 23, which specifically protects children's rights, is also pivotal in addressing child marriages. It provides, "(1) all children, regardless of the circumstances of their birth, are entitled to equal treatment before the law." Nyirenda has rightly argued that section 23(1) must be read together with section 20(1).<sup>84</sup> Section 23(1), consistent with international and regional instruments, arguably prohibits discrimination of girls based on sex.<sup>85</sup> As pointed out in part 2, most cultural practices that lead to child marriages affect the girls' right to education. Once married, girls lose the protection of the law as children.<sup>86</sup> Section 23(4)(b) which requires non-interference with the education of children, becomes relevant as "children are entitled to be protected from economic exploitation or any treatment, work or punishment that is, or is likely to interfere with their education."<sup>87</sup>

More importantly, section 23(4)(b) must be read together with section 25 which also guarantees the right to education.<sup>88</sup> In this context, cultural practices that lead to child marriages deny girls to exercise their right to education by forcing them into marriage. These provisions are, therefore, relevant in that they prohibit parents from practicing traditions that interfere with the girls' education rights.<sup>89</sup> The Committee on the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR Committee) has pointed out that, "the right to education is important because it obviously gives priority to the best interests of girls; thereby, safeguarding them from abuse associated with harmful cultural practices."<sup>90</sup>

In addition, cultural practices that affect the health of girls can be addressed using section 23(4)(c), which is similar to Articles 24(1) (3) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This provision protects the physical, mental, spiritual health, and social wellbeing of children. Most girls found in child marriage situations are immature and taken advantage of by older men. This subjects them to domestic violence and the risks of HIV infection that inevitably affect their health, survival, and development.

Apart from sections 20 and 23 as discussed, section 22 also lays down the framework that can address child marriages for it directly prohibits forcing anybody

into a marriage.<sup>91</sup> Implied in this provision is that, parties to a marriage should give their consent.<sup>92</sup> We therefore argue that section 22 excludes children from concluding a marriage since they are incapable of giving consent because of their age. Furthermore, section 22(6) seems to set the minimum marriageable age at eighteen, which is in line with the regional standards that require eighteen as the age of marriage.<sup>93</sup>

However, section 22(7) is problematic as it allows persons between fifteen and eighteen years to enter into a marriage if they obtain parental consent. This legal gap encourages parents or guardians to bypass the age requirement stipulated by section 22(6) and marry off their young children.<sup>94</sup> This provision is an oversight as it stands in the way of all attempts to end child marriages where parents are particularly involved in the name of cultural practices.<sup>95</sup> More importantly for this discussion, this provision is in conflict with international standards, specifically the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) that sets eighteen as the minimum age for marriage.<sup>96</sup>

Section 22(8) further heightens the problem of child marriages in that it merely discourages marriages between persons where either is under the age of fifteen years.<sup>97</sup> The court in *Francis Mangani v Republic* observed that persons under age fifteen are too immature and incompetent to give consent to a marriage.<sup>98</sup> Section 22(8), therefore, does not take a firm standing in prohibiting child marriages. Instead, section 22 subsections (6), (7) and (8), respectively, give "a constitutional imprimatur to child marriages."<sup>99</sup> In addition, these subsections give a negative impression that the Constitution permits marriages between persons where either of them is under the age of eighteen since they merely discourage child marriages.<sup>100</sup>

Furthermore, section 24 on the constitutional protection of women's rights is useful in addressing child marriages.<sup>101</sup> The Maputo Protocol defines women as "persons of the female gender, including girls."<sup>102</sup> Section 24(2) complements sections 20 and 23 in that it effectively prohibits discrimination against women and girls based on gender. In this view, Chirwa has rightly stated that men and women require equal treatment and laws that discriminate against women are void.<sup>103</sup> In addition, section 24(2), just like section 20(2), requires Malawi to pass legislation that eliminates patriarchal customs and practices. In compliance with these constitutional provisions, Malawi has enacted several acts, for example, the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act, which have fixed the marriageable age at eighteen. The Child Care, Protection and Justice Act and the Gender Equality Act, discussed below, also outlaw harmful cultural practices, such as child marriages. What is evident here is that Malawi complies with most human rights treaties that require it, as state party, to enact legislation that outlaws discriminatory practices against girls and women.<sup>104</sup>

Despite the positive attributes that come from the Constitution in addressing child marriages, however, section 23(5), which defines a child as a person less than sixteen years old, is problematic. Firstly, it is incompatible with the international standards that set the age of majority at eighteen years.<sup>105</sup> Secondly, by defining a child as anyone under sixteen years of age, the Constitution does not send a strong message against child marriages.<sup>106</sup> Thirdly, the constitutional definition of the child is against the guarantees of the general norms of non-discrimination, child participation, right to survival and development, and the best interests of the child principle.<sup>107</sup> What is also problematic is that the Constitution does not expressly

recognise the best interest of the child, which is a cardinal principle in the protection of children's rights.<sup>108</sup> Lastly, as the supreme law of the land, the Constitution sets a bad precedence; hence, the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act, as it will be shown below, has similar prescriptions.<sup>109</sup>

### *The Child Care, Protection and Justice Act*

The Child Care, Protection and Justice Act, is the principal piece of legislation on matters concerning children. This Act is a direct response to Malawi's obligation under international law to address child marriages in the context of cultural practices.<sup>110</sup> For instance, section 80 provides that "no person shall, subject a child to a social or customary practice that is harmful to the health or general development of the child."<sup>111</sup> This provision complies with Articles 24(3), 21, and 5 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), respectively.

Section 80, just like section 23(4) of the Constitution, prohibits parents, guardians, and public or private agents from practicing customs that negatively affect the health, education, and general development of children. This led Mwambene to observe that the ban on all cultural practices that may affect children sends a strong message that any cultural practice that is harmful to children cannot be in the best interests of the child.<sup>112</sup> More relevant to the focus of this paper, section 80 complies with the Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee), General Comment No. 13 of 2011 that explicitly prohibits child marriages because they hinder the general health and development of children, especially girls.<sup>113</sup>

In addition, section 81 provides that "no person shall force a child into the marriage; or force a child to be betrothed."<sup>114</sup> This provision is unequivocal in dealing with customary practices such as *kutwala* (marriage by abduction) and *kupawila* (paying off a debt by marrying a daughter), which force girls into marriage.<sup>115</sup> Section 81 complements the Constitution in that consent is an essential element of the right to marry.<sup>116</sup> The provision also complies with Articles 16 and 21(2) of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), respectively.<sup>117</sup> By prohibiting children from entering into forced marriages, this provision is in tandem with the international standards, which require consent to be given by a person who has the competency.<sup>118</sup> As Chirwa has rightly observed, the decision to marry or not to marry is essential because marriage is a life commitment.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, courts have, before the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act, reprimanded parents who allow young girls to get married.<sup>120</sup>

Furthermore, section 82 can address cultural practices such *kupawila*, whereby parents or guardians pledge girls to obtain credit or as surety for a debt.<sup>121</sup> Arguably, the practice of *kupawila* is as good as slavery because it forces girls, without the right to refuse, into marriage as payment of a debt owed by their parents. Section 82 is therefore consistent with section 23(4)(b) of the Constitution and Article 1 of the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery of 1956 (Slavery Convention), which also

outlaw and prohibit institutions or practices which can exploit children economically and are similar to slavery.<sup>122</sup>

More importantly, section 83 fortifies sections 80, 81, and 82 in that a person who contravenes sections 80, 81, and 82 commits an offence and shall be liable for a ten-year imprisonment.<sup>123</sup> This provision is in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Committee on Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee), both of which recommended that criminal laws must include protection measures for victims of harmful practices.<sup>124</sup> The imposition of a punishment sends a strong message that child marriages can no longer be justified on the grounds of cultural practices.<sup>125</sup>

Section 23(1)(b) can also be used to address child marriage.<sup>126</sup> This provision is similar to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and CRC Committees' Joint General Comment No. 31, which noted that children, particularly girls, are in need of special care and protection against cultural practices that lead to child marriages, since they subject girls to substantial risks of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.<sup>127</sup>

Due to the direct linkages between cultural practices and child marriages, the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act's definition of a child becomes relevant. Accordingly, a child "means a person below the age of sixteen years."<sup>128</sup> This definition, together with that of the Constitution, is not in accord with international standards where eighteen is the age of majority.<sup>129</sup> The age sixteen is, therefore, against the guarantees of the general norm of the best interests of the child that is useful in reinforcing the prohibition of child marriages.<sup>130</sup>

### *The Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act*

The Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act is premised on the principle of equality as envisaged by section 20 of the Constitution.<sup>131</sup> It fosters equality by guaranteeing equal treatment in terms of the rights and obligations of the parties to a marriage under this Act.<sup>132</sup> In addition, the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act has, *inter alia*, provisions which can address cultural practices linked to child marriages in the following ways: unlike both the Constitution and the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act, section 14 fixes the minimum marriageable age at eighteen. It provides that "subject to section 22 of the Constitution, two persons of the opposite sex who are both not under the age of eighteen years, and are of sound mind, may enter into marriage with each other."<sup>133</sup>

Read together with section 2, which defines the "child" as a person under eighteen years, section 14 categorically prohibits marriages of persons below the age of eighteen. More importantly, it complies with international standards such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), which set eighteen as the minimum age for marriage.<sup>134</sup> In addition, section 14 makes no distinction between boys and girls on their legal minimum age of marriage. Section 14, therefore, guarantees girls enjoyment of their rights, such as the right to education that is proven to keep girls from early marriages at an equal basis with boys.<sup>135</sup>

Apart from section 14, section 77(1)(e) declares a marriage invalid if consent was obtained by force, duress, deceit, or fraud. Consequently, section 77(1)(e) precisely is

important in addressing child marriages where some cultural practices allow girls to marry without their consent. In addition, the girl's right to freely consent to a marriage is fundamental since it affects her life, dignity and equality as a human being.<sup>136</sup> It can, therefore, be argued that section 77(1)(e) goes hand in glove with section 14, as discussed above, which fixes the minimum age for marriage at eighteen. Thus, before reaching eighteen years, girls cannot give their consent. Hence, the age of a person determines whether her consent was given. In assessing its compliance with international and regional standards, section 77(1)(e) is similar to Articles 16, 8(2)(b), 6(a), and 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Southern African Development Community Protocol on Gender and Development (SADC Gender Protocol), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CECSR), respectively. These instruments also emphasise that the free and full consent of both parties is a prerequisite when concluding a marriage.

In addition, section 10, which provides rules for the registration of all marriages (civil, customary, and religious entered after the commencement of the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act must comply with section 10), is also relevant in addressing child marriages linked to cultural practices. It complies with both Articles 6 and 21(2) of the Maputo Protocol and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), respectively, which require that all marriages be registered. More importantly, this provision can guarantee that parties to all marriages are eighteen years or above.<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, the failure to meet section 10 formalities renders a marriage void.<sup>138</sup> In the context of customary marriages, section 38 has entrusted traditional authorities to register all customary marriage.<sup>139</sup> Traditional authorities are then required to carefully observe and comply with section 10 formalities before registering and concluding a customary marriage. Most cultural practices that allow child marriages, at best, require consent of the girl's parents. As such, the formalities in section 10 will reduce the number of child marriages because it will be difficult to bring admissible evidence that compels girls to marry.<sup>140</sup>

Section 54 further provides that:

A registrar who performs the ceremony of a marriage knowing that any of the matters required by law for the validity of a marriage have not been fulfilled, so that the marriage is void on any of those matters, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of K100 000 and to imprisonment for five years.<sup>141</sup>

This section thus complies with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) committees which recommended state parties to impose punishments to persons who observe practices that are detrimental to girls' wellbeing.<sup>142</sup> Section 54 compels traditional registrars to perform their duties diligently when registering and recording customary marriages. Furthermore, the law prevents traditional authorities from registering marriages that are otherwise void, for example, child marriages. As pointed in the introduction, statistics have shown that child marriages affect mostly girls compared to boys.<sup>143</sup> Section 54 is, therefore, important in



combating the problem as it can be used to punish traditional authorities who contravene any of the marriage requirements. The provision can also deter offenders from further committing offences and discourage others from doing the same.<sup>144</sup>

### *The Gender Equality Act*

The Gender Equality Act fulfils Malawi's commitments to international law on gender equality and female empowerment by addressing sex discrimination, harmful cultural practices, and sexual harassment.<sup>145</sup> As discussed above, sex discrimination, cultural practices and sexual harassment have direct linkages with child marriages that affect mostly girls. Several provisions in the Gender Equality Act are useful to address these practices. For example, section 3 of the Gender Equality Act defines harmful practices as: "Social, cultural or religious practices which, on account of sex, gender or marital status, do or are likely to (a) undermine the dignity, health or liberty of any person; or (b) result in physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological harm to any person."<sup>146</sup> Section 3 is similar to Article 1(g) of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), which also defined "harmful practices" as, "all behaviour, attitudes and/or practices which negatively affect the fundamental rights of women and girls, such as their right to life, health, dignity, education and physical integrity."<sup>147</sup>

Besides section 3, section 4(2) imposes a punishment on anyone who engages in sex discrimination to guarantee gender equality.<sup>148</sup> In this way, the provision is useful in eliminating sex discrimination leading to child marriage. It also complies with sections 20(1) and 23(1) of the Constitution and Articles 1, 2 and 3 of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), respectively, which guarantee the right to equality. Analysts such as Chirwa have argued that if men and women are entitled to enjoy full and equal protection before the law, then parents should treat children in the same way regardless of their sex and gender.<sup>149</sup>

Most cultural practices that lead to child marriage amount to sex discrimination because they mostly disadvantage girls but not boys. As earlier observed, through some cultural practices, such as *kupawila*, girls are viewed as a source of wealth or used as debt payment to their parents' creditors. In poor families, parents force girls to swap school for marriage so that they can pay school fees for male siblings to continue schooling.<sup>150</sup> Section 4, therefore, gives equal opportunities for both girls and boys. This provision affords all children equal treatment coupled with dignity, integrity and without distinction. Higgins and Fenrich have argued that provisions, such as section 4 of the Gender Equality Act, imply that states must affirmatively regulate customs and social practices in a way that promotes gender equality.<sup>151</sup>

In addition, section 5, which prohibits any commission of harmful practices, can also address cultural practices linked to child marriages. Section 5 provides that "(1) A person shall not commit, engage in, subject another person to, or encourage the commission of any harmful practice. (2) Any person who contravenes this commits an offence and is liable to a fine of K1, 000,000 and to a term of imprisonment of five years."<sup>152</sup> This provision then complies with Articles 16, 5, and 12 of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Protocol to the

African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) and the Southern African Development Community Protocol on Gender and Development (SADC Gender Protocol), respectively. These provisions also prohibit and condemn all forms of harmful cultural practices that negatively affect the human rights of women and children.<sup>153</sup> More importantly, the imposition of a penalty on those who commit or encourage the commission of cultural practices that affect children's rights can deter the prevalence of child marriages in Malawi.<sup>154</sup>

Furthermore, section 14, which provides for the right to access education, is crucially important in the attempt to address cultural practices leading to child marriage.<sup>155</sup> Thus Chirwa rightly observed that education is an indispensable tool for achieving gender equality in Malawi.<sup>156</sup> In view of these observations, one can observe that there are strong linkages between child marriages, culture, and poverty. Therefore, education facilitates a just and fair environment where everyone has equal opportunities. In addition, the CESCR Committee emphasised the importance of education as an empowerment tool for women and girls that safeguards them from abuse.<sup>157</sup> In the context of this discussion, however, section 14 is consistent with section 25(1) of the Constitution and Article 13 of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR).

### **Has Malawi's Legal Response Complied with International Standards on Child Marriage?**

As already demonstrated, the international legal framework is clear: children's rights take priority over cultural practices that may lead to child marriages. The main question in this paper, however, is: has Malawi's legal response to child marriage complied with international standards? To answer this question, two main observations are now briefly under discussion.

First, the discussion on the current Malawi's legal framework on child marriages shows evidence of the value of using international children's rights standards as a tool in addressing child marriage. For example, in line with international standards, section 80 of the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act prohibits cultural practices, such as child marriage, that are harmful to the health and development of the child. In addition, and similar to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Children's Charter on the Welfare and Rights of the Child, section 81 is unequivocal that no child shall be forced to be betrothed. More importantly, section 14 of the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act prescribes the marriageable age of eighteen. This prescription is in line with African Children's Charter on the Welfare and Rights of the Child and the Maputo Protocol.

Second, the analysis has also revealed conflicting legal approaches in addressing cultural practices that lead to child marriage. For example, whereas the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act prescribes the marriageable age of eighteen, both the Constitution and the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act define a child as "any person below sixteen" and not eighteen. By implication, according to the Constitution and the Child Justice Act, the marriageable age is sixteen years. This is obviously in conflict with the international definition of the child as well as the marriageable age provided in the Maputo Protocol. While the newly enacted 2015 Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act fixes the minimum marriageable age at

eighteen, it unfortunately lacks any legal effect since the Constitution allows anyone under sixteen to marry.<sup>158</sup>

Customary rules further heighten the problem of the marriageable age because they have no fixed age requirement to determine the capacity to marry. As such, there is a pressing need for Malawi to amend the definition of the child in its Constitution and the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act to eighteen. Put differently, all pieces of legislation, especially the Constitution, must adopt a uniform age of eighteen to clamp down any loopholes that may legally justify marriages of under aged girls. In addition, Malawi needs to harmonise its laws on the age of marriage and the definition of a child with international standards. Conflicting laws pose as a serious challenge in tackling child marriages through legal measures.

Closely linked to the deficiency of a uniform marriageable age is that both the Constitution and the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act do not expressly provide for the best interests of the child, which is the cornerstone for the protection of children's rights, particularly girls, against child marriage.<sup>159</sup> For this reason, the Constitution and the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act must be modified to ensure that the rights of children are given due consideration at all times. Lastly, under the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act, it is regrettable that the law does not specify child marriage as one of the grounds for nullifying a marriage.<sup>160</sup> This failure only fasttracks and extends the perpetuation of child marriages. Therefore, we recommend a law review to specify clearly that child marriage is a ground for nullifying a marriage. By criminalising all child marriages, Malawi will be sending a strong message about the unacceptability of child marriages, a lesson that other countries, such as Mozambique and South Africa, facing this problem can learn.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The analysis on Malawi's compliance with international standards in addressing child marriages has highlighted two issues. First, the legislation discussed have provisions that comply with the international standards in addressing child marriage. More importantly, these laws have the potential to protect girls against child marriages linked to cultural practices. Indeed, Chief Kachindamoto, a female traditional leader demonstrated this protection when she used the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act in her village to annul 330 child marriages and enrolled them back in school.<sup>161</sup> As both a punitive and protective measure against child marriages, Chief Kachindamoto further suspended the village heads who were responsible in consenting to those marriages.<sup>162</sup> This serves as a remarkable lesson to other village leaders who might want to follow suit in consenting to child marriages.<sup>163</sup> According to McNeish, "Chief Kachindamoto has broken up 850 child marriages in three years, and banned the sexual initiations of young girls' that encourage child marriages."<sup>164</sup> In this way, the law, with the cooperation of traditional leaders becomes effective in restricting, and ultimately protecting, girls from marrying before the age of eighteen.

Second, these laws have provisions that are in conflict with the international standards. More disturbing is the fact that the different laws enacted seem to be conflicting each other, sending bad messages in addressing child marriage. We



therefore suggest the amendment of all current laws so that they provide a uniform definition of the child, marriageable age, and consent to the marriage. In addition, as proposed by Braimah in the context of Nigeria and child marriages, we also recommend that Malawi enact a special law, for example, the *Prohibition of Child Marriages Act*, which, if enacted, should target all laws and cultural practices that lead to child marriage (emphasis added).<sup>165</sup>

## Notes

- 1 World Vision "Ten worst places for child marriages."  
<http://www.worldvision.org/newsstoriesvideos/ten-worst-places-child-marriage>  
(accessed 22/04/2016).
- 2 UNICEF 2015a, p. 6.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Human Rights Watch 2014.
- 5 Malawi Human Rights Commission 2005.
- 6 Mutyaba 2011.
- 7 Chatterjee 2011.
- 8 Nour 2009.
- 9 Cook 1994.
- 10 For example, Malawi is party to both the CRC and the ACRWC, having ratified these instruments in January 1991 and July 1999, respectively.
- 11 See, Article 24(3) of the CRC, Article 16 of CEDAW, Articles 2(1)(b) and 5 of Maputo Protocol, Article 20 of AYC and Article 21 of SADC Gender Protocol. Section 23 of the Constitution explicitly guarantees the rights of children.
- 12 The discussion, particularly, focuses on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (Maputo Protocol). The focus will be on the minimum age and the issue of consent, and the general measures to address cultural practices linked to child marriages. The protection of children's rights in both the CRC and the ACRWC is guided by four general principles, namely: non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, child participation, and child's survival and development. For the CRC and ACRWC, see Gose 2002, Ekundayo 2015, Hodgkin and Newell 2007, for CEDAW, see Sepper 2008, Mwambene 2010 and Cook 1994, and for Maputo Protocol see, Chirwa 2011 and Banda 2006.
- 13 For example, Malawi 1994, section 5 of the Constitution.
- 14 Braimah 2014.
- 15 Article 1 of the CRC and Article 2 of ACRWC.
- 16 Article 2 of the ACRWC.
- 17 Gose 2002, p. 53.
- 18 Article 21(2) of the ACRWC.
- 19 Article 6 of the Maputo Protocol.
- 20 Article 16(2) of the CEDAW.

- 21 CEDAW Committee. 1994. *CEDAW General Recommendation No. 21: Equality in Marriage and Family Relations*.
- 22 CEDAW Committee. 2010. *Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of the 6th periodic report: Malawi*. CRC Committee. 2002.
- 23 CRC Committee. 2009. *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention: Convention on the Rights of the Child: concluding observations: Malawi*.
- 23 Odala 2012.
- 24 Odala 2012.
- 25 Article 8(2) of the SADC Gender Protocol.
- 26 CEDAW Committee. 2004. *CEDAW General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on temporary special measures*.
- 27 Article 5(a) of the C
- 28 Sepper 2008.
- 29 CRC Committee. 2003. *General comment No. 4 (2003): Adolescent Health and Development in the Context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*.
- 30 CEDAW Committee. 2014. *CEDAW General Recommendation No.31 and UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee), General comment No. 18 on harmful practices*.
- 31 CEDAW Committee. 2014. *CEDAW General Recommendation No.31 and UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee), General comment No. 18 on harmful practices*.
- 32 CRC Committee. 2003. *General comment No. 3 (2003): HIV/AIDS and the Rights of the Child*.
- 33 CRC Committee. 2003. *General comment No. 5 (2003): General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*.
- 34 Article 24(3) of the CRC.
- 35 van Bueren 1998, p.307.
- 36 Braimah 2014.
- 37 Biholar 2013.
- 38 CEDAW Committee. 2010. *CEDAW General Recommendation No. 28 on the Core Obligations of States Parties under Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*.
- 39 Merry 2003.
- 40 Article 21 of the ACRWC.
- 41 Article 21 of the SADC Gender Protocol.
- 42 For example, *kupawila* is a customary practice in which parents pledge their girl child into marriage as a form of debt repayment; hence, they prefer their own interests to the girl's.
- 43 Ekundayo 2015.
- 44 African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. 2013. *General Comment No. 1 on Article 30 of the ACRWC: "Children of Incarcerated and Imprisoned Parents and Primary Caregivers"*.
- 45 Article 1(3) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

- 46 Lloyd 2002. The doctrine of *lex specilis* relates to the interpretation of laws. It can apply in both domestic and international law contexts.
- 47 African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.  
2013. *General Comment No. 1 on Article 30 of the ACRWC: "Children of Incarcerated and Imprisoned Parents and Primary Caregivers.*
- 48 Article 12 of the CRC requires State Parties to give an optimum environment where children are freely capable of forming their own views in all matters affecting them. Article 4(2) of the ACRWC demands all proceedings, which affect children, must allow them to communicate their views and those views must be considered when giving a decision that affect those children.
- 49 Chirwa 2011.
- 50 Mezmur and Sloth-Nielsen 2008.
- 51 Lansdown 2005.
- 52 CRC Committee. 2009. *General comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard.*
- 53 It is also recognised in Articles 1, 2, 2, 2, and 26 of CEDAW, ICESCR, AYC, Maputo Protocol and ICCPR, respectively.
- 54 Vandenhoe 2005.
- 55 Hodgkin and Newell 2007.
- 56 Human Rights Watch. 2014.
- 57 CEDAW Committee. 1992. *CEDAW General Recommendation No. 28 on the Core Obligations of States Parties under Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.*
- 58 CEDAW Committee, *CEDAW General Recommendations Nos. 19 and 20, adopted at the Eleventh Session, 1992.*
- 59 Articles 6 and 5 of the CRC and ACRWC, respectively.
- 60 Kaime 2009.
- 61 CRC Committee. 2003. *General comment No. 5 (2003): General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.*
- 62 Chirwa 2011.
- 63 African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.  
2013. *General Comment No. 1 on Article 30 of the ACRWC: "Children of Incarcerated and Imprisoned Parents and Primary Caregivers.*
- 64 Malawi Human Rights Commission 2005. See also discussion by Mwambene, Lea. 2010.
- 65 Malawi Human Rights Commission 2005. See also discussion by Mwambene, Lea. 2010.
- 66 See for example, Articles 2, 1, 2, 3, and 1 of the UDHR, CEDAW, CRC, ACRWC and the Maputo Protocol, respectively.
- 67 Malawi 1994, section 20 of the Constitution.
- 68 Chirwa 2011.
- 69 Oxford Dictionary.
- 70 Nyirenda 2014.
- 71 *Malawi Congress Party & Others v Attorney General & Another* [1996] MLR 244, 299-300 (HC).
- 72 Hodgkin and Newell 2007.

- 73 Chirwa 2011.
- 74 *Republic v Chinthiti & Others (1)* [1997] 1 MLR 59, 65 (HC).
- 75 Albertyn 2011.
- 76 Fredman 2005.
- 77 Fredman 2005.
- 78 Malawi Law Commission 2006.
- 79 Chirwa 2011.
- 80 CEDAW Committee. 2008. *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: 6th periodic report of States parties: Malawi.*
- 81 *Republic v Chinthiti & Others* [1997] 1 MLR 59, 65 (HC).
- 82 Nyirenda 2014.
- 83 CEDAW Committee. 2014. *CEDAW General Recommendation No.31* and UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee), *General comment No. 18 on harmful practices.*
- 84 Nyirenda. 2014.
- 85 See, Article 2 of the CRC, Article 3 of the ACRWC, Art 2 of the CEDAW and Art 6 of the Maputo Protocol.
- 86 Katja 2015.
- 87 Malawi 1994, section 23(4)(b) of the Constitution.
- 88 The provision of the right to education is compatible with Articles 13, 28, 12 and 11 of the ICESCR, CRC, Maputo Protocol and ACRWC, respectively.
- 89 Chirwa 2011, p. 249.
- 90 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. 1999. *ICESCR General Comment No. 13: The Right to Education.*
- 91 Malawi 1994, section 22(4) of the Constitution.
- 92 Section 22 is compatible with Articles 16, 8(2) and 6(a) of the CEDAW, SADC Gender Protocol, and Maputo Protocol, respectively.
- 93 Malawi 1994, section 22(6) of the Constitution.
- 94 Chirwa 2007.
- 95 Malawi Human Rights Commission 2005..
- 96 ACRWC, Article 21.
- 97 Section 22(8) provides that 'the State shall actually *discourage* marriage between persons where either of them is under the age of fifteen years'.
- 98 *Francis Mangani v Republic* Criminal Appeal no 3 of 2007 (unreported) as cited by Chirwa 2011.
- 99 Chirwa 2011.
- 100 Mwambene 2010.
- 101 Malawi 1994, section 24(2) of the Constitution.
- 102 Art 1(k) of the Maputo Protocol.
- 103 Chirwa 2011.
- 104 Malawi then complies with provisions such as Articles 21, 16 and 24(3) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that require state parties to enact legislation outlawing discriminatory practices against girls and women.

- 105 CEDAW Committee. 2014. *CEDAW General Recommendation No.31 and UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee), General comment No. 18 on harmful practices.*
- 106 Braimah 2014.
- 107 Articles 2, 3 and 3, 4 of the CRC and ACRWC, respectively.
- 108 Chirwa 2007.
- 109 See, observations by Chirwa 2011 and Mwambene 2010.
- 110 The Child Care; Protection and Justice Act No. 22 of 2010 was adopted on 07 July 2010 and commenced on 29 July 2010.
- 111 The Child Care; Protection and Justice Act, section 80
- 112 Mwambene 2012.
- 113 CRC Committee. 2011. *General comment No. 13 (2011): The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence.*
- 114 The Child Care; Protection and Justice Act, section 81
- 115 Jacobson-Widding 1967.
- 116 Ibid.
- 117 Articles 16 and 21(2) of the CEDAW and ACRWC, respectively also prohibit child betrothal and child marriages.
- 118 Article 8(2) of the AYC.
- 119 Chirwa 2011.
- 120 *Getrude Gondwe v Matiasi Gondwe* (unreported) and *Francis Mangani v Republic* Criminal Appeal no 3 of 2007 (unreported) as cited by Chirwa 2011.
- 121 Section 82 of the Marriage; Divorce and Family Relations Act.
- 122 Article 1 of the Slavery Convention.
- 123 Odala 2012.
- 124 CEDAW Committee. 2014. *CEDAW General Recommendation No.31 and UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee), General comment No. 18 on harmful practices.*
- 125 Gaus and D'Agostino 2012.
- 126 Section 23 of the Child Care; Protection and Justice Act.
- 127 CEDAW Committee. 2014. *CEDAW General Recommendation No.31 and UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee), General comment No. 18 on harmful practices.*
- 128 The Child Care; Protection and Justice Act, section 2.
- 129 CEDAW Committee. 2014. *CEDAW General Recommendation No.31 and UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee), General comment No. 18 on harmful practices.*
- 130 Articles 2, 3 and 3, 4 of the CRC and ACRWC.
- 131 See, Part II of the Marriage; Divorce and Family Relations Act. See, a discussion by Mwambene 2007.
- 132 Section 14 of the Marriage; Divorce and Family Relations Act.
- 133 See, Part 14 of the Marriage; Divorce and Family Relations Act.
- 134 Articles 21(2) and 6 of the ACRWC and Maputo Protocol, respectively.
- 135 Chirwa 2011.
- 136 CEDAW Committee. 1994. *CEDAW General Recommendation No. 21: Equality in Marriage and Family Relations.*



- 137 Article 6 of the Maputo Protocol.
- 138 Section 10 of the Marriage; Divorce and Family Relations Act.
- 139 Section 38 of the Marriage; Divorce and Family Relations Act.
- 140 CEDAW Committee. 2014. *CEDAW General Recommendation No.31* and UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee), *General comment No. 18 on harmful practices*.
- 141 Ibid.
- 142 Ibid.
- 143 UNICEF 2014, p. 4.
- 144 Gaus and D'Agostino 2012.
- 145 See Part II of the Gender Equality Act.
- 146 See section 3 of the Gender Equality Act
- 147 Article 1(g) of the Maputo Protocol.
- 148 Section 4(2) of the Gender Equality Act.
- 149 Chirwa 2011.
- 150 Mwambene 2010.
- 151 Higgins and Fenrich 2011.
- 152 Section 5 of the Gender Equality Act.
- 153 Sections 3, 4 and 5 of the Gender Equality Act.
- 154 Ibid.
- 155 Section 14 of the Gender Equality Act.
- 156 Chirwa 2011.
- 157 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. 1999. *ICESCR General Comment No. 13: The Right to Education*.
- 158 See, section 14 of the Marriage; Divorce and Family Relations Act.
- 159 Mwambene 2012.
- 160 See, section 77 of the Marriage; Divorce and Family Relations Act.
- 161 *Nyasa Times* 2015.
- 162 Ibid.
- 163 Ibid.
- 164 McNeish 2016.
- 165 Braimah 2014.

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# Endangered Human Security in Cash Strapped Zimbabwe, 2007-2008

MEDIEL HOVE

**Abstract:** This article discusses human security in the context of cash shortages that Zimbabweans experienced between 2007 and 2008, notwithstanding the fact that the human security facets were gradually threatened in the country following the introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme in 1991 and the establishment of the Movement for Democratic Change. It argues that the competition between the opposition political party, the Movement for Democratic Change, and the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front, deepened the socio-economic woes including shortage of cash and a currency that continued to tumble into a worthless legal tender. The government's efforts to curtail inflation and address cash shortages by, among other things, introducing price controls aggravated both the shortage of goods and the cash crisis, thereby threatening the Zimbabweans' "freedom from want" or their rights to access their money from the banks. The ruling party stuck to the domestic currency, only later to begrudgingly embrace the multi-currency regime because people had adopted it as one of their survival strategies in an effort to lessen the challenges experienced in a biting economic milieu. It concludes that the shortage of money violated Zimbabweans' rights to access their money from the banks and also endangered their security since the shortage of cash destroyed the capacity to access socio-economic needs. Also, poverty, hunger, and unemployment among other insecurities left many people (both employed and unemployed) feeling hopeless and troubled.

## Introduction

The political competition between the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) posed severe threats to the human security needs of Zimbabweans in terms of "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want." The chronic cash shortages that were experienced between 2007 and 2008 belong to the "freedom from want" strand of human security, which is the focus of this article. The period was characterized by a rapid decline of the economy, a hyperinflationary environment, excessive pricing, and a shortage of basic commodities. A significant number of banks came to a standstill largely due to undercapitalization. Consequently, the public lost trust in the banking sector as a result of the government's ill-conceived monetary policies that it had initiated with

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the intention to establish a steady cash flow in the country. It is imperative, however, to realize that the economic downturn in Zimbabwe began in 1991 when the country embraced the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) and only reached its peak in 2008. Although companies, investors, and the government were affected by cash shortages, the ordinary citizens were the hardest hit. In 2007, the inflation rate stood above 1,400 percent and the Zimbabwean dollar was trading against the United States dollar at nine million to one dollar.<sup>1</sup> According to Hanke and Kwok, the inflation rate was recorded at 79.6 billion percent by mid-November 2008.<sup>2</sup>

While other countries have experienced hyperinflation, Zimbabwe's experience was the first of its kind in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the second highest in world history (the first position being that of Hungary). It marked the world's thirtieth hyperinflation, with the first that which France experienced during the French Revolution.<sup>3</sup> There is a precedence to Zimbabwe's hyperinflation experiences that is briefly represented by what took place in Germany (under the Weimar Republic 1920–1923) and Yugoslavia (1992–1994). The German hyperinflation led to the development of a corrupt and criminal black market as people responded to survive the wiping out of their incomes.<sup>4</sup> In response to increasing hyperinflation Germans invested in houses, antiques, jewelry, soap, and hairpins. Petty theft of copper pipes and brass armatures and fuel siphoning from other people's cars also became a common way of coping. Others resorted to barter trade of goods and services.<sup>5</sup> In Yugoslavia people devised different coping mechanisms, which included relying on remittances from relatives who lived in other countries, savings, and in particular the black market that worsened the prevalence of corruption and criminality.<sup>6</sup>

The experience with hyperinflation by many countries worldwide made the subject vital in the burgeoning literature that seeks to explain and reflect on the economic challenges but, however, neglecting the resultant human security challenges per se.<sup>7</sup> According to Claessens and Kose, financial crises come in different sizes, forms, and shapes changing over time into different forms and even spreading across borders. Their implications for economies are enormous. Some of the countries that experienced run-away inflation include Germany (1920s), the United States (1930s), and Greece (2009).<sup>8</sup> The Great Depression, which started in the United States in 1929, is believed to have caused mass unemployment and severe deflation in many countries across the globe at different times and with varying severities. Its most devastating effects, however, were largely felt in the United States and Europe where it lasted longer.<sup>9</sup> Standards of living are believed to have dropped alarmingly, and one-fourth of the industrialized countries' labor force could not find employment during the Great Depression.<sup>10</sup> From the foregoing examples, different types of responses were experienced, and it is thus valuable to establish how Zimbabweans and their government responded to the cash crisis and how this affected human security. Again, the same appears to have occurred in 2007–2008 in the form of a world financial crisis.<sup>11</sup> According to Chen and Imam, econometrically, asset shortages negatively impact on economic growth, asset bubbles, and raise a high probability for a crisis particularly in emergent economies.<sup>12</sup> The financial crisis in Greece led to widespread unemployment, which stood at 27.5 percent by early 2013 and impoverished many households.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, literature analyzing citizen responses to these crises have a lot in common with what was experienced in Zimbabwe in the more extreme forms of an informal economy.<sup>14</sup> Zimbabweans responded in different strategies and as a result the entire

Zimbabwean economy developed into *kukiya-kiya* (meaning an informal method of living, using separate tricks and tactics to stay alive) aimed at individual survival, or to ensure their “freedom from want” in particular.<sup>15</sup>

Against this backdrop, the aim of this article is to: (1) explain the nexus between the concept of human security and cash shortage revealing how individual Zimbabweans responded to the cash crisis; (2) briefly discuss the causes of socio-economic decline in Zimbabwe; and (3) evaluate the various individual citizen responses in the midst of unceasing cash shortages aggravated by hyperinflation. The article engages the human security concept’s “freedom from want” strand whilst acknowledging the ongoing discussion and observation that contemporary human security is complex. The study seeks to reveal how people survive in an environment where the currency is increasingly worthless as a result of unprecedented economic chaos. Thus it shares the same view with those calling for diverse approaches to be deployed in a drive to deal comprehensively with the new security arrangements where material and social elements co-exist.<sup>16</sup> Engaging the qualitative research methodology and data collected through analysis of both secondary and primary sources, the article asserts that the shortage of cash and the worthlessness of the printed bearer cheques constituted a threat to the socio-economic wellbeing of individuals in Zimbabwe because the majority could not afford to procure basic commodities needed in order to survive. My categorization of cash shortage in Zimbabwe as constituting a human security threat is relevant and critical in light of the fact that security has been redefined and contested. It is in this light that the shortage of cash experienced in Zimbabwe between 2007 and 2008 constituted a human security issue. This is so because money is a passport to socio-economic needs of individuals, and without money access is denied to any such services or wants. The first section reflects on the human security concept showing how its “freedom from want” strand relates to the insecurity brought by the cash shortages plus the worthlessness of the Zimbabwean dollar between 2007 and 2008. Secondly, the causes of hyperinflation in Zimbabwe are briefly discussed followed by an examination of the strategies engaged by individuals to survive the cash crisis and the ever-declining value of the Zimbabwean dollar. The article concludes that the cash crisis caused by hyperinflation was indeed a human security threat in Zimbabwe between 2007 and 2008 because a huge number of Zimbabweans were unable to access cash from the banks and thus unable to purchase basic survival goods. Moreover, any government effort meant to ameliorate the availability of cash and avert its ever-collapsing value actually aggravated the situation, hence violating the rights of Zimbabweans to get their money from the banks.

### **The Human Security Concept**

In examining the cash shortages that were experienced in Zimbabwe, it is prudent to declare that a combination of the worthlessness and shortage of money falls under the freedom from want strand of the broader human security concept. This is because money is one of the basic needs required to ensure access to basic survival needs such as food and health care thus contributing to human security.

Traditionally, security threats came from other states, whereas today security challenges develop within states. Prior to 1994, security was viewed from the lens of the state and/or nation. That is to say security only focused on the defense of the state from external attack.

Added to this, states focused on their territorial integrity and other resources they controlled at the expense of the people they represented. More so, states were preoccupied with preserving themselves and ensuring the security of the elites at the expense of the poor many.

In 1994, the human security concept came into the limelight, and it is about shielding individuals and communities from any form of violence or insecurity. The term “human security” according to Jolly and Ray reveals new global security challenges and the substance of dealing with persistent threats to human life.<sup>17</sup> In this dichotomy, security was redefined to include non-state centered security issues including hunger, disease, and repression and hurtful disruptions in normal daily life patterns, be it in homes, jobs, or communities.<sup>18</sup> This is because interstate conflicts declined while intra-state conflicts increased as a result of a number of factors that emerged after the end of the Cold War.<sup>19</sup> Redefining the concept of security became imperative in a drive to deal comprehensively with the hitherto not seriously considered security threats based on human rights violations and individual concerns as opposed to state sovereignty only. However, at present the security of the individual by no means guarantees state security, regional, and even international security.<sup>20</sup>

For the common people, human security as a worldwide concept “means protection from the threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, human security is a critical instrument that changes focus in security examination from the state to human beings.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, “human security and national security should be, and often are, mutually reinforcing.”<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, it is significant to realize that a safe state does not by design make people secure. Protecting people from foreign threats may be an indispensable aspect of their human security but it is not adequate. The seven dimensions of human security outlined by the UNDP include:

*Economic security*—assuring every individual a minimum requisite income; *Food security*—the guarantee of physical and economic access to basic foodstuffs; *Health security*—the guarantee of minimum protection from disease and unhealthy lifestyles; *Environmental security*—protecting people from the short- and long-term ravages of nature, man-made threats in nature, and deterioration of the natural environment; *Personal security*—protecting people from physical violence; *Community security*—protecting people from loss of traditional relationships and values and from sectarian and ethnic violence; and *Political security*—ensuring that people live in a society that honours their basic human rights.<sup>24</sup>

Human security entails ensuring “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear” for all people and is the most critical way to tackle the challenge of global insecurity today. The “freedom from fear” school limits the concept of human security to protecting citizens from violent conflicts that are linked to poverty, lack of state capacity, and other forms of inequities. It points out that restricting attention to violence is a realistic and workable strategy towards human security. Again, it is concerned with emergency assistance, conflict prevention, and resolution and peace building. All advocates of human security are in agreement that its central aim is the protection of individuals against threats that confront them.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, the “freedom from want” school (which I engage in this article) advocates for an all-encompassing strategy in accomplishing human security on the economic and social front. It argues that the human security agenda should be widened to cover hunger, disease, and natural disasters because they are interrelated concepts in tackling the root causes of human insecurity and they take a toll on far more people than war, genocide, and terrorism combined.<sup>26</sup> As opposed to “freedom from fear,” it broadens the focus beyond violence with a focus on development and security aims. However, it is essential to note that these two schools of human security are interrelated.<sup>27</sup> In short, human security is people-centered, multi-dimensional, universal, and inter-connected.<sup>28</sup>

It is against this background that this article uses the “freedom from want” school to discuss the strategies that individuals used to deal with cash shortages and the ever-tumbling Zimbabwean dollar between 2007 and 2008. This is because among other things Zimbabweans suffered “freedom from fear” (which is not the subject of this study) threats in the form of political violence and displacements while “freedom from want” challenges dominated their concerns and were prolonged. These include those linked to cash shortages such as poverty, hunger, disease, and natural disasters (drought) culminating in the lack of state capacity to provide freedom from want and protect its citizens from human insecurities including access to their banked money. Apparently, the lack of cash brought hopelessness to many people tipping the country on the verge of collapse because people faced many threats ranging from lack of food and health issues to other socio-economic related challenges.

Put in simple terms, money is a medium for paying for services and empowers one to be able to procure basic commodities without which the right to purchase and access to services is denied, thus threatening human security and in particular the “freedom from want” strand. In this regard, services and basic goods are all wants that people with their cash are free to get in order to lead decent lives. In Zimbabwe they were two challenges regarding cash: that people had money but it was made worthless as a result of government policies and that individuals could not access cash from the banks. Hence their freedom from want was violated and their lives were endangered.

### **An Overview of the Causes of Socio-Economic Challenges in Zimbabwe**

The country’s socio-economic systems began to decline as a result of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme 1991-99, payment of unbudgeted gratuities to war veterans, involvement of the Zimbabwe Defense Forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Zimbabwean land reform crisis.<sup>29</sup> With the background to the Zimbabwe crisis extensively analyzed elsewhere an overview only may suffice here.<sup>30</sup> Scholars have identified a number of causes and dimensions of the economic meltdown and by implication human insecurity in Zimbabwe. These consist of economic, political, and social causes. Political causes and dimensions of the crisis have appeared equally important contributing factors to the collapse of the country’s economic sector. The political crisis has been repeatedly cited as the original cause of the Zimbabwean crisis that led to the emergence of the economic and social dimensions. These causes include the government’s failure to deal with corruption and prioritizing of some political, at times authoritarian, decisions regardless of their harm to the economy. Furthermore, the crisis was exacerbated by the violent Fast Track Reform Programme, the use of violence in



order to destroy the opposition, disputes concerning election results, and the absence of the rule of law.<sup>31</sup> Apparently, the populist moves by the government that were not economically sound generated far-reaching negative socio-economic effects. Accordingly, the late 1990s marked the beginning of the printing of paper money without the gold equivalent backing, and this process ultimately fed into the resultant hyperinflation experienced in 2007-2008. It is believed that the printing of paper money began in 1997 when the government paid \$Z50,000 in unbudgeted gratuities to war veterans.<sup>32</sup> Thereafter, the Zimbabwean dollar continued to tumble. To this end, Kairiza notes that Zimbabwe's hyperinflation was a result as well as the cause of the fall in production and the depreciation of the exchange rate.<sup>33</sup> According to Gukurume, hyperinflation was largely caused by the involvement of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) in the black market foreign exchange transactions to improve its foreign currency reserves, which were falling fast.<sup>34</sup> The RBZ inflated the prices of foreign currency through its agents to such a degree that any common moneychanger would not be able to buy any foreign exchange because of the RBZ had *bhegi raGono*, referring to the money from the then RBZ governor Gideon Gono that bought foreign currency in the black market. Also, cash transfer rates were tremendously high because the money that was being transferred was "artificial" in the sense that the RBZ printed money due to shortages in local currency. Therefore, money burning thrived as a result of a crucial shortage of both the foreign currency and the local currency that was in circulation. Consequently, there was no "real cash" as in the actual, physical money, which merely meant that "plastic money" and by extension real-time gross processing system (RTGS) transfers would have high rates of the more imagined money than it was warranted.<sup>35</sup>

For the purposes of this article, it is imperative to define the phrase "financial crisis" as experienced in Zimbabwe. In the words of Claessens and Kose, a financial crisis denotes "an amalgam of events, including substantial changes in credit volume and asset prices, severe disruptions in financial intermediation, notably the supply of external financing, large scale balance sheet problems, and the need for large scale government support."<sup>36</sup> This definition applies to the Zimbabwean case because the resultant acute shortage of money in 2007-2008 happened in the context of a political crisis coupled with an economic meltdown exacerbated by the sanctions imposed by the West (United Kingdom, Australia, the European Union, and the United States) on account of the country's bad human rights record and failure to service the debt owed to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.<sup>37</sup> Combined, the sanctions and lack of foreign currency in the economy left the country with one choice—excessive printing of money that led to hyperinflation. Therefore, the financial crisis Zimbabwe experienced during the period under review is difficult to categorize because it cuts across many of the observed categories of financial crises, namely currency crisis, sudden stop (or capital account or balance of payments) crisis, debt crisis, and banking crisis. A currency crisis is basically seen as involving devaluation or sharp depreciation of a currency forcing authorities to defend it by expending large amounts of foreign currency reserves, imposing capital controls, and sharply raising interest rates. A sudden stop (or a capital account or balance of payments crisis) denotes a large (and usually unpredicted) fall in international capital inflows or a sharp reverse in total capital flows to a country, often occurring in conjunction with a sharp increase in its credit spreads.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, a debt crisis entails a country's failure to service its debt both domestically and internationally. In the case of Zimbabwe both cases apply. Domestically, the

Zimbabwean government still owes many service providers millions that run into billions. The country's external debt in 2015 stood at US\$6.703 billion while domestic debt stood at US\$1.7 billion.<sup>39</sup> Lastly, a banking crisis entails the failure by banks to honor the convertibility of their liabilities, forcing government intervention to prevent this by providing large scale capital and liquidity assistance. In the case of Zimbabwe, the country was grappling to provide such services to ailing banks even in the post-hyperinflation era.<sup>40</sup> As one of the consequences a huge number of Zimbabweans could not withdraw their money from their banks to purchase socio-economic services, thus denoting human insecurity.

## Responses to the Cash Crisis

### *Illegal Foreign Currency Trading and the Rise of the Black Market of Goods*

In response to the skyrocketing inflation, which devalued the Zimbabwean dollar at an alarming rate, people resorted to a number of survival strategies. These include what Jones classified as a "*Kukiya-kiya*" economy, which refers to an individual survival strategy.<sup>41</sup> Or, it was what Chagonda referred to as a "casino" economy, which refers to different ways of coping with challenges and some of these are sometimes illegal.<sup>42</sup> Moyo analyzed livelihood strategies deployed by the urban poor in Bulawayo to alleviate household food gaps amid food insecurity and macro-economic meltdown plus the effectiveness, capability, and sustainability of livelihood strategies including the role and capacity of the state in addressing the food crisis.<sup>43</sup> Tamukamoyo dealt with the nature of informal economic activities among urban traders (who were dealing in clothes and shoes, DVDs, arts and crafts, and second-hand books) in Harare who struggled to survive and stay afloat during the crisis.<sup>44</sup> This article augments this literature by shifting the discussion to the tactics individuals adopted to lessen human security challenges imposed on them by the inability to access money and the worthlessness of any money they were able to access.

At the peak of Zimbabwe's political and economic crisis, a number of Zimbabweans fled the country in search of greener pastures throughout the world, most particularly South Africa, Botswana, and Britain. Some people remained resolute, hence enduring enormous livelihood hardships. To grapple with hyperinflation some people resorted to "money" burning or "*kubhena mari*," and they "developed remarkable resilience to grapple with the economic stagnation and livelihood limitations emerging thereof."<sup>45</sup> During the crisis Zimbabwe experienced "the worst economic situation in its recorded history and the highest inflation rate ever experienced worldwide by any nation at peace" and its "economy had untold negative effects on the education system which led to the mass exodus of teachers."<sup>46</sup> Parents engaged in "economic activities such as cross-border trading" and supported "teachers with money and food."<sup>47</sup> Morreira asserts that during the period of hyperinflation there were "images of economic disarray: empty shelves in supermarkets, queues for bread and piles of Zimbabwe dollars without value."<sup>48</sup>

Some people resorted to the illegal use of foreign currency. In this light *Mai* (mother) George, a woman who owned a *shebeen* in the Harare suburb of Avondale, beginning in the first quarter of 2007 sold beer to her clients in United States dollars and South African rand without the government's endorsement.<sup>49</sup> This dovetails with Hanke and Kwok's observation that

foreign currencies obtained on the black market rapidly replaced the Zimbabwean dollar, and by 2008 the US dollar, South African rand, Botswana pula, Zambian kwacha, and Mozambican metical all had become increasingly popular in the country.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, it was alleged that the Montana Beef Company circumvented the economic crisis by banking its foreign currency earnings in South Africa, and this revenue guaranteed its operations.<sup>51</sup>

Foreign currency exchange was so quick and efficient to the extent that it was mistaken for an official well-organized economic system. This led to the emergence of illegal foreign currency exchangers known as *Osiphatheleni* (What have you brought us) in Bulawayo. They sometimes went and waited by the Botswana border at Plumtree to exchange with informal cross border traders returning to Zimbabwe. *Osiphatheleni* offered the Zimbabwean dollar for the Botswana pula. Critically, the black market in Zimbabwe was a result of an amalgamation of various factors including but not limited to high unemployment, high taxes (tax burden), foreign exchange controls, restrictive business environment, hyperinflation, high poverty rates and a high rate of return.<sup>52</sup> Accordingly, black market became a common feature of the Zimbabwean economy and was of significance as the Zimbabwe's hyperinflation peaked at a stupendous 89.7 sextillion percent in October 2008.<sup>53</sup> Against this soaring inflation people could not access their cash from banks, and the few who got their money found its purchase capacity eroded. Hence, human security was endangered.

Among other reasons, people resorted to the illegal use of foreign currency because of the government-imposed price freeze on basic commodities in 2007 as a desperate attempt to stop hyperinflation. The policy was not effective for it led to the shortage of goods since retailers could not replenish their stocks largely because of a lack of capital and the unacceptability of the local currency (bearer cheques) where the traders bought their wares.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, while the licensing of about one thousand shops to use foreign currency as their trading currency was touted as a good tactic to help struggling businesses import goods and spare parts, it was genuinely the first official recognition of the unofficial dollarization of the economy and was also done for political expediency.<sup>55</sup> This is because on the one hand the government was still paying civil servants in the devalued local currency but expected them to buy basic needs in shops using foreign currency. On the other hand, the licensed shops paid tax to the government in foreign currency, which increased the government's depleted foreign currency reserves. At the same time, the government continued to criminalize the use of foreign currency on the black market where it was unable to collect taxes and hence not benefiting from transactions. It is also important to note that government was involved in illegal foreign currency deals through the RBZ, which employed money dealers to buy United States dollars on the black market.<sup>56</sup> It is worth noting that as a longer-term consequence of the formal economy and local currency having virtually collapsed, the Inclusive Government (2009-2013) resorted to paying its workers in form of vouchers in 2009 and transformed the system into the use of multi-currencies. This helped stabilize the economy up to early 2013. However, following the contested 31 July 2013 elections a rapid decline became the trend for the Zimbabwean economy, thus further slipping the majority of Zimbabweans into an inability to get their money out of banks, thus marking another return to human insecurity. Since early 2016, a repeat of the long queues and withdrawal limits were common amid a biting cash crisis despite using a multi-currency regime and since end of 2016 a pseudo-currency called the bond note.

As Kairiza has observed, “paradoxically, the government’s price controls, via the informal economy fuelled prices, further eroding living standards and further alienating the masses.”<sup>57</sup> City shops were fined for overcharging during the price control exercise.<sup>58</sup> Such price controls, however, culminated in late 2007 in “empty shelves” and continued throughout the whole of 2008.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, punitive charges were slapped on commuter omnibus operators for overcharging passengers.<sup>60</sup> In the short term, price controls eased skyrocketing prices but in the long run led to the closure of business and hyperinflation. Consequently, it can be argued that the price control exercise, although launched to monitor shops and other businesses that constantly hiked prices in response to the ever-growing inflation, assisted ordinary people to at least subsist in accordance to what money they had, but it was not helpful to them in the long term. They were left with nothing to buy due to a combination of an inability to access their cash from banks and the worthlessness of the accessed money indicating an increasing state of human insecurity.

In 2008 many people became involved in buying and selling critical basic commodities that were not available in the shops. Some of the commodities in short supply were manufactured locally but were moved into the black market by “unscrupulous” business people as a way of evading government price controls. In response, the government ordered the arrest of business people who diverted goods to the informal market.<sup>61</sup> For example, the magistrate court sentenced a Harare businesswoman, Venencia Madake, to community service for overcharging and failure to display prices.<sup>62</sup> Such a failure to display prices was due to the fact that prices were often spiraling on a monthly basis in 2007 and on daily and even hourly basis in 2008. As a result, overcharging was merely business people’s attempt to keep their prices in line with the inflation and remain in business. On the other hand, the government by criminalizing those who overcharged was simply attempting to control the situation by addressing the symptoms instead of the root causes of hyperinflation.

To exacerbate the situation, in August 2006 Gideon Gono, the then RBZ governor, slashed three zeros on all denominations. This did not halt the inflation rate but simply made the bearer cheques portable. The naïve reasoning in removing the zeros from the local currency was a psychological ploy that people were going to be confused into believing that the Zimbabwean currency had ceased to be inflationary and thus rethink their beliefs about inflation.<sup>63</sup> However, like in previous years since 2002, the idea of printing money and introducing new denominations was merely cosmetic because it did not bring an end to inflation, the unavailability of basic commodities, lack of investment, and high unemployment. In 2007 the RBZ ordered banks to reduce bank charges and continuously raised withdrawal cash limits.<sup>64</sup> This was caused by the Zimbabwean dollar’s loss of value and partly because banks operated according to the central bank’s imposed withdrawal limits. The cash withdrawal limit was not even enough to cover a one-way bus fare ticket for those who stayed in town. One of the consequences was that people were dying despite having money in the bank.<sup>65</sup> The inability to access money and go to work on a daily basis meant the freedom for one to access cash was violated, hence human insecurity. This is because most of the people’s basic needs such as food, footing health bills, and paying utility bills could not be accomplished in light of inaccessible cash. This demonstrates that normal life patterns were disrupted both at home and work, which dovetails into what MacGarry observed:

Every issue of new currency boosted inflation, so that the largest new denomination rapidly became the price of a loaf of bread. Money supply could not keep up with demand for most of the year. Bank withdrawal limits meant that, whatever a workers' pay might be, if it was paid by cheque, s/he would only be able to withdraw a fraction of it on any day – often hardly enough to pay a minibus fare to come to the bank.<sup>66</sup>

The above observation largely explains that printing money with no economic backing (lack of a strong local industrial, commercial, and agricultural base) spells doom for any economy and triggers the attendant human security problems.

### *Earning Goods as Salary/Wages and Barter Trade*

In response to hyperinflation, businesses developed different survival strategies. In 2007 and 2008 the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe among other companies paid their employees in fuel coupons, and the workers in turn sold their fuel to motorists.<sup>67</sup> In a related reaction, on 28 July 2008 Mimosa Mining Company announced its decision to pay its workers 25kgs of maize, 20kgs beans and a five-liter container of cooking oil as salary.<sup>68</sup> Also, the Grain Marketing Board paid its employees a 50kg bag of mealie-meal, a case of beans, and a bag of coarse salt per month. The workers then bartered some of their earnings for cooking oil and soap.<sup>69</sup> A number of companies downsized their workforce due to operational challenges. For instance, Archer and Zimsun retrenched about two thousand and four hundred workers respectively.<sup>70</sup> Linked to this, Gumbe and Kaseke noted that only companies that were able to implement various survival strategies such as “quantity reduction, decentralization of decision making, reducing quality of products, development of syndicates, shorter pay periods and other forms of financial, marketing and purchasing strategies” were able to survive the hyperinflation.<sup>71</sup>

In the provision of education, teachers solicited for incentives, and some schools demanded fees in foreign currency or fuel coupons. Most teachers went on strike, and students wishing to attend classes had to do so through extra lessons where teachers obtained payment in the form of groceries from students before classes could begin.<sup>72</sup> At Africa University located in Mutare, fees were paid in the form of cattle, beans, and maize. Likewise, at Waddilove High School in Marondera, day scholars were allowed to pay fees in cattle.<sup>73</sup> More so, at Hallingbury primary school in Harare parents and guardians paid school fees using foodstuffs such as rice, cooking oil, sugar, and soap that were then distributed to the teachers as their incentives.<sup>74</sup> The above reveals the degree of insecurity created by the worthless and inaccessible Zimbabwean dollar.

While barter trade is not a unique feature in Zimbabwe, it became significant and widespread during the crisis in terms of its intensity and the products that were used as a medium of trade. It was practiced as an alternative measure to the scarce and ultimately worthless cash. In rural areas barter trade was considered as an efficient method of exchange in the midst of cash shortages and worthlessness of the Zimbabwean dollar. For instance, one goat was bartered for a 50kg bag of maize in Zaka District.<sup>75</sup> Related to this, individuals such as Maseheka and his workmates went as far as Murehwa in Muchinjike area where they bartered soap and clothes for bags of maize.<sup>76</sup> At the peak of the scarcity of the basic commodities in the country an imported 12.5kg bag of mealie-meal sold for R100 or US\$15. These prices were beyond the reach of the poor, as many needed about R300 to R400 per month to feed his family



of six.<sup>77</sup> In some rural areas people went to the grinding mills with a 750 ml bottle of cooking oil as payment for getting a bucket of maize processed into mealie-meal. Two kilograms of maize were paid to have a 20kg bag processed into mealie-meal.<sup>78</sup> A considerable number of residents in the Mbare suburb of Harare went to Muzarabani to exchange goods such as flour, sugar, and plates for goats and maize in an effort to overcome the valueless Zimbabwean dollar and survive the cash shortages.<sup>79</sup>

Even far afield in the Buhera District, Chief Nyashanu noted that “people could not die simply because there was no cash. We exchanged livestock like goats and sheep in return for basic goods like mealie-meal, soap, and clothes.”<sup>80</sup> Similarly, in the rural areas of Nkayi in Bubi District the people from Mdotshane traded a goat for 10kgs of maize meal, and gold was also used as a medium of exchange.<sup>81</sup> In the barter trade process, Morgan Mahenye, a farmer in Maware farm in Zaka District, got more than ten cattle as he traded 100kgs of maize for a beast.<sup>82</sup> To facilitate the movement of goods barter trade was also introduced. For instance, for transporting bags of food or cement from point A to B some of the goods transported were used as a medium of payment for the service.<sup>83</sup> What is evident from the foregoing is that the individual responses to the worthlessness of the currency and failure to access cash from banks were largely driven by the need to survive and overcome a myriad of insecurities. The resultant effects on the rural people were threats to livelihoods, a poverty cycle, and a threat to their freedom from want. The rights of children were threatened, families lost their draught power after selling or bartering their cattle, and they could no longer manage to produce food for themselves. Also, losing livestock meant the loss of the only status symbol of wealth that many rural people have, and this signified enduring human insecurity.

### ***Bribery and Petty Corruption***

Bribe taking and petty corruption became rampant as people paid bribes for services as if it was the normal thing to do. While it will not be correct to say that the cash shortages caused corruption in Zimbabwe, the cash crisis exacerbated corruption (reaching even areas that were hitherto uncorrupted). Before the cash crisis high profile corruption cases had been publicized. Yamamoto argues that “Zimbabwe’s decay and collapse of its moral fibre started way back in the 80’s and was allowed to slowly eat away the society’s fabric over decades.”<sup>84</sup> This erosion of the social fabric was apparent in a number of scandals starting in 1982 and continuing right up to the present.<sup>85</sup> It is evident from the long list of financial scandals that corruption permeated Zimbabwe’s moral fiber like a cancer and morphed into a patronage form that politicians strongly backed. At the same time, the fact that cash shortages had effects on corruption between 2007 and 2008 need not be overemphasized.

People with relatives who worked for banks had the privilege and likelihood of getting their money. As one informant said, “My mother works in the RBZ, so this assisted her to get enough cash to meet all our requirements and so life was easy.”<sup>86</sup> To ensure order, banks had to issue service numbers as a mechanism for controlling the exhaustive long queues. Moreover, some people who awoke early sold their queue tickets to bank clients who arrived late.<sup>87</sup> Added to this, there was a category of clients who chose to sleep at the entrance of banking halls or on the pavements in order to secure a tactical position that would guarantee access to cash the following morning as banks opened for business.<sup>88</sup> Bank clients from outside towns, however,

found themselves without access to cash most of the time. The situation was grim by the end of November 2007 as “people desperately waited in long and meandering queues for salaries and bonuses.”<sup>89</sup> To widen their chances of accessing cash, bank clients had to buy queue tickets from street kids or negotiated with transporters from outside towns to transport them very early in order to join the queues earlier.<sup>90</sup> Consequently, those without corruption networks suffered the most while those with links managed to survive.

Unorthodox methods such as paying bribes via tips to bank tellers were widely used in 2007 and 2008 to circumvent cash withdrawal limit from banks, which was at one point pegged at Z\$5 million dollars. In the process some bank tellers charged a premium of up to 40 percent of what a client needed, and if one wanted Z\$200,000 million (approximately US\$143), only Z\$120 million (approximately \$86) was obtained, with the difference remaining with the tellers.<sup>91</sup> More often tellers reserved the signed cash withdrawal slips from friends and relatives who got whatever cash available.<sup>92</sup> Corruption was also widespread amongst the police force, especially at roadblocks, as police officers accepted bribes as a survival strategy. Moreover, police officers wore uniforms off duty and briefly controlled the bank queues just as a means of accessing their own cash and obtaining bribes.<sup>93</sup> Even where police officers were assigned to control bank queues they manipulated this as an opportunity to allow their relatives and friends to bypass the long queues.<sup>94</sup> In a different setting, vendors engaged in running battles with the police, and most of the loot was shared amongst the members of the force involved in the operations.<sup>95</sup>

As a reaction to withdrawal limits continuously introduced by the RBZ (to end the cash crisis which it temporarily managed), people opened multiple bank accounts, which enabled them to access reasonable amounts of cash whenever it was available. For instance, Isaac Munda, a city of Harare worker, opened accounts with the Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe, Barclays Bank, and ZimBank.<sup>96</sup> A huge number of bank employees who had multiple bank accounts withdrew money above the daily cash withdrawal limit and offloaded it on the black market in exchange for foreign currency.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, in October 2008 illegal foreign currency dealers conspired with bank employees to withdraw large sums of cash beyond the Z\$50,000 cash withdrawal limit.<sup>98</sup> Some of these worked for high profile businesspeople in the city of Harare, Members of Parliament, and other government officials who were exempted from the ordinary daily cash limit.<sup>99</sup> Such officials abused their social status to duck cash shortages, and their “loot” was exchanged for foreign currency at Roadport, Eastgate and Sam Levy village in Harare.<sup>100</sup>

The government through the central bank launched the Basic Commodities Supply Side Intervention (BACOSI) program in 2008 to address the plight of rural people.<sup>101</sup> Under this program for a nominal fee people received food hampers that contained sugar, flour, cooking oil, and salt. The program, however, was unsustainable and marred by corruption because the products were sometimes diverted to the black market, and also it was financed by printing more money. As a result, it only provided relief in the short-term. According to Kairiza, it was these quasi-fiscal activities disguised as expansionary Keynesian economics but in reality being meant to prop up the Mugabe regime that also played a key role in decisively worsening hyperinflation in its penultimate stages.<sup>102</sup> Besides, the quasi-fiscal activities significantly contributed to Zimbabwe’s debt.<sup>103</sup> It was the central bank’s lack of independence from the

whims of the government that pushed up inflation. In addition, investors lost confidence both in the short and long term due to a lack of trust of the central bank. These developments vindicate Asiedu and Freeman's observation that, corruption at both the firm and country level among other factors contributed to undermining firm and country investment growth.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, the case of Zimbabwe is believed to offer nothing new to the case studies of hyperinflation as "it followed the same pattern of government coercion, disrespect for property rights, and reckless use of the monetary printing machines."<sup>105</sup>

As the responses to the crisis largely demonstrate, however, there was indeed innovative thinking on the part of the general populace to continue surviving against all odds brought about by the hyperinflation and the failure to access bank deposits. Overall, it is apparent from the foregoing that people resorted to corrupt strategies and bribes because the banks and the RBZ did not respect their right to withdraw any amount they had in their bank accounts. Above all, businesspeople found an opportunity of making huge profits as the country declined into a law of the jungle.

### *Morally Decadent Activities as Livelihoods*

Although there are challenges in establishing a direct cause and effect relationship between cash shortages and morally decadent behaviors, the increase of these activities was alarming between 2007 and 2008. Forced and early marriages increased as parents exchanged their girls for either food or cash.<sup>106</sup> Thus, the cash crisis in Zimbabwe had multiple layered effects for girls, including but not limited to an increase in early marriages, and drop-out rates in schools more severely affected girls, thus confirming that the economic crisis had negative effects on women's empowerment.<sup>107</sup> There was also an increase in prostitution, robbery, theft, and fraud among the impoverished Zimbabweans as they sought to earn a living amid the biting cash shortages. In other instances commercial sex workers demanded fuel for their services and sold it on the black market.<sup>108</sup> Related to this, five teenage girls stripped and walked for about two kilometres in the streets of Kariba in an effort to get school fees.<sup>109</sup> Fake anti-retroviral drugs were sold as a way of obtaining money amid the critical shortage of the drugs in the clinics and hospitals, both public and private.<sup>110</sup> The repercussions of the rise of prostitution illuminated the dire circumstances the country was facing with about 3,500 people died weekly in 2008 from the combined effects of HIV/AIDS, poverty, and malnutrition.<sup>111</sup>

The case of a mother of five who died after Parirenyatwa Group of Hospitals staff refused to attend her because she had not paid admission fees is illustrative. Her seemingly preventable death was due to her brother having left the bank unable to obtain cash he needed for her fees because of the cash shortages.<sup>112</sup> Responding to the challenge of accessing needed medical care, a significant number of people requested prescriptions from doctors, which in most cases required millions of Zimbabwean dollars to buy medicine for chronic ailments. Armed with the prescriptions they applied for cash from their banks. After obtaining the cash they either exchanged it for foreign currency or bought basic commodities.<sup>113</sup> In addition, doctors produced retirement documents in connivance with their clients on false medical grounds such that their "patients" urgently needed their pension funds. The pensioned individuals gave the doctors part of their loot and often then invested the rest in their own small businesses. Unorthodox means such as the presentation of real or fake burial orders to banks became popular. These

empowered the beneficiaries involved to be exempted from queuing and being susceptible to limited withdrawals.<sup>114</sup> The above illustrations of financial desperation and manipulation also relate to what the literature on prostitution says about the link with poverty.<sup>115</sup> Also, the literature on criminality, including organized crime, notes that it thrives under poverty and financial crisis conditions.<sup>116</sup> Again, when in May 2008 the RBZ introduced special agro-cheques to curtail money shortages some people began to print counterfeit notes. In response the central bank advised people to take note of the security features of the bearer and special agro-cheques.<sup>117</sup> Robbery was also rife, and businesses were not spared in this rampage.<sup>118</sup> At the same time, increases in criminality such as shoplifting, fraud, and embezzlement negatively impacted businesses.<sup>119</sup> Consequently, diverse human security challenges were wrought by the failure of people to access their money from banks and the worthlessness of the currency.

From 2006 through to 2008 there was a boom in diamonds in the Manicaland area of Chiadzwa that attracted people from different parts of the world and Zimbabwe for either diamond digging or buying, plus prostitution (which was one of the lucrative businesses in the area).<sup>120</sup> The illegal male miners known as *magweja* took comfort in either the illegal women diamond panners known as *magwejelina* or other women who offered sexual services for cash, both in local and foreign currency.<sup>121</sup> Prostitutes from as far as Beitbridge rented houses in Mutare because they had a big business from illegal diamond miners and traders.<sup>122</sup> Most of them were South Africans, Congolese, or Nigerians (who were known for keeping large sums of foreign currency).<sup>123</sup> Money obtained from prostitution was used to pay rent, bills, and to buy groceries and clothes. It was also common practice that illegal miners paid bribes worth R100 or US\$10 to the security personnel to gain entry to the diamond fields.<sup>124</sup> The illegally mined diamonds were sold and the cash thus obtained was used among other things to buy groceries, beer, and the services of prostitutes.<sup>125</sup> Accordingly, the Marange diamond fields in Chiadzwa and gold panning in different areas including Kwekwe helped the impoverished and cash starved Zimbabweans to alleviate their challenges. Indeed, that illegal mining greatly aided as a shock absorber during the crisis cannot be underestimated. It formed part of many people including rural people's sources of livelihood diversification amid a failing agricultural economy and a lack of the traditional sources of livelihoods including money sent by breadwinners from towns. In this dichotomy illegal diamonds panning became a livelihood tactic of alleviating the challenges caused by drought and the worthlessness and inaccessibility of the Zimbabwean dollar.

### ***Survival of the Fittest: Resort to Violence***

Demonstrating the adage that a hungry man is an angry man, violence was also used as a strategy to overcome the cash shortage. Some uniformed forces including soldiers embarked on expeditions to harass black market vendors so as to grab scarce basic goods and cash.<sup>126</sup> Soldiers threatened people queuing for money at banks so that they could access money from the banks first. The country was at a tipping point because soldiers between late November and early December 2008 looted and vandalized shops and beating foreign currency dealers, especially in Harare, thus spreading fears that the country's crisis had reached a dangerous point, as a mutiny was highly likely. Additionally, over 80 percent of the country's population lived in poverty.<sup>127</sup> In fact, fears of mutiny were actually high as soldiers at one point clashed for over

six days with anti-riot police who were attempting to stop the military from looting shops. Their looting was a demonstration of their inability to access their money from the banks because of the cash withdrawal limit imposed by the RBZ.<sup>128</sup> The soldiers' unrest was only pacified when the Zimbabwe military police intervened by withdrawing and transporting large sums of cash from various banks to the barracks, which they then paid to the restless soldiers.<sup>129</sup>

The short life of the riots should be viewed from the standpoint that the Zimbabwean military's top echelons are largely pro-establishment; hence given the primacy of discipline in the army, a mutiny by lower-ranking personnel without the support of their superiors was difficult to sustain.<sup>130</sup> In fact, the military factor has been influential in deciding the outcome of many revolutions as exemplified by the cases of Tunisia, Egypt and Syria. In these countries, the dearth of independence between the state, party and the military decisively prevented political change but allowed it where the situation was vice versa.<sup>131</sup> Although the soldiers' short-lived riots did not go further and did not turn into a mutiny, however, that Zimbabwe was in the throes of political and socio-economic woes could not be doubted. Critical to note is the fact that the use of violence by the low-ranking military personnel, while primarily aimed at making ends meet for the individuals, also threatened the security of a number of other people. While members of the security sector resorted to violence because they could not get their money from the banks, at the same time their use of violence endangered the civilians' "freedom from fear" that is a right enshrined in the constitution of Zimbabwe.

### *Cross-Border Trading, Workplace Vending, and Emigration*

Between 2007 and 2008 government workers were among the most impoverished in the country and a good number resorted to selling freezits, sweets, and sugar among other commodities at work, apart from voting with their feet.<sup>132</sup> People went to South Africa to buy basic commodities such as rice, soap, lotion, and cooking oil. Prior to 2007, Zimbabweans were importing goods from other countries, but these excluded basic commodities. Such goods were sold for foreign currency at both workplaces and residential homes.<sup>133</sup> At times a network of people contributed cash for one person's fare to and from either South Africa or another country in the region who would then return with the scarce commodities.<sup>134</sup> This seems a good example of the relevance of task cohesion amid threats where a shared commitment among members of a group is available to achieve a common goal.<sup>135</sup> Women played a very critical role during the crisis, and it would not be an understatement to argue that the individuals who engaged in cross border trade, most of whom were women, saved the country.

Civil servants including teachers went to Mozambique where they bought quantities of clothes packed in big bags popularly known as *mabhero* for reselling in Harare and other towns.<sup>136</sup> Their movement was necessitated by the government's suspension of import duties on all basic commodities.<sup>137</sup> However, the imported goods and other locally produced commodities instead of being readily available in the formal retail shops and markets found their way to the parallel market. RBZ governor Gideon Gono appreciated the role of cross border traders and small and medium enterprises when he said "their products keep the economy going."<sup>138</sup> It was this thinking that resulted in civil servants being allowed to go outside the country in 2008 without visas after an agreement was reached between Zimbabwe and South Africa. It can be argued that probably after having tested the potential benefits from other countries and



motivated by a combination of push factors (such as the lack of life opportunities, low living standards, political and socio-economic volatility, and lack of chances to use skills) and pull factors (better wages, employment prospects, better working conditions, freedom from political insecurity, and careful immigration policies that appeal to high skilled workers) many professionals decided to leave the country.<sup>139</sup> As a result, Zimbabwean professionals, including nurses, teachers, and security sector personnel, and unskilled workers emigrated in search for greener pastures. About four million out of the twelve million Zimbabweans were estimated to be living outside the country.<sup>140</sup> Both the positive and negative economic effects of this exodus exposed the extent to which cash shortages and the worthlessness of the local currency violated people's rights to access goods and services.

Regionally, South African businesses benefitted immensely from the business opportunities generated by Zimbabwe's economic meltdown.<sup>141</sup> The Southern African region's education sector,, especially South Africa's and even beyond also benefitted as teachers and academics fled Zimbabwe. This is true notwithstanding the fact that the emigration of unskilled personnel caused xenophobic attacks in Botswana and South Africa. This was caused by increases in unemployment and socially unbecoming means of earning livelihoods including but not limited to robbery and prostitution.<sup>142</sup> The domestic health sector and the education fraternity significantly suffered due to a dearth of human capital signifying human security challenges in the form of health and education insecurity.<sup>143</sup> In a more positive vein, members of this diaspora remitted money to Zimbabwe through different money sending services such as Home Link and Western Union, thus helping both the national economy and individuals.<sup>144</sup> These remittances alleviated the cash challenges that were experienced in the country, but it was mostly those with relatives and friends outside the country who enjoyed the benefits. Overall, the involvement of the Zimbabwean diaspora guaranteed the survival of both those who moved and those who stayed, thus helping the Zimbabwean situation.<sup>145</sup>

## Conclusion

Employing the human security concept's "freedom from want" strand, this article discussed individual citizen and to a lesser degree government responses to the insecurity brought about by the cash shortages and the devalued Zimbabwean dollar between 2007 and 2008. The study began by discussing the difference between state security and human security. It asserted that state security was centered on the interests of the state at a time when conflicts between states were acute before 1991. Following the end of the Cold War in 1991 there was a decline in inter-state conflicts and an increase of intra-state conflicts; hence the need to focus on human security that addressed the needs of the individual, which are divided into two continuums of "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want."

The article further argued that the cash crisis experienced in Zimbabwe between 2007 and 2008 compelled individuals to resort to different strategies in an effort to survive. This was so given the fact that money was difficult to access from the banks. Moreover, even those who accessed the limited permitted withdrawal amount, they could not buy a reasonable amount of basic commodities or pay for the provision of services because the Zimbabwean dollar had become worthless in terms of value. What is imperative to realize is that money as a medium of exchange that ensures access to social needs (for example health and education) and economic

needs (such as basic food commodities) was unavailable. Overall, the inaccessibility of cash from the banks threatened people's livelihoods. Therefore, the cash crisis caused by hyperinflation was indeed a human security threat in Zimbabwe between 2007 and 2008. Put differently, people failed to obtain sufficient money to purchase basic needs that included but were not limited to food, and they had no money for footing their health bills, travel expenses to and from work, and for paying utility bills because they could not access or withdraw their cash from banks and even if they could its value was ever-declining.

The inaccessible cash meant that people were denied access to their socio-economic wants; hence human insecurity was apparent. Normal life patterns were disrupted at home, jobs were lost, and the formal economy came to a standstill due to an acute cash shortage. Zimbabweans responded with numerous strategies in a drive to lessen or cope with the human security challenges caused by their failure to access money from the banks and the worthlessness of the currency. The strategies included but were not limited to: cross border trade and vending, bribe taking and petty corruption, selling goods on the black market, and illegal foreign currency trading and use. This was all in an effort to survive amid an economic crisis.

Furthermore, government efforts meant to mitigate the shortage of cash instead aggravated it. Government efforts such as price controls and further printing of money were short-lived solutions because the cash crisis and hyperinflation were merely symptoms not the root causes of the crisis. In fact, the situation worsened until the adoption of multi-currencies and the temporary thawing of the political haggling between the country's political parties and this eased the economic decline. In light of the foregoing, it is important to argue that citizen responses to the 2007-2008 cash crisis to a great degree represented a more extreme form of informal economy driven by the need to survive after the government failed to redress the socio-economic and political challenges. To this end, the cash shortage that so greatly endangered human security was rooted in contested politics, ill-informed economic policies, and corruption among other ills.

## Notes

1 *Parliamentary Debates* 2007.

2 Hanke and Kwok 2009, p. 354.

3 Ibid.

4 Tapiwa Chagonda 2016, p. 138.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 See, for instance, Crafts and Fearon 2010; Chen and Imam 2012; Claessens and Kose 2013; Romer 2003.

8 Claessens and Kose 2013, p. 3.

9 Romer 2003.

10 Ibid.

11 Crafts and Fearon 2010, p. 1.

12 Chen and Imam 2012.

13 Matsaganis 2013, pp. 6-7.

- 14 See, for example, Jover et al. 2014; Cinalli and Giugni 2016.
- 15 Jones 2010.
- 16 Schouten 2014, p. 25.
- 17 Jolly and Ray 2006.
- 18 UNDP 1994, p. 23.
- 19 Goucha 2008, p. xix.
- 20 Jolly and Ray 2006, p. 5.
- 21 Hove et al. 2013, p. 3.
- 22 Jolly and Ray 2006.
- 23 Hove et al. 2013, p. 3.
- 24 UNDP 1994, pp. 24–33.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Goucha 2008, p. xxii.
- 28 Jolly and Ray 2006, p. 6.
- 29 Hove and Gwiza 2012.
- 30 See, for instance, Timba 1997; Bond and Manyanya 2002; Dansereau and Zamponi 2005; Chimhowu 2009.
- 31 Murisa 2010, p. 3.
- 32 Hove and Mutanda 2014, pp. 116, 118.
- 33 Kairiza n.d.
- 34 Gukurume 2015, pp. 220-221.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Claessens and Kose 2013, p. 3.
- 37 Hove 2012, pp. 76-77.
- 38 Claessens and Kose 2013, pp. 11- 12.
- 39 Mhlanga 2015.
- 40 Despite a multi-currency regime, since 2013 bank clients also faced intermittent challenges to access their money from banks and the problem became acute since early 2016 and no sign of ending is in sight by mid-2017.
- 41 Jones 2010.
- 42 Chagonda 2012.
- 43 Moyo 2009.
- 44 Tamukamoyo 2010.
- 45 Gukurume 2015, p. 220.
- 46 Sadomba et al. 2015. p. 235.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Morreira 2015, p. 273.
- 49 Mai George interview 2011.
- 50 Hanke and Kwok 2009, p. 358.
- 51 Chepasi interview 2011.
- 52 Makochekanwa 2012, pp. 33-35.

- 53 Hanke 2008.
- 54 *The Herald* 2008c.
- 55 Kairiza n.d., p. 13.
- 56 Chagonda 2016.
- 57 Kairiza n.d., p. 5.
- 58 *The Herald* 2008c.
- 59 *New African* 2007, p. 78.
- 60 *The Herald* 2007.
- 61 *The Herald* 2008a, p. 2.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Kairiza n.d., p. 12.
- 64 *The Sunday Mail* 2007.
- 65 Nyathi 2008.
- 66 MacGarry n.d., p. 4.
- 67 Chepasi interview 2011.
- 68 Nyoni interview 2011.
- 69 Zeda interview 2013.
- 70 *The Chronicle* 2007, p.1.
- 71 Gumbe and Kaseke n.d., p. 1.
- 72 *The Herald* 2008b.
- 73 Mupayiwa interview 2013.
- 74 Moyo interview 2011.
- 75 Muza 2009.
- 76 Maseheka interview 2011
- 77 Munda interview 2011.
- 78 Zeda interview 2013.
- 79 Moyo interview 2011.
- 80 Nyashanu interview 2013.
- 81 Tembo interview 2011.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Mupayiwa interview 2013.
- 84 Yamamoto 2016.
- 85 Among the most notable early instances were: the 1982 Paweni grain scandal, 1986 National Railways Housing, 1987 Air Zimbabwe Fokker plane worth \$100 million, and 1987 Zisco Steel blast furnace scandals (for these see Ibid). Moreover, there were: the 1988 Willowgate car (see Pindula 2016); 1989 Zimbabwe Republic Police Santana, 1994 War Victims Compensation (See Moyo 2014, p. 25); 1995 Grain Marketing Board, 1996 VIP Housing, 1998 Boka Banking, 1998 ZESA YTL Soltran and 1998 Harare City Council Refuse Tender scandals. In 1999 the: Housing Loan, Noczim, DRC timber and diamond United Nations reported, Grain Marketing Board and Ministry of water and Rural Development Chinese tender scandals were recorded. These was followed by: the 2001 Harare Airport, 2005-8 pillaging and milking of Zisco Steel, 2006-present pillaging of diamonds in Chiadzwa, 2008-2014 the

Airport Road, the perpetual milking of Zimbabwe, and the pillaging of the central bank under Gideon Gono scandals which are among a “few” publicized corruption intrigues during Robert Mugabe’s regime (for the foregoing see *The Insider* 2016). The most shocking scandal was the disappearance of US \$15 billion in diamond revenue in mid-2016, which arguably triggered critical cash shortages. It was three times more than Zimbabwe’s annual national budget (Ndlovu 2016).

- 86 Zimbiti interview 2012.
- 87 Zeda interview 2013.
- 88 From various interviews.
- 89 *The Herald* 2007.
- 90 Maseheka interview 2011.
- 91 *IRIN* 2007.
- 92 Moyo interview 2011
- 93 *Ibid.*
- 94 Soza interview 2011.
- 95 *Ibid.*
- 96 Munda interview 2011.
- 97 *The Herald* 2008c.
- 98 Miyo interview 2011.
- 99 Soza interview 2011.
- 100 *The Herald* 2008c.
- 101 *The Herald* 2008b.
- 102 Kairiza n.d., p. 10.
- 103 Bracking and Sachikonye 2009, p. 2.
- 104 Asiedu and Freeman 2008.
- 105 Coomer and Gstraunthaler 2011, pp. 340-41
- 106 Sibanda 2011.
- 107 Floro et al. 2009.
- 108 *Outpost* 2006.
- 109 *The Herald* 2007.
- 110 *Chronicle* 2007.
- 111 Coltart 2008, p. 1.
- 112 *Financial Gazette* 2008.
- 113 *The Herald* 2008d.
- 114 Muza 2009.
- 115 Scambler et al. 1990, p. 262.
- 116 Leijonmarck et al. 2009.
- 117 *The Herald* 2008a, p. 2.
- 118 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- 119 Bressler n.d
- 120 Hove et al. 2014, pp. 68-70.
- 121 Munda interview 2011.



- 122 Soza interview 2011.
- 123 Zimbithi interview 2011.
- 124 Muza 2009.
- 125 Ibid.
- 126 Ibid.
- 127 Zimbabwe Situation 2008.
- 128 Nyathi 2008.
- 129 Guma 2008.
- 130 Hove and Ndawana 2016, p. 77.
- 131 Battera 2014.
- 132 Muza 2009.
- 133 Munda interview 2011.
- 134 Moyo interview 2011.
- 135 Harrell and Miller 1997, pp. 53-54
- 136 Mupayiwa interview 2013.
- 137 *The Herald* 2008b.
- 138 *New African* 2007, p. 108.
- 139 Rugwiji 2014, pp. 1011-1016.
- 140 Dube 2010, p. 250.
- 141 Soko and Balchin 2009, p. 33.
- 142 Mafukata 2015.
- 143 Chikanda 2005.
- 144 Hove et al. 2012, pp. 7-8.
- 145 Crush and Tevera 2010.

# Rethinking African Indigenous Ritual Festivals, Interrogating the Concept of African Ritual Drama

MORUFU BUKOLA OMIGBULE

**Abstract:** The postcolonial influence on the study of indigenous African culture is overwhelming. It is one out of many Western scholarly influences that colonial rule brought about in Africa. A good example is the description and evaluation of African indigenous ritual practices in terms of Western conceptions of dramatic experience at the expense of the peculiar character of the ritual experiences. Taken together the full range of the colonial influences reveal the abetting of the subordination of African thought to that of the West; hence, African scholarship remains an appendage of the Western scholarly tradition. Lately, many African and Africanist scholars see the tendency as an anathema that a committed African scholar must treat with abhorrence. This perception is needed in the interest of a more fully centered African scholarship in general and a respectable outlook of the African scholarly tradition in particular. African indigenous ritual performances, a major discursive category in African cultural studies, which have been hazily categorized as a form of drama, thus deserves to be retheorized and recategorized in the light of emerging insights and the ongoing mutating processes of African culture. The present study therefore draws upon postcolonial discourse in identifying modernity, which has subsequently culminated in globalization and the related rather complicated postcolonial condition of Africa. Drawing generally upon ritual discourse and specifically citing the example of the Yoruba, the paper identifies certain improprieties in equating African indigenous ritual festivals with drama while proposing “performance” so as not to stall valid engagement with the cultural phenomenon of traditional African ritual practices.

## Introduction

African rituals are components of, or “cultural sub-systems” of African cultures. We recognize them as such, as culture is taken to mean a body of systems into which lots of human experiences and conditions surrounding them are classified. Such cultural sub-systems, as Laitin enumerates, include “religion, traditions, customs, political practices, economic behavior, and so on.”<sup>1</sup> Considered as discursive subject, African rituals belong in the intellectual domain of African cultural studies. With growing concern and constant calls for a redefinition and securing the future of epistemological tradition in Africa, the humanities in Africa, and indeed, African cultural studies as a whole, should be seen as located at the nodal point of the entire African knowledge enterprise.<sup>2</sup>

The call for reconstituting and reorienting the African tradition of knowledge production relates to the earlier awareness of the colonial origin and postcolonial implications of the

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v17/v17i3a4.pdf>

contemporary African knowledge enterprise; that is, the call is more or less an extension of the struggle of the earlier African intellectual to define her/himself in opposition to the Western image created of her/him. Nevertheless, in light of the realities of the present modernizing-globalizing milieu, the very notion of “self” in any socio-cultural context has become obviously more complex. Indeed, knowledge productions, target audienceship, and means of knowledge consumption are now driven under the pressure of modernization-cum-globalization, so much so that the earlier visible walls for demarcating the self now seem to be less rigid.<sup>3</sup> Hence, cultural materials, which have been abundantly deployed in the service of projecting the African identity, can now be seen to have shed significant parts of their traditional features, unlike their treatment in certain earlier cases as materials and experiences permanently insulated against change.<sup>4</sup> The changes that they have gone through and the pressure of modernization and globalization under which they continue to exist have implications for the perception of the cultural materials. Though the cultural materials have now been reconfigured and continue to face reconfiguration, nevertheless we can still glean features of traditionalism with which the African identity is still constructed and maintained as part of the pervasive modernizing-globalizing realities.

To truly reshape the African knowledge enterprise, the foundation of the enterprise in the colonial experience as well as its sustenance as a postcolonial reality need be examined with a view to generating a superstructure of knowledge productions devoid of foundational challenges. The gamut of efforts in this respect can never be disregarded. While there is need to sustain the tempo with which efforts have been made towards this end, however, the deployment of specific African cultural realities in the articulation of the discourse of African knowledge enterprise need be more actively pursued. One way this can be achieved is to strive at attaining conceptual propriety. Hence concepts that had to be imposed on the discourse of African culture in response to the perceived postcolonial challenge of racial denigration should be re-examined for appropriateness of usage. The present study is therefore an attempt to re-engage the notion of African rituals. Two conceptions of African rituals are consequently being interrogated: the notion of African rituals as an equivalent of Western drama, and their contemporary conception as cultural materials for consumption within the globalizing space, which tends to reduce their essence within highly flexible frames of experiences.

In this sense, it is to be noted that the perception of African rituals by those “who live the rituals” differs from that of those who show interest in the rituals for reasons other than that of those whose lives derive fundamental meanings through acts of the rituals. On the contrary, the processing of the rituals as cultural materials for knowledge generation has been predominantly championed and dominated by academics whose lives are not viewed as connected to the essence of the rituals or defined by them. There has therefore been a playing down on the essence attributed to the rituals both in their use as knowledge materials and selection for advocacy. A good instance is the reduction of the African ritual to an equivalent of Western drama in academic discourses. In this reductive endeavor, so much is bound to be overlooked since so much would be assumed in the use of the borrowed concept.

The contention of this paper is that the need to equate the African ritual to the Western drama was probably a well-conceived counter-discursive effort. It is nevertheless a racial card whose relevance has been lost in the face of the realities of modernization and globalization

game. The present study therefore proposes “performance,” a broader concept as a replacement for “drama,” which is not adequate to capture the details involved in rituals. This is to allow for more objective engagement with the phenomenon of African rituals beyond their hazy deployment as postcolonial discursive strategy. In the light of broader insights provided by such scholars as Rappaport and Driver, and since “a peak of modernity” called globalization must push the discourse of African culture beyond the emergency postcolonial discourse of self-exorcism, African rituals need be reappraised and afforded the real valuation they deserve. The paper thus seeks to relocate the discourse of African rituals from the familiar corner of Afrocentric postcolonial discourse of self-exorcism to a broader plane of global knowledge enterprise; that is, a pushing of the discourse of African ritual traditions to where it will not be regulated merely by the fancy of self-identification, no matter the prompting. This will make possible the application of concepts without risk of reduction in the character and significance of a ritual subject and ensure the production of knowledge that stands the test of time.

### **Plumbing the Depth of the Discourse**

The discourse of what is considered African indigenous drama takes place within the broad field of African cultural studies. This is so when our point of reference in time is specifically postcolonial; that is, when we engage with the issue in the learnt and acquired formal pattern of generating theses, processing and articulating thoughts as acts of knowledge production occasioned by the postcolonial condition. The so-called African indigenous drama emerged distinctively as a domain of intellectualizing in the colonial epoch that was marked by a certain preponderance of asserting the African identity. Shall we recollect the period for a moment, not as a repeat of the usual romantic longing for the (over-)glorified essential African self; that is, the kind of “hankering for” that animated the ideology of pan-Africanism with which the one-sidedly initiated and articulated colonial discourse of Africa was countered need be put on hold. This is to allow for an objective engagement with the subject of Africa and what it entails as a concept. In actual fact, African indigenous drama as an epistemological domain emerged with and belonged in the counter-discursive initiative of the early African elite, “a reactive enterprise” built on the various cultural and sub-cultural distillates assembled from cultures across the continent.<sup>5</sup>

The discourse surrounding Africa, at inception, had to be articulated based on the multi-cultural reality of Africa. The emergency need for African self-redefinition and social reconstitution in the face of the dominant imperialist project with dehumanizing implications for Africa was widely felt by the African elite. Incidentally the elite were colonially tutored and could not but exhibit Eurocentric sensibilities even in their commitment as advocate and defender of the oppressed Africa. The historic denigration of African humanity occasioned by colonialism, nevertheless, necessitated the assertion of the “African self” and, perhaps for the first time, a self-perception of the various peoples of the continent as one was distinctly experienced, reinforcing the known contacts that had been in existence among the peoples long before the colonial epoch.<sup>6</sup> The concept, African indigenous drama or African drama was coined as a referent for a major form of cultural practice that lent the discourse of Africa culture some of the essential materials for its articulation. So, African indigenous drama was mapped as a scholarly domain serving in the projection of the ideology of pan-Africanism. However, the

mapping incidentally injected into the body of knowledge generated from the new scholarly domain of Africa poignant doses of critical contentions that should presently demand unbiased reception and fitting application of the concept. Apart from those of conceptual applications, there are those bordering on “borrowed” European languages, Western scholarly modes and processes of thought among others. This is to claim that it is rather fortuitous that the discourse originally aimed at exorcising Africa, by ironic twist, interrogates itself by implicating the basis of its own formulation, processes of articulation, and the human agency involved. More importantly, it retains the very postcolonial contradictions coloring its own constitution as it continues to function and relate within the expansive field of African cultural studies. The contradictions are most revealed in the critical discourses of African literature as taught in many if not all African universities today. That literature remains a disciplinary domain that, on its own, is a postcolonial phenomenon with multivalency of paradigms of operation. It, particularly the segment called oral literature, often entertains the discourse of African indigenous ritual festivals as that of African indigenous drama or African ritual drama or African festival drama. One of the contradictions is revealed in the manner it is assigned the conceptual category “African ritual drama” or “African festival drama.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, “the self” ended up being defined in the uncritical terms of the “other,” thereby ridiculously retaining a superordinate-subordinate relation that opposes the relation between superordinates, or at worse, that between homologs as originally intended.

Ritual festival, a means by which humans express their sensitivity to the world as well as encode their actions/reactions to natural and environmental circumstances, have been shown to be native to Africa; but the African has had its discourse articulated in a way that the postcolonial imperative is dominant.<sup>8</sup> That is, rather than exploiting the resources of African indigenous ritual practices as cultural material for generating knowledge about Africa for Africa and the rest of the world, the ritual practices are constituted into arsenal for racial struggle. In a manner, the way of their articulation for self-definition exudes ethnocentrism of a kind in the final analysis. This we shall see in the sense of the politics behind the formulation of the discourse of African ritual; and could the propriety of considering the option of the political ever be contested given the obvious reason that it emerged as a counter-discursive initiative? Two tendencies can be noticed in the views that have been articulated under the subject of indigenous African ritual drama. On the one hand, there is the eagerness to debunk established Western bases of classifying no cultural phenomena of Africa as drama as we find in the studies of Ola Rotimi and Echeruo.<sup>9</sup> This led to the delineating and wedging of an African sense of dramatic tradition into the dominant Eurocentric sense of dramatic tradition. On the other hand, there is the felt pressure to constitute essential bases upon which a separate category under the concept of African indigenous drama could be determined. Both tendencies sum up as a direct or indirect result of caving in to the epistemological pressure exerted by the early Western scholars of African cultures in the course of apprehending African indigenous ritual festivals alongside other African cultural phenomena through academic discourses.

We easily come to terms with the imperative to map the African domain in the global conception of the idea of dramatic traditions most outstandingly in Wole Soyinka’s treatise *Myth, Literature and the African World*. Soyinka takes African rituals to be a form of drama. He conveniently refers to them as “drama of the gods” and describes them as “cleansing, binding,



communal, recreative force.” The African world of Soyinka’s mind is constructed on three of the numerous archetypal beings known to Yoruba mythic history when several other mythic accounts exist among other Africans.<sup>10</sup> The treatise on the whole embodies a complication in the sense that it attempts to establish the African regional identity by rather weakly assuming too much for a constituent culture (Yoruba) in an attempt to explain the African cultural mosaic. There exists in the treatise, as the case is with known attempts in engaging with the concept of African indigenous drama, evident ironic yielding to the discursive command of the early Western scholars. By way of exemplification, whether wittingly or otherwise, views of distinguished scholars such as Oyin Ogunba, Ruth Finnegan, Ulli Beier, and M.T. Drewal among others are significantly inspired by the postcolonial necessity and, of course, the concomitant postcolonial sensibility characterized their discursive attempts. For example, Finnegan’s description of certain African practices in which rituals form a prominent category as “quasi-dramatic” is inspired by her Western cultural background and scholarly orientation.<sup>11</sup> Though her reluctance to qualify the cultural practices as drama is in line with the present call for proper recognition of the character and essence of African rituals, the reluctance is more of the result of her working within Eurocentric standards of dramatic practices. Her study, like those of others in the category she is presently put, is part of the range of intellectual efforts to grapple with the realities of the African cultural space since Africa became a major subject of Western intellectual enquiry. The enquiry continues today as a more open knowledge enterprise for all across the world.

Now, on colonialism, which the presently study implicates, Bell informs that it “reshaped existing structures of human knowledge,” leaving no aspect “untouched.”<sup>12</sup> One could argue that the early Western scholars were “incidental agents” and could not have done more than justify the intent to dominate on the part of the colonialists and “legitimize” the imperialist mission. Really, could it have been otherwise at inception given that the condition necessitated the discourse as a knowledge paradigm of the mission to subjugate? Can it ever be any different given that the intent to perpetuate the domination by the West still endures? Reactions (direct or indirect) to the major thrust of the body of knowledge generated through the involvement of the Western scholars constitute, in part, what is known as “postcolonial discourse,” “postcolonial studies,” or “postcolonialism.” Postcolonialism, as Hulme describes it, is “a process of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome, which takes many forms and is probably inescapable for all those whose worlds have been marked by that set of phenomena.”<sup>13</sup> Again, postcolonialism, as Rusell Jacob informs, has “declared intentions [...] to allow the voices of once colonized peoples and their descendants to be heard” even though as a theory, critical engagements with it have brought about a lot of confusion and controversy rather than serving the need for which it is meant.<sup>14</sup> Yet, can the use to which the theory has been put and the gains that have consequently been recorded be denied? Postcolonial studies afford knowledge of the history of colonialism in different parts of the world. For instance, it is stimulating to know that the anticolonial struggles of the leading imperialist of the world today, the United States, were a reaction to its experience of colonial domination even though they did not involve the indigenous Americans. More exciting it is to know that it treats colonial domination as a “general process with some shared features across the globe.”<sup>15</sup>

The point on the altering of the structure of knowledge globally must, in a sense, inform that the postcolonial reception of the notion of African indigenous drama has not just been trans-culturally articulated within Africa; that it has, indeed, been a transcontinental discursive focus implicating “the metropolis” and “the colony” even in their most recent outlooks. Craig, a Western scholar but an enthusiast of African rituals comes to mind here. His passing defensive comment on and enthusiasm about African indigenous ritual performances is worth quoting at some length for the rare illumination it offers the present study:

In Asia, too, the forgotten masters of the temples and all that those temples contained, have permeated every thought, every mark in their work with this sense of calm motion resembling death...glorifying and greeting it. In Africa (which some of us think we are but now to civilize) this spirit dwelt, ...the essence of the perfect civilization. There too dwelt the great masters, not individuals obsessed with the idea of each asserting his personality as if it was a valuable and mighty thing, but content because of a kind of holy patience to move their brains and their fingers only in that direction permitted by the law—in the service of the simple truth.<sup>16</sup>

His reference to the Asiatic dramatic form alongside Africa ritual performances should inspire a rewarding trans-cultural discourse of traditional or ritual performances that must implicate Africa and Asia either at the higher level of inter-continental cultural evaluation or the lower level of inter-cultural and inter-sub-cultural appreciation.<sup>17</sup> The Nietzschean lauding of the cultural phenomenon of ritual, which predates Craig’s, was inspired by the perceived failure of the European of the modern scientific mentality to appreciate the spiritual moor that Greek ritual served. That certainly is reminiscent of many people with a similar mindset in today’s world, for science, in spite of its global dominance as a supposedly most useful and refined intellectual enterprise, has not been able to satisfy the spiritual yearnings of the modern human.<sup>18</sup> The different cultures on the continent of Africa presently experiencing a seizure of the indigenous culture should particularly be interested in the idea of total theatre, which the essays of Craig, Kernodle, Kirby, and Lyons embody.<sup>19</sup> We recall the maiden African Studies Association of Africa’s (ASAA) Conference held in 2015, where many of the positions expressed, including those of the first and second keynote speakers, the former president of Nigeria, General Olusegun Obasanjo, and Professor Toyin Falola, favored a return to the appreciation of worthy African cultural values as well as a re-generation of the African knowledge system.<sup>20</sup> Again, as Ogaga Ifowodo similarly recalls, “The theme of a ‘return to the past’ constitutes a key trope of postcolonial discourse. This theme is as established in the poetics of the decolonization struggle that saw to the emergence of the post colonial state as it is in the literary acts of self-representation that flourished alongside that struggle.”<sup>21</sup>

In the light of the repeated call, the studies of Craig, Kernodle, Kirby, and Lyons provide essential bases for the valuation of cultural experiences such as African rituals. The processes of the new knowledge system canvassed at the conference cannot but show interest in traditional African ritual practices.

### Between the Ideas of Drama and Performance

We need briefly engage in conceptual clarification over the terms African indigenous drama and African indigenous ritual performance in order to capture the proper form the cultural phenomena should be apprehended in contemporary scholarship. African indigenous drama is a coinage intended to capture what many a scholar has taken to be dramatic embodiment of African indigenous ritual performances. It represents one of the potent reactions to the Hamitic hypothesis, which confers outright the genius of high culture on the Westerners and rules out the innate possibility of the same in Africans. Recall that the hypothesis is traceable to the ethnocentrism of the eighteenth-century philosophers such as Voltaire, David Hume and Montesquieu, which allows for the description of Africa in such derogatory terms as “brutish, ignorant, idle, crafty, treacherous, bloody, thievish, mistrustful, and superstitious.”<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the use to which the coinage, African indigenous ritual drama, has been put cannot be denied. Yet it is bedeviled by certain conceptual ambiguity in respect of the subject to which it serves as referent. This is in addition to the fact that it aids misplacement of essence/meaning with regard to the discourse of African indigenous rituals. By way of interrogation, are we to accept with sufficient conviction that African indigenous ritual performances are a pure drama and their essence is the same as that of conventional drama inherited from the Western culture? Perhaps, we should uphold it as the truth that “African rituals” have been interpreted to correspond to the Western conception of the dramatic enterprise, so that as the effort serves in countering the Hamitic hypothesis, it cannot but invite an interrogation of “the validity and/or the adequacy of its epistemological formulation.”<sup>23</sup>

Ritual, as Rappaport strongly contends, is more than mere drama since what ritual embodies is more than the total summation of the conventional drama.<sup>24</sup> In Tom F. Driver’s treatise, we are even persuaded to hold a view of ritual that points to the past and that which points to the future, and of course, a totalizing impressions of it:

Ritualization is a way, an experimental way, of going from the inchoate to the expressive, from the sheerly pragmatic to the communicative. Hence, in humans it is a close relative of art, especially the performing arts. In fact, we had best think of it as their progenitor, and as the source also of speech, of religion, of culture, and of ethics. It is not as true to say that we human beings invented rituals as that rituals have invented us.<sup>25</sup>

Yet, Driver distinguishes between ritual, a combination of tradition and creativity, as “a mode of performance” comparable to “religion and liberative action” in which an alternative world is constructed, and “performance in the ritual mode” that is:

theatrical, or quasi-theatrical: [in which] something is ‘acted out’ within a definite frame that sets the action apart as the kind of event that is, in the English language, usually called a ‘performative’, whether it be a play on the stage, a game played on the field, a piece of music played in a concert hall, or a service attended in synagogue....performances contrived for special occasions, including many kinds of play (certainly sporting events), play-acting (in theatres or elsewhere), and the performance of music and dance as well as religious and secular rituals.<sup>26</sup>

The foregoing submissions on ritual are somewhat sufficient to reveal the lots that are missed out in the simplistic equation of African indigenous ritual performances with drama of the European mode or any kind at all. This is because the differences that set ritual apart from drama are not denied it and the extent to which ritual and other performance modes, including drama, could be related in discourse is mapped out. We therefore propose a clear-cut epistemological issue rather than the type polluted by overwhelming postcolonial concerns. The kind of thinking that was confused on account of the haste brought about by the social quagmire of the Hamitic hypothesis may be understandable but to allow it to endure or for it to be deliberately sustained is no doubt an assault on intellectual integrity. Even if the Hamitic hypothesis still endures, it no longer flagrantly stares anyone in the face. And who dare insist it does not? Robin Law's observation which lends credence to the suspicion being expressed about the enduring influence of the hypothesis is worth quoting: "Although the overt racism of the 'Hamitic Hypothesis' was repudiated by the academic historiography of Africa which developed from the 1950s, the model of state formation through invasion and/or cultural influences from outside continued to exercise a powerful influence."<sup>27</sup>

Be it as it may, no one dare contest the valid claim that "[h]uman beings are in all aspects bio-cultural."<sup>28</sup> The high tendency of Eurocentricity in many an African today can though be argued to be an aftermath of the regime of the hypothesis, but that it is largely internally induced is well known.<sup>29</sup> What perhaps was deliberately suppressed in the bid to respond to the hypothesis and stem its tides of influence is the fact which any serious cultural worker must follow Driver in affirming: "No one can become human in a universal way; everyone does so in ways specific to this culture or that."<sup>30</sup> And this appears to be the big omission that could have mediated the reactive awareness then; that is, the cultural material of African indigenous ritual performances could have been better categorized. This would have guarded against the consequence of over-simplification such as seeing African ritual performances simply as drama with the implication that they primarily focus on entertainment as does drama.

Indeed, a lot needs to be sieved out of ritual to enrich contemporary scholarship. A major line of action to take could be spotted in Nasidi's prescription for the condition of the quagmire of the African postcolonial discursive enterprise: relocate ritual out of "the historical context of the still active desire by a stigmatized people to counter-define themselves."<sup>31</sup> Assuming this is given, we should first interrogate for the purpose of the appropriateness of the assigned category: African indigenous ritual drama. In doing this, we appeal to Driver as we avoid the myth-ritual controversy which Driver's totalizing sense of ritual may attract. Hence, we choose to opt for two of the criteria upon which ritual as a mode of performance and performance in the ritual mode could be categorized as enunciated by Driver: religiosity and secularity.<sup>32</sup> Invariably, African indigenous ritual festivals, for example, are both religious and secular in terms of essence and function. These two qualities are but a simultaneous presence in African indigenous ritual festivals. Applying the criteria of religiosity and secularity would then qualify African indigenous ritual festivals as ritual performances in the way Rappaport has enunciated.

What scholarly gain would then accrue if the concept of African indigenous ritual drama or the often-used African ritual drama is substituted for indigenous African ritual performances? We argue that there will be an immediate avoidance of glossing over the metaphysical quality of the practices, for the recommendation that ritual should be forced to yield its messages for

the enrichment of our acquired sense of conventional dramatic enterprise constitutes a dismissive presumption.<sup>33</sup> It is this dismissive tendency that characterizes the lending of African indigenous ritual festivals to the discourse of the tourism potential of African cultures that has now become so fanciful across the continent. If, as Soyinka and others have shown that Africa could lead the world in making culture assure a harmonious world, the dismissive approach to ritual should be addressed, for ritual constitutes the core of those cultures upon which so much hope is being placed.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, let the mind-set of the would-be attendee of an African ritual performance, particularly those in the festival category, or any scholar at all interested in studying a particular African ritual performance be prepared for an experience that goes beyond mere entertainment. Only then would ritual's sanctity be maintained and its custodians accorded the respect that would facilitate their "body and soul" involvement in the performance act; only then can the would-be scholar of the ritual practice be able to approach the performance act with original curiosity that would lead him or her, at the least, to the path of discovering the hidden beauty and messages of ritual if not straight to them.

Most of the scholarly discourses conducted under the heading African indigenous ritual drama or African ritual drama are configured by the shadow cast by the general postcolonial condition of the African knowledge production system. In fact, there is a major preoccupation with the shadow rather than the object of study in many ritual studies. As Nasidi contends in respect of African literary discourses in general, African scholars have "merely been involved in the unheroic task of reproducing bourgeois discourses in an African guise."<sup>35</sup> We therefore propose that the shadow be recognized as such and abandoned for African epistemological efforts to really count in the struggle for African social transformation through investment in her cultural heritages. The pithiness in this proverbial proposition must be recognized for the intent to affect that informs its deployment; that is, we intend this would provoke interrogation as to how the shadow may be abandoned.

### **Dimension of Modernity/Globalization**

The concept of ritual has engaged intellectuals across space and time, and the engagement has yielded bases for recognizing and appreciating ritual drama as some form of old artistic practice carried over into contemporary times. But then how is knowledge (re)generated with a view to enriching society and humanity in the circumstance? We could interrogate this way with particular focus on a major African culture, the Yoruba culture, which still boasts a good number of ritual practices. The complexity of the postcolonial Yoruba perhaps like other major cultural formations of Africa could be explained under the concept of Yoruba modernities. The concept should then suggest, among other things, the Yoruba experiences of the processes of cultural merger taking place across Africa as a postcolony, and of course, the world as an increasingly "borderless" human habitation. While the phenomenon of cultural merger may have been as far back in history as the primitive stage of humanity, hence a phenomenon predating colonialism, its ongoing monumental, global dimension is ultimately historically connected to colonialism and its aftermath which, in some "sharp" postcolonial discourse, is often termed "neocolonialism" or "neoimperialism."<sup>36</sup> Globalization equally goes into capturing the experience in question. The term "globalization," however, seems to enable a less indicting or, perhaps, an all-indicting discourse of culture, for no way and nowhere can it still be affirmed



with validity that domination, or better put, exploitation is a one-sided experience in contemporary times. We should note before further discussion that the Yoruba example comes within the reach of the present scholar. Therefore, it is not pontificating on Africa by displaying a cultural case in point; but merely citing the example of an African cultural condition to reflect the modern tendency experienced across Africa.

Yoruba ritual practices that offer age-long sites of artistic performances are now attractions to peoples in locations far away from the Yoruba cultural dominion. This is not to merely indicate that the cultural-cum-social space of the Yoruba is very accessible to all for this is a given, but that it is an active site of cultural interactions in which various agencies of cultural (re)production participate. Alas, the unwary, the mere cultural enthusiast is often easily persuaded to recognize the activities of the agencies as laudable forms of promotion of the indigenous Yoruba culture. How is this sometimes experienced? A complete stranger or a half-informed intending to access aspect(s) of indigenous Yoruba culture could be seen holding a video-recorder or photo-camera, while standing very close to a ritual practitioner held as most venerated by the indigenous ritual congregation in the course of an intense ritual exercise, one upon which the community in question is, by indigenous traditional belief, expected to lean for its survival. It might even be the case that a group or groups of non-natives (both in the local and the foreign senses) have come to witness a ritual event as a form of relaxation. There are even extreme cases of extension of authority to “perform” as a core ritual practitioner when the individual in question is not of the particular lineage bestowed with a right to a ritual act. And many more! Does this serve in promoting the indigenous Yoruba ritual practices in the interest of the sanctity attached to the practices by the indigenous practitioners? Does it serve the security of their indigenous belief system strongly connected to the practices, particularly as ritual events have become attractions to globalization? The answers to these are certainly in the negative.<sup>37</sup>

As Mattelart observes, globalization “aimed at the construction of an unrestricted global arena.”<sup>38</sup> In the context of this understanding, humans irrespective of their location on the globe are to be understood as members of one decipherable community. In this understanding, all social distinctions and cultural particularities must dissolve for the broad outlines of the global space to gain visibility – the only un-partitioned space for humans in their global community. Hence, the discourse of culture in general is to be constructed in global terms, for every form of cultural practice must be globally transmittable; in the transmission, cultures are transposed to new social contexts such as the (re)generation of forms of indigenous Yoruba culture in overseas places like Cuba, South Carolina and Brazil among others. That is, as van Staden posits, “African contexts themselves may not exclusively constitute the site of African culture, since post-colonial/expatriate communities often articulate a so-called ‘black’ culture.”<sup>39</sup> Further, as Featherstone more clearly explains, blacks in such communities constitute cultural communities with certain practices that can neither be limited to the “nation-state in which they reside” nor easily “integrate” the peculiar practices or “limit” such practices to their immediate location of residence.<sup>40</sup> But shall we hold on a little to critically observe: supposing the ongoing cultural regenerations taking place further afield, outside of the “original location” would not permit any reconfiguration of the indigenous cultural practices being adapted to new social contexts, the wide latitude of “cultural nativity” extended to cultural strangers in matters of

core aspects of Yoruba rituals certainly does. Whether on account of the trendy necessity for globalization of knowledge or the now fashionable unrestricted exchange of cultures across the globe, or any reason whatsoever, there is need for caution. Yoruba rituals, indeed, are inherently elastic in terms of granting allowance for participating in them; but certainly not to the extent of endangering their sanctity as an act that is of serious communal implications.

But, who dare make such a claim as to the need to protect the sanctity of such things as Yoruba rituals within the all-pervading Yoruba modernities? Might anyone assert any serious relevance for ritual as a cultural category beyond the fact that it is an antiquarian subject of discourse or an instance of ancient dramatic experiences in the face of the command of the modernities? Even in Ile-Ife, “the religious capital of Yorubaland” where there is a large concentration of the ritual performances, modernity holds sway.<sup>41</sup> Yet ritual should now appeal to anyone who is truly concerned about the survival of the world. And why not? We are informed in a most disturbing manner by Driver that the twentieth century is:

an age in which the decline of ritual sensibility, particularly in the Western industrialized nations, has become a threat to the survival of life on earth; [that] the life-threatening pollution of the earth’s oceans, streams, and atmosphere is partly due to the neglect and decline of rituals that once regulated people’s relation to their habitat. At any rate, the attempt of modern civilization to live in a de-sacralized cosmos is coming more and more to look like the making of a catastrophe.<sup>42</sup>

We might need to add to the foregoing Marguerite A. Peeters’ observation about the Western cultural revolution to which globalization is often connected:

Having attacked the very structure of the human person, the revolution has provoked an anthropological cataclysm [which has resulted in the] “shift[ing] from the family to couples and individuals, from spouses to partners, from marriage to free love, from happiness to well-being and quality of life, from parental authority to children rights, from self-giving to ownership of one’s body and control over one’s destiny, from conscience to free choice, from interpersonal communion to the fusion of nameless and faceless individuals, from complementarity of man and woman to a contract between the sexes, from parents to reproducers, from procreation to reproduction, from all forms of legitimate authority to individuals’ empowerment and experimentation.”<sup>43</sup>

Should we see globalization in the light of what Bourdieu considers as the “false universalism of the West,” any enthusiastic embrace of it by an African cultural worker might simply need to be seen in light of Onoge’s idea of “mellifluous universalism” that takes for granted the cultural potentials of Africa which humanity might need for its security and sustenance.<sup>44</sup> This precisely is where Peeters’ concern for the protection of Africa against the imposition of “decadent agenda” must be well appreciated.<sup>45</sup> Any ideology wrapped up in and promoted through the concept of globalization needs to be held suspect.

## Conclusion

Contemporary discourses under the heading African indigenous ritual drama or African ritual drama should rather be conducted under the heading African indigenous ritual performance. It should also be considered an “inherited mandate.”<sup>46</sup> This is because scholarly interest in African indigenous rituals dates back to the colonial era of Western anthropologists before the advancement of the interest by Africanist and African scholars of African culture. And African literary enterprise (both as critical and creative engagements) has striven like other allied disciplines to deliver this mandate. As a duty, its discharge has been in line with the demands of specific postcolonial African socio-economic-cum-political conditions. Like other categories of cultural practices of diverse African peoples, the discourse of African indigenous rituals often finds easy accommodation within any cultural project aimed at African historico-cultural restoration, both politically informed and otherwise. In Nigeria, such latitude was provided for the discourse of cultural matters such as ritual festivals in the Festival of Arts and Culture sponsored by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1977. The Centre for Black Culture (CCBAC), the Centre for Black Culture and International Understanding (CBCIU), centers and institutes for the study of African culture, and related matters located in our higher institutions of learning are also parts of the scholarly enterprise through which discourses bordering on core cultural matters such as rituals are sustained.

The general recognition of ritual as a noteworthy cultural phenomenon in the early nineteenth century need be factored in when African rituals like other vital indigenous cultural forms are being discussed. That is, the debate surrounding it often framed essentially in what may be termed “exclusionary” postcolonial mode cannot be said to be appropriate in extending the frontiers of knowledge along the axis of the worth of cultural practices inherited from the past.<sup>47</sup> In other words, that scholars of Western origin have given commendable appraisal to rituals, particularly African rituals, should confer a cross-cultural deracialized status on rituals as a subject of scholarly discourse. The “essentialist” postcolonial mode of reception of African indigenous rituals should therefore first be subjected to critical examination. Generating an accretion of the fragments of knowledge of indigenous African ritual practices may be difficult given the gamut of scholarly outputs that exists in respect of its explanation and understanding within the postcolonial circumstances. There is, on the whole, the need to consciously safeguard African rituals. The need to properly reorganize discourses surrounding them across all the allied disciplines must be recognized. Perhaps, we are at a most crucial point in time when the world’s attention must shift to Africa. Certainly, African cultures such as the Yoruba that have numerous ritual practices in their sphere of cultural control have a prominent role to play if rituals would appeal as some possible panacea to global socio-cultural and ecological crises that the world continues to face.<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, the form of intellectual discourse that rituals could attract would be shaped by the discursive property of the cultural modernities, which the contemporary African cultures now have to tolerate. These cultural modernities are an offshoot of the postcolonial predicament of Africa. It is of necessity that the entire African contemporary epistemological systems *vis-a-vis* ritual practices in particular, and other ancient cultural forms in general are carefully interrogated. This is with a view to ensuring a thorough democratization of African epistemological systems to the extent of disinfecting them of all forms of fallacies and

unqualified anathema. That is, the African subject to discuss, who to discuss it, and how to discuss it should not just be determined within the knowledge enclosure of racial pride or an enclosure framed with the excessive emotion triggered by racial denigration. Doing this will enhance the disclosure of the true value of indigenous African rituals. It will help to discourage undue equating of cultural phenomena and conditions, reductive inferences and assumptions, over-assumptions, conceptual ambiguities and impropriety among others. African scholarship must be bold. What is at stake is ultimately an inward movement to re-addressing “the African self” rather than merely or even critically engaging with the “other.” As the cultural affairs of Africa are increasingly made complex and complicated by modernity and its newest manifestation—globalization—African scholarly tradition still conveniently exists as a shadow cast by the Western epistemological tradition when it should be in the active re-constitutive process. To be seen to be active in this sense is to be seen taking on the challenge headlong. In this way, our conceptual application must be well informed as African cultural matters are engaged for intellectual purpose. The present proposition that drama be replaced with performance in the discourse of African indigenous ritual performances might be a paltry reaction to a very engaging challenge, for the whole of the contemporary African epistemological approaches vis-à-vis African indigenous cultures is no doubt in dire need of total overhauling.

## Notes

- 1 Laitin, quoted in van Staden 1998, p.17.
- 2 This, in addition to similar calls at other fora, was a central concern of the maiden edition of African Studies Association of Africa’s (ASAA) conference held at the University of Ibadan in 2015.
- 3 Globalization cannot be divorced from modernity. This is the point Tomlinson makes with the phrase “the complex and multiform interrelations, penetrations and cultural mutations that characterize the globalization of our current stage of modernity.” For further reading, see Tomlinson 1999, p.105. Giddens’ definition of globalization, which aligns with Urry’s, is also relevant here: a process by which happenings in one place affect those in other places that are remote in time and in terms of geographical location. See Giddens 1990 and Urry 2003, p. 39.
- 4 An important point pertinent to adopting a “culture-specific” approach in the study of indigenous practices like rituals in this milieu of globalization is made by Christo van Staden: “Being ‘culture-specific’ may easily become a strategy of harnessing knowledge of cultural difference to the end of cultural hegemony. Being ‘culture-specific may [...] become a means of appropriating local knowledge, beliefs, feelings, and practices for global information markets, at the risk of essentialising such local information in neat packages that makes consumption easier and more attractive” See van Staden 1998, p. 20.
- 5 Mudimbe 1988 and 1994, provide explanations on the several and often disparate cultures that the concept “Africa” refers to.

- 6 For a fuller discussion, see Ali, Asiwaju, and Oloruntinmehin 1988, especially the chapters by Ajayi, Nukuna, and Osanyin.
- 7 Ogunba 1969, Soyinka 1976, and Ibitokun 1993, among others favour this manner of applying the concept in scholarly discourses.
- 8 Omigbule 205, p. 159.
- 9 For further reading, see Echeruo and Rotimi 1981
- 10 Soyinka 1976, pp. 1-36.
- 11 For further reading, see Finnegan 1970.
- 12 Bell 1992, p. 7.
- 13 Hulme 1995, p. 120.
- 14 Jacob quoted in Loomba 2005, p. xi.
- 15 Loomba 2005, p. 19.
- 16 Kirby 1969, pp. xiv-xviii.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 See Driver 1991, p. 32 for the opinion that “twentieth [...] an age in which the decline of ritual sensibility, particularly in the Western industrialized nations, has become a threat to the survival of life on earth.”
- 19 For further reading, see Kirby 1969.
- 20 The need to rescue African societies from the “seizure” predominates in the various presentations at the recently held First International Conference of the African Studies Association of Africa Conference held in University of Ibadan, Ibadan. Lots of emotion was expressed by many presenters and discussants on the situation. The pathos that marked the observations and submissions of some paper presenters including the present writer was deep. The theme of the conference “African Studies in the Twenty-First Century: Past, Present & Future” seems to have attracted these.
- 21 Ifowodo 2013, p. ix.
- 22 Biakolo 1998, p. 2.
- 23 Omigbule 2015, p. 159.
- 24 Rappaport 1999, p. 38.
- 25 Driver 1991, p. 31.
- 26 Driver 1991, pp. 80-82.
- 27 Robin 2009, p. 294.
- 28 Driver 1991, p. 23.
- 29 In Adefuye 2011, p. 10, we are told that “Ethnocentrism [is ] the source of such historical practices as the Hamitic hypothesis [...] African historiography has, of course, largely overcome the major effects of European ethnocentrism, but must turn their attention to ethnocentrism within their own continent and individual nations.”
- 30 Driver 1991, p. 24.
- 31 Nasidi 2002; Omigbule 2015, p. 159.
- 32 Driver 1991, p. 82.
- 33 This recommendation appears in Echeruo 1981, pp. 137-50.



- 34 For further elaboration, see Soyinka 2007, pp. 31-50; and Kukah 2007, p. 41 contains a pertinent submission that is noteworthy here.
- 35 Nasidi 2002, p. 84.
- 36 van Staden 1998, p. 23 and Yakubu Nasidi 2002, p. 117 are some useful references on the use of these terms. While van Staden uses the term neo-imperialism in his articulation of the discourse of African colonial experience and "Africa's current marginalized position within globalized economies," Nasidi's Marxist discourse of African literature as a postcolonial subject makes use of terms such as "neocolonialism" and "bourgeois hegemony" among others to recommend to the African-centered creative artist a countering of "deleterious effect of globalisation [...] through cultural action," which "will require a massive rejection of current practice, and a reorientation of our fundamental values, and with it a questioning of our basic goals, and over-all educational policy."
- 37 For one very pertinent line of thought on globalization, see Nasidi 2004, p. 10. Indeed, we should think along the same line with Nasidi so that we are wary of not just the "deleterious effects" of globalization but those posed by modernity in other guises in order to be able to re-orientate African fundamental values, set basic African goals, and overhaul the African educational policy.
- 38 Mattelart 2000, p. 1.
- 39 van Staden 1998, p. 23.
- 40 Featherstone 1995, cited in van Staden 1998, p. 23.
- 41 Walsh 1948, pp. 231-38.
- 42 Driver 1991, p. 32.
- 43 Peeters 2007, p. 4.
- 44 Bourdieu 1998, p. 19; Onoge 1985, p. 21.
- 45 Peeters 2014, p. 6.
- 46 George 2007.
- 47 See Armand Mattelart 2000, p. 1 for the use of the word "exclusionary" and further reading.
- 48 See Walsh 1948, pp. 231-38, about the numerous ritual festivals of the Yoruba.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Cawo M. Abdi. 2015. *Elusive Jenna: The Somalis Diaspora and the Borderless Muslim Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 289 pp.**

*Elusive Jenna* is a portrayal of the many dynamics the process of immigration and immigrants take in search of an imagined or actual better life. In this case, as refugees from a war torn, and for a long time, stateless country, characterized by relentless political turmoil, life in developed countries can be considered utopic escapes, *Jannah*, for Somalis. Yet from the normal daily interactions with Somalis in the U.S. neighborhoods such as those in Minnesota and Ohio, with the largest Somali populations (p. 173), one can easily miss out on the precarious and complex journeys, family dynamics, religion, culture and the very economic survival techniques refugees undertake and experience in pursuit of happiness. As an example, there is the pressure on the scattered families phenomenon characterized by nuclear family members living in more than one country, the step migration from Somalia to Kenya refugee camps, and migration to many countries using exploitative middle men on their way to South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, the U.S., and, sometimes to less extent, a reverse migration to the same countries. As an accentuation, global economic social and political hierarchies of countries place western developed countries in the top tier making U.S. the ideal preferred destination. Thus, migrations to developing countries are viewed and understood as liminal spaces and steppingstones for migrating to developed western countries, journeys only undertaken when all options have failed.

Cawo Abdi follows Somalis living in three countries: the United Arab Emirates, South Africa, and the United States. Abdi documents their lived social realities within these contexts not as separate entities but as part of the whole immigration experience, as they negotiate these spaces as immigrants in search of the next viable, most convenient, socially, and economically mobile country. In each country, however, Somali immigrants encounter benefits as well as challenges, some of which can be overcome, some that cannot, and others that can be tolerated. The author critically analyzes the interactions between government policies with immigrants' hopes and dreams such as permission to work, housing, travel documents, and in general how Somalis are incorporated into these three countries. Abdi also highlights agency and survival skills to subsist in each of the three countries that immigrants confront. The importance of this approach, the author states, "is that we can see how the interaction between the context of reception and the immigrants' own characteristics shapes their integration and adjustment in each society" (p. 15).

Islam as a religion is emphasized as crucial and as an adaptive mechanism utilized to legitimize Somali incorporation into the large Muslim community (*Ummah*) that spans boundaries. This borderless community identity bound together by religious beliefs and

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v17/v17i3a5.pdf>



practices provides a safety net, housing, jobs and sometimes, assistance in obtaining working documents in both the United State Emirates and South Africa. Islam helps Somalis position themselves in countries with racialized and culturally controversial histories. For example, in South Africa, with a history of racial economic hierarchies, Somalis distance themselves from South African blacks and instead take a religious identity among Indian Muslims to avoid the connotations that accompany identifying with the predominant black populations living in poor inner city neighborhoods. In the United Arab Emirates, Somalis have to align themselves with the Indian immigrant communities as the country is predominantly Islamic in its religious affiliation. However, on arrival to the United States, their religion, Islam, does not work to their advantage, at least not at the national levels. With an exception of those who integrate into the US middle class or higher, the majority of the Somalis find themselves categorized and living in inner city neighborhoods and competing for government subsidies, jobs, and other resources with poor minority groups. Moreover, skills such as education and English language competency become pivotal to their main economic adaptation. In this case, religion takes a marginal position as a beneficial tool of incorporation to the American mosaic communities. Thus, these three countries require a negotiation of their identity exposing, like in most cultures, the “Malleability of their cultural took kit” (p. 111). The author, using South Africa as a case in point states that “this testifies to the malleability of religion and race and how newcomers position themselves within a society polarized and segregated on ethnic and racial bases” (p. 112).

In sum, this timely book begins with an introduction that captures the experiences of three immigrants from three different countries; Osman Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates, Ardo Bellville in South Africa, and Adam in Minneapolis. The author situates their immigration experiences within the politics, cultural, and economic policies in each country as case studies and as a microcosm of the Somali immigrant dynamic and complex experiences in these countries. The author then compares migrations, elaborates on her multi-sited ethnographic research, gives a reflection on self and ends the chapter by providing an organization of the book. In chapter one, the author “provides a background for understanding the scattering of Somalis as refugees and migrants” (p. 27), chapter two takes readers to the United Arab Emirates, chapter three to South Africa, chapter four to the United States, and the last chapter, the conclusion, “compares and contrasts the findings in the three case studies” (p. 28).

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**Iris Berger. 2016. *Women in Twentieth-Century Africa: New Approaches to African History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 233 pp.**

Over the past decade I have read quite a number of works by Catherine Cocquery-Vidrovitch, Barbara Cooper, and Nwado Achebe on the roles and responsibilities of women in African history such that I was not sure if Professor Berger’s new book would offer anything new. Yes, not only is her approach to this complex and dynamic subject

refreshingly novel, but she also taps into the most recent secondary materials available on the subject to write an informative book. She approaches the subject by collapsing the role of women in twentieth century African history into eight broad themes. The author shies away from the cliché periodization of African history into pre-colonial, colonial, and post colonial and instead writes under the framework of action-based efforts of women.

In chapter one, Berger, Professor of History Emerita, SUNY-Albany, gives an overview of women's experience at the onset of colonial rule. Here she argues that women were quick to see and seize the chance caused by a vacuum created by the transition into colonial rule and asserted themselves by "challenging family control" (p. 10) and engaging in new economic openings such as cash cropping. She contends that at the onset of colonial rule, women in Africa "were fully engaged in the economic life of their communities" unlike their peers in Europe at this time (p. 11). Here the author asserts the strident agency of African women in shaping not only the history of the continent but also its economic life. Sadly, the incoming colonial rulers ignored these economic contributions and failed to take into account women's ideas and abilities in the new colonial economic set up.

The author argues in chapter two that colonial rule disrupted the lives of women by marginalizing them in almost all facets of colonial life. This marginalization, however, strengthened rather than weakened their resolve to contribute to the evolution of their societies. For example, they resorted to "spiritual power" (p. 31) to protest colonial marginalization and to carve out new space for themselves. Such attempts at self-reassertion of course only increased the ire of the colonial masters, which manifested itself in oppressive legislation. Women always resisted these wanton laws through diverse forms—peacefully through new religious movements, or in direct confrontation against the White rulers such as in the Aba Women's War in Igbo land in 1929 (p. 40).

In chapters 3, 4 and 5 Professor Berger reiterates the role of women in the decolonization process: in the increase in the enrollment of girls in schools, and in women directly resisting colonial policies that were anti-women, and also confronting colonial chiefs "responsible for implementing and enforcing" them (p. 70). The life of struggle led by iconic women freedom fighters such as Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria, Frances Baard in South Africa, and Wangari Maathai of Kenya are highlighted in chapter 5.

Indeed, a strength of this book is the author's use of micro biographies of such women leaders to paint a macro picture of the illustrious role of African women in decolonization and also in the creation of women-centric platforms for the immediate post-independence governments. Another novelty in this book is the author's apt use of contemporary African fiction such as by Buchi Emechata and Mariama Ba as points of departure in her very lucid arguments. The potential of modern African literature in revealing the striving, and shaping opinion on African women's issues, comes out very clearly. Clearly, the author has mastered the subject matter as is evident in her drawing examples from all parts of the continent to illustrate her points.

In chapters 6, 7, and 8 Berger traces the ongoing struggle of African women to shape better policies and laws on critical issues like marriage, sexuality, and the Aids pandemic. Curiously, here the author contends that despite the suffering visited upon women in the conflicts which raged in Africa in the 1990s, such as the Rwanda genocide and the Liberian civil war, they came out of these conflicts with quite hefty dividends in the form of empowerment tools such as women friendly constitutions and legislation which call for gender equity, more sexual freedom, and better inheritance rights. Yet, she concludes that just as women were celebrating the rise of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in Liberia or Professor Maathai's Nobel Peace prize, "a backlash" (p. 204) arose from conservative forces in the pulpit and politics, for example in the "decency bills" in Uganda. But, it seems the vigilance of the women's movements locally and internationally will come in handy to stem this conservative tide, which indeed is an optimistic note to end an equally optimistic book on the role of women in twentieth century Africa.

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**Geert Castryck, Silke Strickrodt, and Katja Werthmann (eds.). 2016. *Sources and Methods for African History and Culture: Essays in Honour of Adam Jones*. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag. 698 pp.**

*Sources and Methods for African History and Culture* is divided into ten sections consisting of thirty-seven chapters, with twenty-four written in English (on which this review will focus) and thirteen in other languages. The book is a compendium of scholarly essays on multiple sources of information for the reconstruction of African transitional history in honour of Adams Jones to mark his retirement March 21, 2016 from Leipzig University. Jones is a renowned Professor of African History and Culture who specialized in identifying and interrogating sources and methods on African history. The book begins with a prelude that chronicles the intellectual strides of Adam Jones (pp. 11-24).

Section One, "Oral Tradition and its Methodology," focuses on research on the early recollection of the African pre-literate past would depend to some extent on the adoption of oral account such as traditions of origin (John Thornton, pp. 27-43), praise-songs (Robin Law, pp. 45-63), and scientific aid to validate oral accounts (David Henige, pp. 75-91) to reconstruct those pre literate engagements.

As Europeans began to have contact with Africa, their observation of developments in the continent was documented, which is the subject of Section Two, "Written and Material Sources for the Pre-colonial History of Coastal West Africa." These early written and material documents are germane to understanding Africa's history such as symbolic art objects (Peter Mark, pp. 95-100), rare European documents (Gerard L. Chouin, pp. 101-16), and application of source-criticism on early European account (Natelie Everts, pp. 117-34).

Umma Aliyu Musa (pp. 175-97) ably demonstrates the use of photographs as another source of information on African history in her chapter in Section Three, "Maps and Photographs as Historical Sources." Chapters in Section Four, "African Encounters

with Christian Missions,” suggest that early information on the activities of Christian missionaries in Africa can be noticed in architectural designs and monuments (Paul Jenkins, pp. 239-54). Also, documented evidence of African impressions and acculturation of Christianity (Lize Kriel, pp. 275-87) provide further insight into these encounters.

Section Five focuses on “New Perspectives on East Africa’s Early Colonial Past.” Colonial rule in Africa has been argued as epochal as it formally introduced Africa into the orbit of world politics and cultures, thus influencing African ways of life. For example, there was the introduction of firearms and their negative effect (Felix Brahm, pp. 291-304). Other chapters in this section examine the unique relationship between the Sultan of Ottoman, Abdulhamid II, and Sayyid Khalifa of Zanzibar (Hatice Ugur, pp. 305-16) and the revealing archival documentation on the early colonial impact on Africa (Geert Castryck, pp. 317-36). However, there is need for source-criticism and validation of oral or written accounts for the reconstruction of African history to reduce fallacies (Manuela Bauche, pp. 337-56).

The chapters in Section Six examine “Interpreting African ‘Voices’ in West African Press, Petitions and Performances.” With the presence of a literate colonial community, Africa began to associate with some colonial values such as using the print media as another means of communication, which provides information on the social stratification in early colonial Sierra Leonean community (Odile Goerg, pp. 339-76) and the value of petitions are sources of information for African history (Andreas Eckert, pp. 377-92). The theme of Section Seven is “Re-constructing Careers in Twentieth-Century Africa.” Interrogating colonial records of African employees is another source of information (Joel Glasman, pp. 413-30), and having contact with living survivals of ex-colonial employees can help validate oral and written accounts (Dmitri Van Den Bersselaar, pp. 431-47).

As Europeans and Africans begin to exchange visits and often live in each other’s continents, early images of their lived experiences were captured in the writings of these visitors. Jochen Lingelbach (pp. 523-540) looks at correspondences among European immigrants in Africa and Sara Pugach (pp. 541-562) of African immigrants in Europe in their respective chapters in Section Eight, “Entanglement of African History and Europe’s Twentieth Century.” Section Nine, “Cultures of Memory and Politics of History,” focuses on how priests in Africa can be regarded as chroniclers because their incantations are full of memory of past events that connect with the present, thereby demonstrating a link between the past and the present. Careful interpretation of African spiritualist words and actions can be informative about ancient practices (Peter Lambertz, pp. 577-94), and the proper use of historical knowledge can mitigate conflict (Joram Tarusarira, pp. 613-25).

Chapters in Section Ten, “Measures for African Economies,” examine how modern Africa is an emerging market for profitable investment (Robert Kappel, pp. 629-49), but there is the need to develop new strategies for African economies to meet the challenges of modern development (Helmut Asche, pp. 651-70). However, investors should go

beyond using only the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as markers to explain African growth rate (Ute Riefdorf, pp. 671-87).

Africa is a large continent with diverse histories and cultures. The various essays in this book succinctly discussed interesting sources of information on African pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial historical experiences. Some of the essays interrogated unexpected and “weird” accounts that reveal the depth of historical knowledge about African peoples and cultures. The book is a befitting farewell gift to Adams Jones from both older and younger scholars of Africa.

Simon Odion Ehiabhi, *Adekunle Ajasin University*

**Jennifer Cole and Christian Groes (eds.). 2016. *Affective Circuits: African Migrations to Europe and the Pursuit of Social Regeneration*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press. 352 pp.**

If we could characterize the last two decades of the twentieth century as the times of the de-structuring of national economies thorough Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America, then the first two of the twenty-first will probably be remembered by the problematization of migrant populations in Europe and in the United States. Within academia, several scholars have examined the relation between these divergent processes. Some have looked at the advent of migrant and anti-migrant political movements by studying the uneven distribution of resources among populations or nation-states. Others have examined the mediating power of economic hardships in the relationship between migrant populations and their host communities. While insightful, much of this body of work rests a set of assumptions that warrant further deconstruction. Primary among these is the notion that in order to construct comprehensive objects of analysis researchers must divide immigrants from locals, countries that expel from countries that receive, past violence from present opportunities; falling into what Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller (“Methodological Nationalism and Beyond,” 2002) have termed as a “methodological nationalism.” Novel ethnographic research has begun to question the nature of these dissections and, by exploring the fabrics of everyday life, recalled that the transnational experience is above all an amalgamation of worlds (Dreby, *Everyday Illegal: When Policies Undermine Immigrant Families*, 2015; Alarcón, Escala, and Odgers, *Making Los Angeles Home: The Integration of Mexican Immigrants in the United States*, 2016; or Coutin, *Exiled Home: Salvadoran Transnational Youth in the Aftermath of Violence*, 2016, to name a few). In a similar fashion, Jennifer Cole and Christian Groes’ edited volume *Affective Circuits: African Migrations to Europe and the Pursuit of Social Regeneration* adds important arguments to the scholarly conversation. By attending to diverse textures such as childcare among Ghanaian immigrants, motherhood within the Cameroonian diaspora, young Guinea-Bissau men who traffic cocaine, or marriage among Mozambican women and European men, the volume collectively suggests that migration is not a process that can be explained solely by “push” and “pull” structural factors, but that in the interstices



of the quotidian experience, migrant's social relations, desires, and creativity are also at work in the making of a place they can call "home."

*Affective Circuits* is the outcome of the conference "Intimate Migrations: Marriage, Sex Work and Kinship in Transnational Migration," hosted by Roskilde University and the Danish Institute for International Studies in April 2013. The authors analyze how African immigrants in Europe shape their sense of personhood and build community while living under the constraints of violent economic and political structures. While critically engaging with the structural analysis of neo-liberal assemblages and their generative role in fueling the mass exodus of Africa's "reserve army of labor," the book's chief contribution is its centering of migrant's fierce capacity to redefine, reproduce, and contest the bi-national social worlds they inhabit. For this purpose, the essays explore the nature of the migrant's "Affective Circuits," an over-arching theoretical apparatus proposed by editors Christian Groes and Jennifer Cole focusing on the exchange networks of goods, ideas, people, and affections in which the migrant subjects both participate and are embedded in. As an allegory to the flows of electric charge, *Affective Circuits* is a comprehensive framework that enables the contributors to focus on connections and interactions rather than on the forces of expulsion or reception. While they maintain the importance of such forces, they do so while attending to the forms of exchange—its material and affective components, its bidirectional movement, and its discontinuous intensity—which at times can be reckless and effective and at others slow and futile.

In the same vein, the volume is an outstanding example of how editorial endeavors can provide a comprehensive analysis if committed to a collective concern, theory, or agenda. As the chapters trace the flow of diverse matters—such as that of love, money, obligations, jealousy or information—each explored through the volume's shared framework, *Affective Circuits* can be read as a multi-sited ethnography on the relational nature of migration. For a selective reader, the essays can be also grouped into four thematic clusters. The first one corresponds to the essays written by Cati Coe, Pamela Feldman-Savelsberg, and Pamela Kea who analyze the bi-national logics and the effects of transnational migration on the dynamics of parent-child relations. In the second, Carolyn Sargent, Stephanie Larchanche, and Leslie Fesenmyer trace how systems of beliefs affect the way that immigrants relate to their communities of origin. In the third, Helene Neveu Kringelbach, Christian Groes, and Jennifer Cole study family life and transnational marriage in relation to both life-goals and long-term ancestral obligations. In the fourth, authors Henrik Yigh, Julie Kleinman, and Sasha Newell look at diverse questions that revolve around youth and gender; exploring how the cocaine trade has constituted a space of opportunity for young men, how young people transform relations among peers, and how movements of goods and fashion define belonging and exclusivity.

By studying the textures of everyday life, the volume provides two key nuances to the study of the African diaspora in the twenty-first century. First, scholarship should not solely focus on the study of the immigrant individual, as migrant populations are embedded in broader networks of exchange to which they recur in order to give

meaning to their transnational experience. Second, political and economic restrictions do affect the movements of populations to Europe; nonetheless, immigrants resort to myriad strategies in order to create, reactivate and navigate their bi-national social networks to make their life "habitable." Above all, *Affective Circuits* is a direct challenge to the usual narratives of exclusion, suffering, and abandonment that pervades contemporary depictions of African migrants by shedding light on their capacity to elude, challenge, and transform structures of power as they re-imagine their life worlds.

Alejandro Ponce de León, *University of Texas at Austin*

**David C. Conrad. 2016. *Sunjata: A New Prose Version*. Indianapolis, IN and Cambridge: Hacket Publishing Company. 140 pp.**

Certainly, the "seventh folklore miracle" of the world is the heroic epic poetry of Africa, the incredible wealth of which has been recognized over the last decades after a long period of ignorance. The heroic epic genre in Africa came out of the fog of ignorance (non-recognition, non-discovery) to the light illuminating its incredible richness from the previously unknown depth. Before 1960 (which is the year of the publication of D. T. Niane's *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*) western scholars still do not know that there was an African heroic epic. Frobenius himself undoubtedly discovered Sunjata's text and other types of West African heroic epic (1907–1909, published in English, in *The Voice of Africa*, vols.1-2), but he considered them knightly stories. Due to the wide range of researches on the new types and new variants across the continent, the emblematic story of West African Mande peoples, the Sunjata epic, stands out in the African material, which to this day has become one of the most important sources of historical and cultural identity for the peoples of the continent.

The Sunjata epic left behind, for example, the Nyanga Mwindo epic of Congo rich in variants and Fulbe epic material discovered in many places in West Africa as well as the Mongo-Nkundo Lianja, likewise of Congo, as Africa's richest known heroic epic type. According to Stephen Bulman's bibliography ("A Checklist of Published Versions of the Sunjata Epic," *History in Africa*, 1997) we know about forty to fifty pieces of total or fragmented versions, and since then they have only increased their number, among other reasons due to recent publications by Conrad. He has already published a different (very large, 5445-line) version with the same publisher as the present volume (*Sunjata. A West African Epic of the Mande Peoples*, 2004).

The present volume, surprisingly for many, emphasizes prose as the special genre definition in its title, although the first known versions of Sunjata are prosaic (Frobenius, 1911–1912, Zeltner 1913, Humblot 1918). The Russian E. Meletinsky, whose noteworthy, but maybe little known study to Western European/American researchers, says that oral epic texts can be of three types: verse form, prosaic (free or informal speech), and mixed (both verse and prose/free speech at the same time). This is contrary to Ruth Finnegan's controversial thesis (1970), namely that the basic criterion for a true epic is verse form. As far as Conrad's text is concerned, it is apparent from some places that refer to poems/songs, that we are faced with a mixed-text version.

A whole study should be devoted to the analysis of the text. Due to the review's scope, however, only three (+ one) aspects are raised. On the one hand, as in his previous publication (2004), Conrad is likely to leave a significant amount of the collected texts in this volume (see his notes in parentheses). Obviously, of course, seeing aspects of publishing aspects (above all the additional costs), we have learned in the Hungarian folklorist school (Gyula Ortutay, Vilmos Voigt and others), and for the sake of authentic communication, everything must be collected, noted, and published. (In addition, it may be that the omitted parts would be interesting, whether for professional circles or more general readers).

It raises a similar problem, but it can only be a financial background to the absence of the original version (in both cases). Gordon Innes in his classical Mande epic text publications (the first of which contains three Sunjata versions, 1974, 1976, 1978) publishes the African language version in an unequivocal manner (although we can mention many dozen of other publications with this solution). However, we also quote from the other end of the research, but also from West Africa: Christiane Seydou's large epic text publications (2010a, 2010b, 2014a, 2014b) are also two-language. Conrad's (though excellent and in English style probably folkloristically authentic) epic text collections, however, lack for the most part the original language transcription. Of course, we are aware that the original language texts are essentially neither accessible to professional nor other interested readers. However, their communication is only the most important means of authentication, and to be honest, a gesture towards the particular ethnic group.

By the way, a special feature of Conrad's text is what is known as the parts alien (we can call them inserts) to the story. From the Asian epic research (see for example the Kyrgyz *Manas* epic), we know that the epic performances, which can take up to several days and consist of hundreds of thousands of lines, are full of "statements" that contain daily "news" or "actualities." But we also know about it from Africa: one of the Mongo Lianja versions, for example, refers to whites arriving on ships and their religion. Conrad's version as well, while with it justifying the *living* existence of the given epic, has such a specific peculiar moment: "One time a Frenchman asked my father if he knew anything about how Paris was built. My father said: 'Yes I know something: the history of Paris. This Paris you ask about, it was not built by Frenchman! It was not built by Americans! It was non built by the English! It was not built by thy Russians... They only saw it appear.'" (p. 99)

This phenomenon (with many others), in any case, raises the necessity of the comparative examination for this and all version of of Sunjata, even of all existing types of the African heroic epic. Since French-language researchers (such as Lilyan Kesteloot) have arrived at valuable observations from the involvement of medieval *Chanson de Roland* and West African epics, more contexts should be explored.

Comparative research for Sunjata also has a question mark that I often feel is that professionals are moving away from hot topics. Since this version of Conrad, apart from the first short chapter filled with Islamic type praises, seems to have little penetration of Islamic elements. So I recall what Frobenius wrote in his prose version under the title in

1911: "The pronounced *pre-Islamite* features of the Sunjatta legend and its connection with Libya." There is no doubt that the culture of today's generations of Mande peoples is heavily influenced by Islam. It should, however, be looked at by thoroughly analyzing the material of Bulman's and other versions, whether the pre-Islamic primordial African cultural world is concealed underneath the versions of the Islamic robe or not. This opportunity seems to strengthen, I think, even the distance between the two versions of the famous *La Charte du Mande*, which is so prevalent today: (1) the ancient version of the formulation of Human Rights in the epic that was not touched by Islam, and (2) a 44-point reconstruction prepared by traditionalists in a powerful, overwhelmed Islam environment, nowadays in Guinea. (Some years ago Professor Conrad had published a guideline study on this theme).

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**Iginio Gagliardone. 2016. *The Politics of Technology in Africa: Communication, Development, and Nation-Building in Ethiopia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 179 pp.**

Iginio Gagliardone was puzzled by the disproportionate relationship between the enormous Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) infrastructure and the limited access to internet and mobile-phone service in Ethiopia. Despite the limited access to the internet, Ethiopia has the most severe measures on the continent to contain its destabilizing potential. To disentangle the puzzle, Gagliardone conducted a decade's research in which he identified the complexities between politics, development and technological adoption in Ethiopia. The book rightly fits into the broader literature on ICT and development in Africa. However, it contends that ICTs in Africa and specifically in Ethiopia, is a conflict-center and therefore plays an active rather than the passive role assigned it by some advocates of ICT for development.

In his analysis, Gagliardone adopted the framework of technopolitical-regime to provide a compelling account of how the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) Ethiopian's ruling coalition, outwitted its political competitors in the adoption and use of ICTs to execute its political program. The actors involved in the ICTs negotiation include the EPRDF, the opposition, civil society organizations (CSOs), the media, and donors all interested in influencing the kind of ICTs that emerge in post-civil war Ethiopia. Prior to the civil war, Ethiopia, was highly polarized. The peasants were marginalized while the elites occupied privileged positions. This aside, the Amharic language and culture were projected over all others. Leading to the civil war, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), EPRDF's antecedent, identified the marginalized ethnics and peasants as beneficiaries of its contentious acts. Consequently, the post-civil-war statecraft led by the EPRDF adopted Ethnic Federalism and Revolutionary Democracy as its ideologies in pursuance of its goal of advancing the interest of the marginalized. Two major things that stood out from how the government played the technopolitical game as discussed by the book are: first, it weakened the mainline political elites and did not play to their strength; and second, it dismantled the

existing state structure, adopted Ethnic Federalism, used ICTs for implementation and made sure its opponents are marginalized.

Other important concepts discussed by Gagliardone are how Ethnic Federalism allows all the key ethnic groups to elect their representatives in the federal government, promote their language, culture, and history while revolutionary democracy is founded on communal collective participation and representation based on consensus. Gagliardone further observed that during the civil war, the TPLF adopted a system to directly interact with followers. The EPRDF tried to replicate this system on a larger scale to connect the country by building ICT infrastructures when implementing its Ethnic Federalism agenda. This process includes the Woredanet, which provides huge plasma-TVs that use ICTs for direct videoconferencing between the center and the peripheries to eliminate intermediaries and distortions of information. Additionally, Schoolnet was developed to transmit prerecorded lessons to students to ensure uniformity in a nationwide curriculum. In designing and implementing ICTs, the government sidelined political opponents and refused to be influenced by donors and CSOs. Moreover, the government monopolized ICTs and ensured internet usage remained minimal as priority was given to Woredanet and Schoolnet in bandwidth allocation. The limit on internet access was deliberate to curb the negative consequences of liberalizing ICTs and ensured that the opposition does not use ICTs to outwit it in competition.

Gagliardone further presents an insightful picture of how the EPRDF exploited the ambiguities of major policies of Western donors to victimize its political opponents and avoid international condemnation. For instance, the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation of 2001 adopted by the EPRDF in 2009 was used to jail thirty-three persons, primarily journalists including the Zone9 bloggers and two Swedish journalists accused of being terrorists.

Furthermore, the book unravels the inadequacies of the policies espoused by Western organizations in addressing Africa's challenges and a need for policy alternatives. Again, because Western prescriptions for Africa's economic problems call for liberalization and other policies that often weaken the state, most countries resist them. Consequently, revolutionary democracy was chosen by the EPRDF as an alternative to liberal democracy. With Woredanet's support, the EPRDF implemented the Ethiopia Commodity Exchange to connect traders, buyers, and financial institutions to solve its perennial food problems. This initiative has been hailed by the WTO and others.

Gagliardone touched on the emergence of China as global power and donor, which has allowed many African states to access alternative funding sources. In fact, his book is worth reading for it points out how China's funds without strings attached and its "non-interference" policy make China attractive. However, this non-interference stance restrained China from sharing its success story regarding ICTs policy with Ethiopia. Another important lesson the reader will find is that irrespective of the huge external financial source, African governments exercise substantial agency in their interaction with foreign donors.



The framework of technopolitical-regime presents appropriate lens for analyzing the politics of ICTs adoption and implementation in Ethiopia and could be explored in other parts of Africa. It would have been great if Gagliardone had provided a research-design on how he conducted his research for replicability since he is a pioneer in using technopolitical-regime to analyze ICTs adoption in Africa. This criticism aside, his analysis of Ethiopia is very robust. The book is a useful resource for scholars of African Studies, Comparative Politics, Development Studies, Media and Communication, just to mention a few.

Samuel Kofi Darkwa, *West Virginia University*

**Camilo Gomez-Rivas. 2015. *Law and Islamization of Morocco under the Almoravids: The Fatwas of Ibn Rushd al-Jadd to the Far Maghrib*. Leiden: Brill. 207 pp.**

Camillo Gomez-Rivas had barely raised his head from the formidable task of reviewing the Arabic judgements and epistles of the celebrated Cordoban jurist and public figure Ibn Rushd al-Jadd (d. 1126 CE) before in his Introduction he's forced to wage battle against troublesome traditions of historiography which are either Ibero-centric (really meaning Euro-centric, presented by authors primarily interested in the *reconquista* and rise of Castile and Aragon), or *mushriq*-centric (the equally unhelpful assumption of many Arab authors that most events of interest during the period took place in Cairo or Baghdad, in other words in the eastern sector of the Arab world). He calmly refrains from romanticizing the Muslim presence in Iberia, nor does he feel compelled to dwell on its flaws. While he summarizes the argument of Abdallah Laroui (1977) to the effect that the "decadence" of the 11<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine and eastern Islamic states "gave the Maghrib its chance" (that is in fact already a western European negative characterization: 11th century Constantinople and her enemy, the advancing Seljuks under Sultan Alp Arslan, were both major powers; they were simply not in touch with the Maghrib), he finds that explication also flawed. Gomez-Rivas argues persuasively for a new scholarship which will view the Maghrib as of interest for its own sake, taking the Africa-based Almoravids (1042-1147 CE) and their successors the Almohads (1121-1269 CE) as empires not solely "African" or "Iberian," but combining elements and cultural strengths of both areas. This formulation sounds strange to those of us in the present "north versus south" age, but in the Almoravid era the forces of the *amir*—who nevertheless still recognized the notional primacy of the caliph in Baghdad—held sway from the periphery of Ghana to central Spain. Ibn Rushd corresponded with jurists in Iberia and in Northern Africa, and although Ibn Rushd was Iberian, the Almoravid leader Ali deferred to his judgement, and so on. It was a state with domains on two continents. It is part of Gomez-Rivas' argument that the work of Ibn Rushd (whose judgements were quoted in Morocco as late as the 16<sup>th</sup> century) and his colleagues did much to cement a coherent legal practice in the region, solidified a sense of community in Almoravid dominions, and finally helped lay the foundation for the modern state of Morocco. And if it is the fact that the Muslims were eventually ejected from the Iberian peninsula, that denouement took place 366 years after the death of Ibn Rushd, in quite a

different age. Regarding Gomez-Rivas' Introduction, since this section occupies nearly one-third of his work, the author might have done better to title it, "Ibn Rushd al-Jadd and Islamic Jurisprudence in the Setting of the Almoravid Age." It provides a substantial overview of the period. The work in general also would have been aided by the addition of a map or two.

When we turn to the actual judgements of Ibn Rushd, no one needs to be a partisan of the Maliki school of jurisprudence he espoused to see his arguments are calm, consistently without regional or social prejudice, and seek to apply Islamic principles (as he understood them in his legal tradition) in a broad manner. Wherever there is a possibility the more humble contestant is in the right, Ibn Rushd gives him the benefit of the doubt. He helped bring different regions of the Almoravid domains together — although again, he would never have claimed any such influence. The jurist's argument that even one of the five pillars of Islam, the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca), was for the moment of lower priority than the ongoing *jihad* against Almoravid enemies is one more example of shifts in perspective deemed to be imperative in a dangerous age. Other cases he examines shed light on the increasing privatization of land in the Maghribi section of the Almoravid domains, which phenomenon proceeded concomitant with urbanization.

Speaking more broadly — although this line of argument would have sounded strange to Ibn Rushd — the founding of Marrakesh and growth of urban centers in Morocco (to which the Cordoban judge indirectly contributed) were emblematic of a move away from the riparian and Mediterranean-focused cultures which had previously predominated in the region. The founding of al-Fustat (the urban entity preceding Cairo) in Egypt, of Cairowan in Tunisia, and of Marrakesh were all part of this trend. Center and periphery are mutable concepts.

Kenneth W. Meyer, *Western Washington University*

**John W. Harbeson and Donald Rothchild (eds.). (2017). *Africa in World Politics: Constructing Political and Economic Order*. Boulder: Westview Press. Sixth Edition. 346 +xiv pp.**

In this edition of *Africa in world politics*, the authors capture the growing realities of development that African states are confronted with, in economic and political areas of engagement with each other and with the outside world. The book acknowledges that some Africa states have made remarkable economic progress, which have erased the era of Africa marginalization and birthed greater economic prominence on the world stage. However, in spite of this markedly improved economic progress and growth, the political perfection of many Africa States remains elusive. Hence, the vital question raised in the book: "To what extent will Africa's growing prominence on the world stage translate into sustainable well-being for the continent in political, social-economic, environmental, and cultural terms?" (p. xiii).

In answering this question, the book is divided into four parts. In the first part, Harbeson and Crawford Young recounts contemporary realities in historical

perspectives. Harbeson argues that the multitude political imperfections characterised by, weak democracies, corrupt and patronage leaders, ethnic rivalries are part of the realities “thwarting the realization of ever elusive quests for viable, legitimate post-colonial states” (p. 7). He thus, canvasses for empirically based research and policy formation that can reveal the metric of simultaneously forming legitimate, democratic, and economic viable states; whereas Young dwells on the heritage of colonialism and its enduring influence on the political quagmire of the continent.

The second part examines the variables that can help African countries build viable political economies. In this regard, Todd Moss underscores the importance of international capital. He maintains that if agents and institutions that facilitate capital into Africa can be effectively managed, Africa can become enlisted among the next generation of emerging markets. Similarly, Pitcher draws attention to the rising government investment initiatives, with the aid of sovereign wealth funds and public pension funds among others. He warns that this form of entrepreneurial governance should be effectively managed while improving regulatory and institutional environment if the governments wish to be saved from the perils of a global financial crisis like the ones it avoided in 2008. Taylor posits that the illusion of Africa Rising resulting from heavy demands of raw materials from the BRICS, particularly China, does not necessarily equate to development but rather deepen dependency.

With strict logic, authors in the third part reflect on the enduring problem confronting African State in constructing substantial and sustainable post-colonial state. Writing on “The International ‘Factors in African Warfare,” Reno draws connections between patronage politics, state building, international influences and African wars. Whereas in Sudan and South Sudan Lyman reflects, as the chapter’s subtitle suggests on ‘the tragic denouement of the comprehensive Peace agreement” and recommends that effective change can only come from within. And Campbell locates the problem in Nigeria in the absence of and controversy over national identity and legitimacy of the state as well as the isolation of the elite from the people (of northern Nigeria), which paved way for terrorism.

Authors in the last section advance that although African countries have developed dogged diplomatic structures for confronting current socio-political and economic challenges, these diplomatic structures and arrangements are in themselves insufficient FOR liberating Africa from its current socio-political and economic quagmire confronting the continent. This central position that Africa’s overreliance on external assistance and weak state institutions are part of the substantial element impeding the manifestation of a viable post-colonial state is quite valid. Africa’s nations are being positioned as extended territories for gaining additional score points and boosting traditional and non-traditional influencers of national interests. China’s search for viable markets and establishing a military base in Africa is indicative of this fact. Thus, the valid recommendations for internal solutions, nurtured by careful government policies and vigilance “completely free of all kinds of foreign domination as to be the starting point of any true rise of Africa” (p. 86).

Unequivocally, the book provides clear and unbiased assessments of the enduring situations confronting African society at large amidst the changing dynamics of the international system. The arguments of the authors disclose in-depth understanding and analyses of the enduring realities in Africa, which affords them the collective clout of explaining how in spite of marked economic progress, poverty, state weakness, and the struggle for building a viable post-colonial state still lingers in most African nations. The mixed account and analyses by diplomats and scholars further gives credence to the reliability of the book. On calm examination, the book can be easily comprehended by students and policy makers as it draws strength from empirical social realities. Hence, the book is highly recommended for students of African politics, particularly those focusing on the dynamics of economics and political variables among African nations in contemporary times.

Oluwatobi O. Aje, *Covenant University Nigeria*

**Jonathan Haynes. 2016. *Nollywood: The Creation of Nigerian Film Genres*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 375 pp.**

It is not uncommon for artistic expressions to bear true reflection of the societies that birth them, that being the inalienable duty and quintessential feature of arts. What is, perhaps, is to chance upon a parallel between the very structure of a society and the structure of its film industry. For, just as Lagos, indeed Nigeria, is a huge testimony to private efforts in providing housing in an unplanned, unregulated manner, so Nollywood, third in the world after Hollywood and Bollywood, provides a place for Nigerians to “live”—employment-wise—all generated by small scale independent producers. Such is the near-complete absence of government input in the lived realities of Nigerians and the resilience of the creative industry practitioners, a fact Haynes notes explicitly. *Nollywood: The Creation of Nigerian Film Genres* traces the contours of Nigerian video film industry in its kaleidoscopic representation of Nigeria’s postcolonial realities as captured through Nollywood. As a brand, Nollywood has almost completely eclipsed other subdivisions of the Nigerian film industry. Haynes clearly delineates “Nollywood,” as referring to English-language video films that spring from the production and distribution system based in Lagos with tentacles in the South-Eastern Nigerian cities of Onitsha, Aba, Enugu, and Asaba, the seed pod of which was *Living in Bondage*, a 1992 Igbo language film.

Haynes, through this book, leaves his mark in the critical studies of an industry that, in about two decades, had over fourteen thousand titles to its credit. With a bird’s eye view on the gamut of Nollywood titles from which he zeroes in on specific films, Haynes charts a course through the slippery terrain of taxonomies noting the blurring nature of generic categorizations. This sets Haynes’ book apart from others of its kind such as Adeshina Afolayan’s (ed.) *Auteuring Nollywood: Critical Perspectives on The Figurine* which focuses on one film but broadly reflects the industry and also from Krings and Okome’s (ed.) *Global Nollywood: The Transnational Dimensions of an African*

*Video Film Industry* which interest lies in the diasporic influence of Nollywood and the controversy therefrom.

First, Haynes identifies the initial genres; money ritual films, senior girls' films and the triad of family, love and community films espousing the interplay between African cultural practices and the doctrinal dynamics of Pentecostal Christianity. Fundamental factors that coalesced to birth Nollywood are recounted and analysed: the 1992 crisis between the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and trained professionals working behind and in front of the camera, a ready-made basis provided by Nigeria's Yoruba travelling theatre tradition, the astronomical increase in the cost of production of celluloid films owing mainly to the devaluation of the naira, and the public's loss of interest in stage plays. Haynes examines the ground-breaking efforts of pacesetters like Kenneth Nnebue, Amaka Igwe, and Tunde Kelani which later burgeoned into a magnificent video film industry. Kelani's "Other Nollywood" stands out, Haynes observes, because of technical superiority which paved way for its entry into international film festivals.

In part two, Haynes dwells on the cultural epic genre bemoaning its lack of representational accuracy of the Igbo cultural heritage partly because it occludes republicanism, an innate feature of the Igbo people. Haynes hails Kelani's "Other Nollywood" as a worthy example because of its veritable documentation of Yoruba cultural heritage. Other genres which Haynes names in this part are 'igwe'-centric or royal films, village films, crime films, and a resurgence of the ritual film genre not for 'get-rich-quick' purposes as in part one, but for power and politics.

Haynes caps off the final part with two other genres; the diaspora films and campus films. Haynes notes the near-complete absence of both the supernatural and Pentecostal Christianity structures in diaspora films and a heavy dose of cult-related thematic concerns in campus films. To Haynes, Nollywood oscillates between a heroic assertion of Nigerian culture against a flood of imports and a commercially-driven betrayal of Nigerian culture, participating as it does with mixed motives in Nigeria's contemporary realities. That the practitioners adopted "Nollywood" coined by New York Times reporter, Norimitsu Onishi, perhaps attests to this ambivalent disposition.

Futuristically, Haynes sees an economically vibrant "New Nollywood" predicated partly on the recent establishment of multiplex cinemas in a few cities in Nigeria. This is, however, dubious given the prevailing precarious state of the country's economy. Although lacking in ideological stance, Haynes howbeit lauds Nollywood's veritable seismographic recording of the Nigerian temperament.

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**Steve Howard. 2016. *Modern Muslims: A Sudan Memoir*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. 217 pp.**

Steve Howard is a rare breed of scholar who lived among the people he wrote about in the Sudan. The Republican Brotherhood, led by the late Mahmoud Mohamed Taha, who was a small but fearless intellectual, was a modern Sufi movement that attempted to



restore what it considered the truly peaceful and egalitarian Islam. The author notes that the attempted reformation of this movement was thwarted when their leader was executed for alleged apostasy at the age of seventy-six. He was hanged by the Sudanese regime led by dictator Gaafar Nimeiry in 1985. The Sudanese people rose up against Nimeiry and deposed him four months later; Taha's execution is thought to have contributed to the popular uprising that overthrew the military strongman.

The established political and religious elites considered Taha a threat to their monopoly on the interpretation of Islam and politics, the author elaborates. It could be argued that Taha's "Second Message of Islam" resembles Martin Luther's 95 theses. Both caused an uproar and indignation among the established religious leaders and heresy charges were labeled against both reformers. While Luther lived long enough to see the fruits of his reformation, Taha, a trained engineer, was executed before his movement could accomplish its goal of reforming Islam.

The author, a former Peace Corps volunteer in the neighboring Chad, was received with a typical Sudanese hospitality better illustrated by the Arabic proverb "when a guest comes to a host, the host becomes the guest and the guest the host." The movement advocated for a version of Islam that is peaceful, egalitarian and gender inclusive. Taha is fondly referred to in the book as *Ustadh*, an endearing term in Arabic that means a teacher. This honorific title is only given to religious teachers known for their learning. In Sufism, the term is also applied to the guide of a *tariqah*, a religious movement.

The Sudanese proverb "do not keep your stick away from these three: a woman, a drum and a female donkey" indicates the discrimination women face in their country. Taha elevated the position of women in his movement as equal to men. The author makes clear that women played a significant leadership role in the Republican Brotherhood. While the term "brotherhood" may seem to exclude sisters from the movement, nothing could be further from reality. All genders were equal members of the brotherhood. The author notes in his book, especially in the chapter "A Women's Movement" that the Republican Brotherhood had a soft spot for women's issues and considered them as an integral part of the movement contrary to the prevailing Sudanese culture. This new thought of emancipating women challenged an entire worldview that considered half the population as inferior to men.

Howard shows, throughout the book, a particular knowledge of the Republican Brotherhood, and a general understanding of the people of Sudan. Many of the findings of the author can apply to the rest of Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa where different versions of Sufism enjoy a huge following. This book is not an academic work and never confines the Republican Brotherhood into a scholarly box. This is a living book that reads like a thriller, and it contains a treasure trove about the movement, their leader, vision, mission, and theology.

The intrepid author demonstrates an insider's knowledge of the movement that accepted him as a respected member, but he presents his findings with integrity and clarity. His cultural knowledge and linguistic ability reflect his thirty years of studying and admiring the Republican Brotherhood. The book is courteous of the movement, but

it does not idolize it. This book bears witness to the fact that Islam is not a monolithic religion. The violent version of Islam familiar to many Westerners is the exception rather than the rule. The overwhelming majority of Muslims do not wield any sword to conquer a territory or impose their faith on anyone; they simply live their lives. This book is a must read for students and educators; it is also helpful to political leaders and their constituents.

Aweis Ali, *Africa Nazarene University, Nairobi*

**Alison Jolly. 2016. *Thank You, Madagascar: The Conservation Diaries of Alison Jolly*. London: Zed Books. 391 pp.**

Alison Jolly has left an engaging legacy for others to read. The book is not an autobiography, although she does speak from her own point of view on aging: "I am getting not only so old but so heavy that I am positively embarrassed when young men have to hoist me upwards with shoves on the bottom" (p. 246) and even death: "Somehow dying doesn't worry me at all. At least not yet. I've had lots of fun and excitement in life" (p. 361). The book is not a field journal with mind-numbing details of particular scientifically-collared lemurs on dark nights, but she informs the reader on many aspects of lemur and Malagasy society. The book is a treatise on conservation in Madagascar and a call for readers to join the effort of saving the natural world because "people of vision do change the course of history" (p. 78).

The book's setting could not be mistaken for anywhere else in the world. Jolly captures Madagascar's uniqueness beautifully: "Little by little the clouds lifted until the rainforest rose above Ranomafana town, bathed in sun. Sun here has a peculiarly golden tone, like sunset at noon. The folds of the hills were deep and green and black, covered in trees like tufted velvet" (p. 199). Jolly uses local words, but always explains the meaning. Readers learn them "*mora-mora* – slowly, slowly" (p. 329) with little effort. She explains why Malagasy surnames seem so long, why girls remain in school longer than boys, and many other questions about the island life that creep up, but would remain unanswered during a once-in-a-lifetime tourist visit.

The book is divided into five parts. Parts, and chapters within, them begin with a reflection drawn from Jolly's fifty-year engagement with the island. These include the voices of many of the Malagasy she has worked alongside and respects greatly. The diary entries, ranging from 1963- 2014, follow. Most are taken from entries at the time of four major conservation conferences in which Jolly participated. Part 1, "Villages," reveals the basis for the need. Jolly quotes Esther Boserup as saying, "It is hungry, or desperate or ambitious people who change their world" (p. 17). No doubt remains that a problem must be addressed. Part 2, "Politics," relates the coming together of global stakeholders with locals to form a National Environmental Action Plan. "Our cash killed Bedo" (pp. 121-24) is a sobering morality tale to be heeded by eco-tourists about learning from locals, or long-term residents, what is appropriate and what is not. Part 3, "Environment and development," describes the work of convincing Malagasy people who believed in their cultural heritage and practices that things must change. Stories of

murder and mayhem join with those of serious research and progress for a well-rounded view of development. Part 4, "Weather," portrays the effects of the normal cycle of drought for which the flora and fauna of southern Madagascar have made adaptations. Climate change, however, is stretching those amazing modifications to the breaking point. The environment is not fully recovering on its own. Part 5, "Money," is controversial. Should mining companies be allowed to function in Madagascar? What must be done to keep their greed for the minerals, as rare as the animals and plants, in check? Jolly is supportive of the mining.

Hilary Grant, in the foreword describes the intended audience of *Thank You, Madagascar* as "Those who love Madagascar, whether tourist, nature lover, dedicated conservationist or professional primatologist" (p. x). These readers will be satisfied, informed, and intrigued. If other readers are looking for a female Thoreau living alone in the wilds, they will be disappointed. Although her style is as literary as *Walden*, she rarely writes of solitude. Jolly travels from village to palace and back with equal pleasure because as Grant notes: "Lemurs were only a part of the picture, not the obsessive whole, because she knew and understood the people—from dignitaries to peasants—as well as she knew lemurs" (p. ix). Some of these esteemed visitors included the Duke of Edinburgh, David Attenborough (BBC), and Jeffery Katzenberg (CEO DreamWorks—before the release of *Madagascar*).

*Thank You, Madagascar* is recommended for those who are interested in conservation, Madagascar, or a woman who lived with passion, humility, and few regrets.

Amy Crofford, *Africa Nazarene University*

**Dominika Koter. 2016. *Beyond Ethnic Politics in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 220 pp.**

*Beyond Ethnic Politics in Africa* is a well researched book, adopting a comparative method to study other variables and factors, apart from ethnicity, that dictate electoral politics in sub-Saharan Africa. Koter examines Africa electoral system using two French West Africa states, Benin Republic and Senegal, as the main case studies. Contrary to the general belief that ethnic appeal is the only mobilization option for African politicians, Koter argues that some African states have diverse electoral supports from all ethnic groups by mobilizing voters through the use of intermediaries. The book combined primary and secondary data collection to analyze the electoral mobilization strategies in the main case studies of Benin and Senegal and secondary cases of Mali, Guinea, Kenya, and Botswana. Koter discusses the problems of electoral mobilization in Africa and difficulties politicians encountered in forging ties with voters, especially those outside their ethnic group, and the role of ethnicity in electoral politics in Africa.

Benin and Senegal have some similarities like shared colonial history; multicultural ethnic nationalities with some spreading across the border of the two countries but differ in their social structures and hierarchical ties. The variation in social structure was as a result of uneven patterns of authority and hierarchy and the impact of colonialism (p.

43). Since African parties aren't ideologically based, highly fragmented and personalized, politicians employed different electoral mobilization strategies depending on the political environment. Koter postulates that the stronger the hierarchical ties between the local leaders and their followers, the more effective the use of intermediaries for electoral mobilization. Where the tiers are weak or non-existence, African politicians directly appeal to the ethnic background.

Since the traditional leadership in Benin is very weak and lacks the capacity to serve as electoral intermediaries, politicians adopt ethnic mobilization strategies, and thus an election is viewed as competition among the ethnic groups over the control of the national resources. The strong hierarchical ties in Senegal provides opportunities for the traditional and religious leaders to serve as electoral intermediaries between politicians and voters, thereby having considerable influence on the outcome of elections. In Benin, Koter argues, political parties are highly regionalized on ethnic blocs and an election is extremely ethnicized and viewed as a zero-sum game among the diverse ethnic groups. Where there is the use of intermediaries in Northern Benin (among the Bariba) it is, however, marginal nationally.

In contrast to Benin, appeals to ethnic identity are strikingly absent on the campaign trail, in media coverage, and in academic works on Senegalese elections (p. 96). The use of the Senegalese marabout and traditional leaders as vote carriers (intermediaries) meant that parties and candidates have diverse and nationally spread voters from all ethnic groups. The overriding influence of Mouride leaders on their followers compared to the Tijanniyya has been translated to electoral assets for personal gains, material rewards, and negotiating for community projects from politicians. Koter further pointed out that the incumbents always have unrestricted access to the state coffers; intermediaries are likely to support the incumbents. The widespread patron-client relationship between the politicians and intermediaries proves to be very useful in ensuring a diverse electoral support for candidates and political parties across the ethnic divides.

In Senegal where the intermediaries play a crucial role in electoral competition, Koter argues, they are more effective in influencing rural voters than the urban counterparts. The variation Koter explained is the nature of the weak tiers between leaders and their follower in urban areas. While local leaders can control both the economic and social activities of a village, they cannot manage to the same extent the complicated urban existence of their followers (p. 129). The individualistic character of the urban voters is a challenge to the intermediaries influence and thus there is a semblance of programmatic campaign in urban cities in Senegal. Hence, there is always a higher level of support for the incumbent in rural areas than in urban areas (p. 136). Similarly, urban voters are likely to support an opposition candidate. Koter found the same pattern for the use of intermediaries in Mali and Botswana where hierarchical tiers are very strong. In other words, ethnic politics is profound in Kenya and Guinea because the traditional institutions have been destroyed by both the colonizers and the first set of political leaders.

The ineffective use of intermediaries in urban centers thus limits their role as agents of nation building and national integration. While, mobilization through intermediaries ensures diverse electoral support and electoral inclusiveness, it has been unable to propel a national identity and integration; at best it has ensured equitable distribution of public goods among different ethnic groups.

Isa Ishaq Ojibara, *University of Ilorin*

**Henning Melber (ed.). 2016. *The Rise of Africa's Middle Class: Myths, Realities and Critical Engagements*. London: Zed Books. 219 pp.**

This volume contributes to the burgeoning debates around the African middle class for sustainable understanding of the trajectories, ramifications and complexities of the economic development and democratic change contributions and capabilities of the middle class in African societies. The edited volume was based, partly, on some papers earlier presented at conferences and events on “Responsible Development... Inequality, Citizenship and Middle Classes” (p. ix) coordinated by the editor. Leveraging the critical contributions of contributors from economics, political science, anthropology, and development practice, the volume intends to be a necessary corrective to popular celebratory narratives of the middle class as important agents of democratic change and economic development in African societies. The orientation of the volume was clearly set by the editor right from the Introduction: “Somewhere above the poor but below rich’: explorations into the species of the African middle classes” (pp. 1-16). The Introduction provides ‘a critical framework and reference point for the contributions’ (p. 1) in the volume which detail the origin, nature, complexities, heterogeneity, actual roles, existences, fallacies, realities and dynamics of the middle class relative to democratic processes and development across Africa. The Introduction is useful in setting not only the theoretical but also the empirical and epistemic perspectives and interventions of the volume.

The volume has a total of ten substantive chapters. All the chapters contribute in different but related ways to the central historical, conceptual and roles arguments of the middle class in Africa. Even though the chapters were written by authors from different disciplinary backgrounds, they are very multi/transdisciplinary and finished with noteworthy intellectual finesse. Chapter 1 by Lentz provides a detailed literature and empirical background for the debates around the African middle class drawing conclusions that set a research agenda based on transnational studies in the area (pp. 17-53). In similar intellectual fashion, in Chapter 2, Stoffel provides a human development perspective for the construction of the middle class within the broader framework of the Global South. Taken together, Chapters 1 and 2 contribute “comparative perspective with some cross-references to studies outside the African context” (p. 9) to give a more nuanced and robust base to the volume. Chapter 3 by Akinkugbe and Wohlmuth examines the role of the African middle class as a base for entrepreneurship development (p. 69). The chapter critically interrogates the missing role of the middle class in filling entrepreneurial gaps created by the delinkages between microenterprises



and large companies in the investment spaces of Africa. The overall contribution of the chapter is “about the role of the African middle class as a base for entrepreneurial development” (p. 87). Chapter 4 by Hellsten ‘challenges the assumptions that the expansion of the middle class will somehow automatically steer Africa towards democracy and good governance’ (p. 95). Hellsten argues that “without any clear ideological and practical commitment to solidarity and social justice for all; there is no guarantee that the ongoing economic change towards middle income, consumer-societies will also transform the states into liberal democracies” (p. 95).

Chapter 5 (Neubert) marks a stylistic departure point from earlier chapters by introducing case study from Kenya. The chapter contextually interrogates the concepts of class against the background experience of Kenya, engages the the Kenyan middle class, examines the blurred boundaries and instability in Kenyan middle class, illuminates issues of choice and socio-cultural diversification/milieu, and concludes that the hope that the Kenyan middle class will lead to democratic transformations, political relevance and middle class consciousness is not fulfilled as against common belief. Orji examines middle class activism in Nigeria in Chapter 6. This chapter adopts the style of Chapter 5 by conceptualizing and profiling the Nigerian middle class and maintaining that the new middle class in Nigeria is more urbanite, more educated, strongly rooted in the private sector, and “possesses a greater capacity to communicate and share information through the new digital technology” (p. 133). The chapter through two case studies demonstrates political activism and the middle class and shows the level of connections and disconnections in the middle class engagements. Chapter 7 by Schubert provides the case study of post-war Angola as emerging political subjectivities in terms of livelihood—leading a descent life and survival in cities—as interfaces of nascent political subjectivities. The objectivity and subjectivity of the middle class is demonstrated through the case study of Mozambique by Sumich in Chapter 8. The chapter after unraveling the origin and post-war existences of the middle class in Mozambique concludes that there is certainly a disjuncture among expectations, ambitions and realities in Mozambique middle class. Ngoma in Chapter 9 explores the South Africa’s middle class through racism, class, inclusion, exclusion, inter-race relations and political participation particularly through the ruling African National Congress (ANC). The conclusion Ngoma draws is akin to de-celebratory direction and the need for a more critical examination of the middle class in Africa. Chapter 10 by Shule demonstrates the identity and role issues of the middle class in Dar es Salaam and Kiswahili through video-films. The “chapter examines the perception of the middle class elite on the Kiswahili video-films in Dar es Salam, Tanzania” (p. 190). The conclusion of the chapter is that the non-involvement of the professional middle class accounts for the poor quality of the video films.

The volume is polemic, bold, engaging and an excellent read. It is a comprehensive account of the middle class and development debates in Africa, and the relationship with democratic change is commendably noteworthy. The relevance of data in the book transcends Africa even though the book is based on Africa. Its multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary elements particularly make the book of immense value. It is a

worthwhile critical compendium of information not only on Africa's middle class but on sustainable social, cultural, economic, and political change in Africa.

Olayinka Akanle, *University of Ibadan*

**Wanjala S. Nasong'o (ed.). 2015. *The Roots of Ethnic Conflict in Africa: From Grievance to Violence*. Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan. 208 pp.**

Nasong'o's edited volume makes a significant contribution to the analysis of ethnic conflict trajectories in Africa in relation to the root causes and eruption of violence. The book aptly captures the totality of the phenomenon of ethnic conflicts in Africa by juxtaposing historical imperatives and contemporary dynamics of political exclusion that culminate in ethnic violence on the continent.

The first chapter sets out to introduce the book by emphatically stating that Africa is characterised by multi-ethnic states. Indeed, the establishment of artificial states by historical processes including mobility and colonization whose subsequent ethnic heterogeneity and segmentation has provided favorable conditions for ethnic mobilization and resultant deadly conflicts. The second chapter provides a succinct theoretical foundation for explaining ethnic conflicts in Africa. Without discrediting the merits of other theoretical approaches, the chapter adopts the grievance model to plausibly analyse how grievances results in the mobilisation of ethnic groups.

In chapter three, Nasong'o illuminates the contribution of the politics of exclusion to the North-South conflict. Challenging the overgeneralising the comprehension of the conflict as mere Arab-African racial conflict or Islam-Christianity rivalry (p. 121), the chapter linked the conflict to the British colonial policies that benefited Northerners more than Southerners, exclusivist politics perpetrated by the Abboud and Khalifa's regimes including reversal of the colonial Southern Policy, compounded by the Arabization and Islamization of Sudan politics as well as Numeiry's accommodation of conservative Islamist politicians.

Chapter four traces the centrality of historical factors and political exclusion leading to uneven distribution of power and economic resources and subsequent generation of ethnic conflicts in Africa. It examines the origins of the Ugandan conflict in relation to the British colonial strategy of divide and rule (p. 60), the militarization of Ugandan politics and manipulation of ethnic tensions to mobilize northern Ugandans and external influence. Stephen Mwachofi Singo and Sam Okoth Opondo devoted chapter five to the analysis of the complexity of the prolonged Eastern DRC conflict. While accepting the influence of ethnic heterogeneity and poor governance, the chapter precisely underscores the utilization of existing grievances in the manipulation of ethnic divisions by rebel groups to gain access to power and economic resources in a war economy.

The next chapter explores the key factors that culminated in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. By including the role played by the Germans and Belgians in politicizing ethnicity by promoting the Tutsis at the expense of the Hutus leading to deep Hutu-Tutsi rivalry, the disparities in the distribution of power and economic resources

between the two major ethnic groups, post-Cold War political opportunity, and how post-independence peace arrangements could not materialize in reconciling Hutu-Tutsi hostility, Celine A. Jacquemin's chapter six captures the entirety of the roots of the Rwandan genocide.

In chapter seven, Martin S. Shanguhya attributes the dynamics of violence in Zanzibar since independence in 1963 to politicization of the Zanzibaris grievances by opportunistic political parties. Ethnic and racial relations between Arabs, Africans, Shiraz and other ethnic groups as well as deeply felt political grievances over unfulfilled revolutionary objectives on the part of the Zanzibaris with Arabs preferring more political autonomy than is accepted under the agreement of the Union with mainland Tanzania are also central to the tensions that have often erupted into violence since independence, and continue to divide ethnic groups.

Using Rwanda and Somalia's linguistic homogeneity, chapter eight by Tom Onditi Luoch delved on demystifying the role of language as a unifying factor in ethnic conflicts. Rather historical factors leading to political exclusion, uneven distribution of political and economic power, and the configuration of African societies can be used to amply account for ethnic conflicts in Africa.

Nasong'o's recommendations in chapter nine with regard to power sharing as the most effective ethnic conflict management strategy can be put into question. While the idea of consociational democracy is noble and has materialised in halting conflicts in some states, the reality of one ethnic group having dominance and hegemonic influence disproportionate to others might remain because power cannot be shared equally; in practice. Over and above, the book is an important illumination into the complex factors causing ethnic conflicts in Africa drawing from historical complexities, political exclusion, and modern equivalent structures that culminate in grievances resulting in ethnic mobilization and subsequent radicalization due to incumbent governments' policy responses. The comprehensiveness of Nasong'o's edited book can be noticed in the quality of content backed with an evidential base of African case studies.

Torque Mude, *Midlands State University*

**David B. Ottaway. 2017. *The Arab World Upended: Revolution and Its Aftermath in Tunisia and Egypt*. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers. 269 pp.**

David Ottaway's *The Arab World Upended* examines the causes of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, their profoundly divergent aftermaths, and the possible path of the two countries' political development. Having previously authored *Algeria: The Politics of Socialist Revolution* (1968) and *Ethiopia: Empire in Revolution* (1978) together with his wife, Marina, Ottaway is not new to writing about revolutions. *The Arab World Upended* uses Crane Brinton's *The Anatomy of Revolution* among other works on social upheavals as its framework for analysis. Ottaway vividly reveals that the phases of revolution outlined by Brinton such as honeymoon, dual sovereignty, Thermidorean reaction, and restoration while visible in both the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, they differed in the degree they were observable in the two countries because some were

more visible than others. The author asserts that while both Tunisia and Egypt “went through strikingly similar revolutionary phases, fracturing in the same way over Islam’s role in the revolution,” they ended differently: “Tunisia under a multiparty democracy, Egypt by a new military dictator” (p. 223). However, both are under serious threat from Islamic extremists resolute to create the last Islamic State (caliphate) on Arab land.

The book consists of an introduction and thirteen chapters that are divided into five parts. The introduction introduces the study and situates it in the growing literature examining the Arab Spring uprisings from a revolutionary and comparative perspective. Comprising chapters 1-4, part 1 discusses the context of the Arab Spring debating the different Western and Arab understandings of the term revolution. Additionally, the socio-economic and political conditions prevailing before the 2011 uprisings broke out are discussed. In parts 2 and 3 comprising chapters 5-6 and 7-10 the book focuses on the phases of the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt in their early years, respectively using Brinton’s outline as a reference point.

In part 4 consisting of chapters 11-12 focusing on the paradoxes and challenges, the book discusses the impact of a counterrevolution from abroad and the challenges facing the two countries following the collapse of the short-lived, chaotic rule of Islamic parties. The first two years in postrevolution Tunisia and Egypt are examined to measure the prospects for other uprisings in the future. Ottaway foresees more uprisings in both countries. The author opines that “Certainly there is the expectation of more turmoil” (p. 233) if there are no changes to the socio-economic situation. Lastly, part five concludes the book by summarising the similarities and differences between the Arab revolutions and classic Western and contemporary ones and a summing up of why the outcomes were so extremely different in Tunisia and Egypt. The key reason among others, Ottaway found it resting in the fact that the military remained in its barracks in Tunisia, which was not the case in Egypt (pp. 245-46).

Forming one of the book’s key strengths is its qualitative nature and use of primary sources including interviews, observation, and media coverage in English, French and Arabic languages. The book is also theoretically well-grounded manifest in its use of major works on social upheavals particularly, Brinton’s *The Anatomy of Revolution*. This helped its structuring of the diverse muddled flow of events that characterised Tunisia and Egypt in the wake of their 2011 revolutions. Moreover, the author convincingly justifies his choice of comparing Tunisia and Egypt and not attempting a wider comparative study outside them. He notes that this was “partly for reasons of space but mostly because comparison to other Arab uprisings of 2011 seemed pointless in the absence of discernible outcomes to the civil wars still consuming Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya as of early 2016” (p. 8). This greatly assisted to make the book rich both from an analytical and narrative perspectives. It clarifies a number of points hitherto not clear in the contemporary history of the two countries such as the future of their revolutions and the decisions of their military to intervene and stay out of politics respectively. However, the book has been somewhat watered down by repetition and typographical and omission of words errors at a number of points. The latter include but are not limited to those found on pages 4, 11, 57, 172, and 214.

Combined, the book's strengths outweigh the weaknesses making it an invaluable contribution to the works on the contemporary history of Egypt and Tunisia. Besides, it is simple to read. Historians, political science, peace and conflict studies, and war and strategic studies scholars and students plus policy makers will find value in this book.

Enock Ndawana, *University of Zimbabwe*

**Andrew Pearson. 2016. *Distant Freedom: St Helena and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1840-1872*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. xiv, 314 pp.**

*Distant Freedom* originates not in historical archives but in the earthly remains of liberated slaves who had been brought ashore on St Helena from slavers captured by the Royal Navy's anti-slavery squadron. A selection of these remains is now on display at the Liverpool anti-Slavery Museum in an exhibition, "Liberty Bound," a title echoing that of Dr. Pearson's book. Irony is never far from the story of ex-slaves who remained, paradoxically, sometimes for many years, "recaptives" or "liberated slaves."

St Helena is remote, 1300 kilometres south-east of Ascension and 1800 kilometres west of Mocamedes on the coast of Angola. Discovered by the Portuguese in 1502, first claimed by Britain in 1659, the island's climate and co-ordinates eventually made it a useful way-station both for the East Indian Company and the British Crown which took control in 1834. In 1840 the exhumation and repatriation and re-interment of Napoleon's remains severed a tie which had been important to St Helena, so that the Vice-Admiralty Court and the Liberated African Establishment, were potentially beneficial responsibilities for the island, involving all aspects of the island's economy.

The court was one of a number established to judge suspected slavers and liberating their human cargo. With its favourable setting within the circulation of Atlantic winds and currents, and the slave trade moving south from West Africa, St Helena proved a more effective centre for the West African anti-slavery squadron than Freetown had been. On 14 March 1840, the *Waterwitch* brought the first slaver to be condemned by the St Helena vice-admiralty court. Despite an uncertain start, and some fluctuations as the antislavery campaign progressed, over the next thirty years, unexpectedly, the St Helena court condemned more slave ships and liberated more Africans than any other British possession, in absolute terms 450 vessels and almost 25,000 people.

The Establishment which processed these African refugees was a complex social organism. They were housed in Lemon Valley, five kilometres south-west of Jamestown on the coast, and Rupert's Valley only a kilometre northeast of the town. Space had to be made for isolation and quarantine. One complication was the variation in numbers, depending on the success or otherwise of the squadron: sometimes the tents and sheds were empty, sometimes they housed over a thousand. Andrew Pearson's account of the lives is exemplary in its attention to detail, just use of the sources, humanity, and sense of context. Reception was almost a reprise of the sale into slavery. The island was ill-prepared for the influx of people. The life chances of the liberated Africans depended on medical intervention, environment (housing), facilities, levels of staffing, and supporting logistics. Housing was improvised, until something permanent was undertaken; the



Treasury preferred to feed the liberated Africans cheaply, communication between staff and the recaptives was fraught with suspicion and hostility. While some official accounts testify to contentment and satisfaction, there are reports of cruel and exploitative overseers, and inhumane conditions—“filth, stench, close packing”—and little attempt was made to learn the language or culture (for example, native therapies for characteristic diseases) of the ex-slaves. Nonetheless the overall record of St Helena compares favourably with other comparable establishments.

After liberation and rehabilitation, education, and evangelization, the recaptives were never intended to become permanent residents. Emigration and possible apprenticeship made their most common programme. As Andrew Pearson points out it is arguable that indenture and apprenticeship were a modified continuation of slavery itself. Some effort was made to convince the recaptives to depart voluntarily, in a state of grace and physical health. Eventually over 17,000 emigrated, the majority to the West Indies. In all destinations the recaptives were probably absorbed into the labour force. Some few were taken up as servants by military or civilians, or enlisted in the merchant marine or the British armed forces, and later a group sought repatriation to Luanda.

Individual voices are rarely heard in this story, and Andrew Pearson is to be commended for his attention to them when they emerge: an old woman who refused to emigrate, or Dr McHenry, the first Medical Officer (and later emigration agent), who had to treat seventy patients a day and showed respect for African healing.

In 1875 there was a remnant community of five hundred liberated slaves on the island. After liberation the freed slaves never rose from the bottom strata of society; apprenticeship and education had failed. Charlotte Harper, the last surviving recaptive living on St Helena, died in 1929, aged 100.

This is an engaging, lively, responsible and thoughtful book, which should inspire further research, at least into the fate of resettled emigrant slaves.

Tony Voss, *University of Kwazulu-Natal, Durban*

**Reiland Rabak. 2015. *The Negritude Movement: W.E.B. Du Bois, Leon Damas, Aime Cesaire, Leopold Senghor, Frantz Fanon, and the Evolution of an Insurgent Idea*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 431 pp.**

Reiland Rabaka's scholarship has often been informed by the leaders of the Negritude movement and their exceptional cultural and political influence. However, *The Negritude Movement* is his first book devoted entirely to the subject, and it proves noteworthy from a variety of academic perspectives. Published in 2015, the book examines the way the Negritude movement engages with other Africana intellectual traditions and continues to remain pertinent today. Specifically, Rabaka reveals the intellectual lineage of the movement as based in the New Negro Movement and its most prominent thinker, W.E.B. Du Bois. Furthermore, the book unveils how Negritude creates a conceptual framework to connect the discursive continuity of Du Bois with Franz Fanon, who Rabaka considers Negritude's "most illustrious intellectual heir" (p. 247). From this perspective, *The Negritude Movement* illustrates how Leon Damas, Aime Cesaire, and

Leopold Senghor are positioned as a pertinent link attaching the ideologies developed by Du Bois with the later philosophy of Fanon in a transnational intellectual and political tradition that continues to shape academic debates.

Rabaka presents a comprehensive and well researched study on the origins and legacies of Damas, Césaire, and Senghor as both writers and politicians. The methodology of the book is based on the significance of the discourse established by Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* as essential to the poetics and politics of Negritude. The author explains that this landmark text of Du Bois provides an intellectual framework to understand the larger problematics and *leitmotifs* of the subsequent movements in the modern Africana intellectual tradition, for example the Pan-African Movement, the Harlem Renaissance, and Negritude. This methodological positioning allows Rabaka to expose the common thread that ties not only the discourses of Du Bois and the Harlem Renaissance to Negritude, but also that these historic discursive shifts culminated in the work of Fanon who achieves new insights on decolonization through the work of Negritude.

The compelling arguments of *The Negritude Movement* are reinforced by an effective chronological structure that guides the reader dexterously through the theoretical dialogue that unfolds between Rabaka and the five intellectuals who comprise the subject of his study. After establishing the concept of “Du Boisian Negritude” in the Introduction, the first chapter, “Prelude to Negritude: The New Negro Movement, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Early Evolution of the Negritude Notion” explains how the paradigm shift of Du Bois shaped the Harlem Renaissance, and consequently the Negritude movement. The second chapter, “Damasian Negritude: Leon Damas,” emphasizes Damas as maintaining a distinct form of Negritude from Césaire and Senghor, which includes more attention to the Harlem and Haitian Renaissances.

Indeed, the third chapter, “Césairean Negritude: Aimé Césaire,” begins by highlighting the different interpretations held by Césaire and Damas of the law of departmentalization imposed by the French government. The chapter concludes with an insightful analysis of Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* as a defining work in the Negritude discourse. The fourth chapter, “Senghorian Negritude: Leopold Senghor,” studies Senghor’s unique engagement with Negritude as a socio-political practice, which offers new interpretations of “Africanness, blackness, Frenchness, and socialism” (p. 35). The last chapter, “Fanonian Negritude: Frantz Fanon,” concludes that Fanon works through the poetics and politics of the Negritude movement to furnish a new philosophy of disalienation and decolonization that is often reductively misinterpreted by scholars. Nonetheless, Fanon’s new philosophy is steeped in the themes and ideas produced by Negritude, and therefore his work is seen to be directly in dialogue with Du Bois as well.

*The Negritude Movement* is an in-depth analysis of the significant relationship between major critical figures of the modern Africana intellectual tradition that scholars from a variety of academic disciplines and fields will appreciate. Rabaka demonstrates how the foundational discourse employed by Du Bois is a point of origin for the later Harlem Renaissance, Negritude movement, and the work of Fanon. The value of

Rabaka's book is seen in his ability to establish Césaire, Damas, and Senghor as an epistemological and theoretical discursive turn that unites the methodological frameworks of Du Bois with those of Fanon. The leaders of Negritude merit a unique analysis with regards to their political engagements as well as their cultural ones. Thus, *The Negritude Movement* unveils a transnational Africana intellectual tradition that extends from Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, and to the United States. This tradition and its thinkers prove more relevant than ever considering ongoing political and social discourses of oppression.

Connor Pruss, *University of California, Los Angeles*

**Kathryne A. Rhine. 2016. *The Unseen Things: Women, Secrecy, and HIV in Northern Nigeria*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 218 pp.**

This scholarly anthropological contribution to the subject matter of HIV and gender relations in Northern Nigeria constitutes a useful addition to the earlier works on HIV/AIDS that make some useful pointers to religious communities and Northern Nigeria in particular. Prior to this particular study, John Iliffe's *The African AIDS Epidemic: A History* (2005) had broken new ground and given praise to religious communities since they harboured low rates of HIV infections. Similarly, Babalola's 2007 article, "Readiness for HIV testing among young people in northern Nigeria" in *AIDS and Behavior* (11.5), and Iliyasu et al.'s 2009 article "Prevalence and predictors of tuberculosis coinfection among HIV-seropositive patients" (*Journal of Epidemiology* 19.2) and 2011 article "Domestic violence among women living with HIV/AIDS in Kano" (*African Journal of Reproductive Health* 15.3) discuss themes that highlight rates of HIV infection and gender relations among others. Some emphases include the argument that a healthy person can be HIV-infected is only significant for women. Nigeria has the third highest population of people living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Despite this, the knowledge of HIV/AIDS and uptake of voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) remain low especially in rural areas. Women comprise about half of the 33.4 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide. In sub-Saharan Africa, where the epidemic is worst, they make up an estimated 57 percent of adults living with HIV/AIDS, and three quarters of young people living with HIV/AIDS on the continent are female.

Rhine's contribution therefore cannot be gainsaid. Based on an emic approach the author interviewed participants and experts on HIV in Northern Nigeria. A majority of her respondents were women who shared how they were infected with HIV, their fears and expectations for now and the foreseeable future, which were highlighted in a narrative fashion. This particular contribution is situated within the context of gender relations in a society that is vehemently confined within customary and religious dogma that is patriarchal and demonizes women at the least opportunity. She decided to explore the aspirations, dilemmas, and everyday lives of women participating in the world that HIV prevention and treatment campaigns have opened up to them. She considers the social relations that produce suffering and well-being among ordinary Nigerians. She duly argues that neither scholars nor public health professionals are

particularly concerned with women's efforts to provide bodily, emotional and social resources to others.

In five chapters, she discusses critical issues under well-crafted themes, namely: first loves, twice married, dilemmas of disclosure, intimate ethics, and hope. Based on anthropological scholarship the author examines marriage and the effect of the HIV virus on the ways intimate relationships are formed and fractured in Northern Nigeria. Secondly, she focuses on the effort of women to conceal and reveal their secrets and emphasizes secrecy's performative qualities. Finally, she relates these ethnical acts to the labour of care-giving which are practices at the core of the hopes women possess and the burdens they carry as they negotiate life with HIV in the era of antiretroviral therapies.

In the first chapter, "First Loves," Rhine concludes that the acts of concealment and exposure reflects women's exercise of agency and further implicated in an increasing risk of contracting HIV. In the second chapter, "Dilemmas And Disclosures," she pays attention to additional narratives of respondents and discusses among other things that the relative freedom of women to select and ignore men is a recent phenomenon (p. 55). This notwithstanding, she argues that while men engage in extra-marital relationships and women circulate through husbands, it eventually create the epidemiological conditions through which HIV is transmitted within marriage in northern Nigeria (p. 59). In the third chapter, Rhine emphasized how secrecy and indirect speeches were useful in helping both women and HIV counselors to achieve their objectives. When women were told their HIV status, Rhine argues, "Their private information will remain confidential" (p. 83) with a further reassurance that hospital policies prohibit them from sharing files without permission. This notwithstanding, Rhine projects the transitions in the social perceptions of women opening up or speaking about their HIV status especially those who know they did nothing wrong, for their infections came from their husbands. This however does not take away the quandary of lies: "HIV infected women are frequently the targets of lies" (p. 101). Significantly, the third chapter questions what is at stake in women's HIV disclosure in northern Nigeria.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, Rhine deals with two themes: intimate ethics and hope. She emphasizes the fact that some HIV positive women have survived to become the 'face' for the education and fight against HIV. Rhine argues that "the social and physical threats related to HIV's stigma, force women to take inventory of their moral and social resources... a positive diagnosis also brings to light their ethical sensibilities that is, the tacit thoughts, actions and statements that guide them in their efforts to live a good life" (p. 104). Rhine further opines though there are a lot of HIV support groups in northern Nigeria with Kano city alone hosting seven of such, here observation during the meetings suggests that even in the support groups women kept their status secret and even attribute such secrets to God. For example, she hints that "Muslims, they said, should not expose the secrets that God protects" (pp. 130-31). She reports that some of the women join these support groups to find HIV positive husbands and severally some physician introduced HIV spouses to each other. The contrast is that some HIV men took advantage of desperate HIV women who were in need of husbands.

This anthropological piece is a useful contribution to the research on HIV in Africa. The issues of gender relations and the need to further interrogate such social relations cannot be gainsaid in contemporary times. It is a pertinent scholarship to comprehend both in academia and in civil relations. When policy makers get hold of it, they should do the biddings of her nuggets and be stimulated to make useful social and public health policies toward this end.

Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, *Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology*

**Keith Somerville. 2016. *Ivory: Power and Poaching in Africa*. London: C. Hurst & Co Publishers. 325 pp.**

Human beings have always hunted different animals and harvested different plants for various reasons. One of the animals that has been overwhelmingly hunted by humans for both domestic consumption and commercial purposes is the elephant. Most prevalent research in this area largely blames recent surges in elephant killings on growing internal insurgencies and rising external demand and clamors for total ivory bans. Conversely, Keith Somerville's *Ivory: Power and Poaching in Africa* (2016) sets out to unveil the complex relationship between power and elephant poaching in Africa, mainly proposing a more holistic ivory control approach that includes regulation, sustainable use, and the inclusion of local communities in conservation initiatives. Divided into seven chapters, the book lays bare the intricacies, hypocrisies, and paradoxes surrounding the age-long hunting of elephants in Africa, stretching its coverage into an indeterminate past and up to the nearest present. Somerville states that "As with the history and political economy of the ivory trade itself, the genesis of this book is complex and does not have an easily identifiable motive or start date" (P. 1).

The introduction foregrounds different debates between opposing camps of conservationists and how different power dynamics influence the ivory trade and the recurring discourse that links insurgency and increased poaching, especially since 9/11. It also recognizes and clarifies nuances and reservations surrounding the term "poaching" among wildlife researchers. Somerville retains the term, but stresses that it has flexible meanings: "from evil and brutal killings of animals for gain to traditional practices rendered illegal by externally imposed law" (p. 7). Chapter one discusses the relationship between Africans and elephants prior to the arrival of Europeans. Early Africans killed elephants for meat and hides and also to save their crops, but later on ivory became one of the principal raw materials (alongside slaves, gold, crude oil, cocoa, etc.) that attracted the earliest Europeans to Africa, especially "traders, those dubbed explorers and then hunters and financiers of hunting and slaving expeditions" (p. 13). Early Europeans like the Portuguese brought weapons (e.g. guns and gunpowder) to the continent. This, coupled with the external demand for ivory outside the continent, led to increased hunting of African elephants, with traditional rulers and other powerful Africans playing the role of middlemen and "gatekeepers" in the ivory trade. Chapter two reveals how European colonialism in Africa led to large-scale killings of elephants mainly by white settler hunters "whom the colonizing powers wanted to attract as



another cost-effective way of reaping economic rewards from occupation" (p. 25). It was during this period that local African hunters were dispossessed of their lands and other natural resources, including the right to hunt elephants. Slave traders were also significantly involved in ivory trade as "slavery became bound up with ivory through the need to transport trade goods inland from the coast to purchase ivory, which then had to be carried back to the coast" (pp. 30-31). Consequently, elephant herds became scarce in many parts of the continent leading to "a constant search for new and more lucrative hunting grounds" (p. 37).

Chapter three discusses the criminalization of African hunters under colonial rule. In their efforts to fund colonial governments in Africa and to maximize profits from colonialism, European powers not only taxed the commerce in ivory but also resorted to either completely banning or largely restricting elephant hunting by local hunters. This led to the criminalization and demonization of African hunters, giving birth to the dichotomy of white hunter/black poacher. This brought about the exclusion of locals from decision-making concerning conservation and consequently formed the basis for their resistance to conservation laws and their usual complicity in illegal poaching, evident even today. As chapter four shows, conservation efforts were (and still remain) filled with corruption, crime, and conflict, not only in East Africa but elsewhere on the continent. At independence, African countries inherited conservation policies from colonial powers and continued to alienate locals from conservation decisions and practices. Most of these governments "largely stopped local communities from taking back ownership [of resources] they'd lost under colonialism" (p. 101). Armed conflicts and disorder in newly-independent nations further led to escalated killings of wildlife. Sophisticated weapons in the hands of rebels in eastern, central, and southern Africa have also brought untold damage on elephants. Central and southern Africa are discussed in chapter five with Angolan, Central African Republic, Sudanese and other armed conflicts shown to be "far more complex than just simple case[s] of elephants killed to fund war" (p. 135). Amidst the gloomy picture of dwindling elephant populations and conflicting statistics mainly produced by Western-funded conservationist NGOs, there are some glimmers of hope in Botswana in southern Africa and Gabon in central Africa where conservation seems to be more successful than elsewhere. Chapter six presents the sagas, debates, conflicts, battles, antagonisms, and arguments surrounding the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) formed in 1975. The demise of CITES was inherent from inception as it advocated "bans and shutting down the potential for community-based, sustainable-use approaches favored by many African states and local groups" (p. 181). As a result, the 1990 CITES ban on ivory trade would soon be challenged by some African countries like Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe shortly afterwards. Such moves against the ban from within later added to frequent armed conflicts and insurgencies on the continent and the recent growing Chinese demand for African ivory, among other factors, to explain the resurgent massacre of elephants in Africa since the mid-2000s, as discussed in chapter seven.

The principal strengths of this book, among others, include its wide-ranging coverage of the ivory trade, its poignant details and revelations surrounding the numerous, truncated, and one-sided reports and statistics produced by most wildlife researchers working on Africa as well as the pitiful exclusion/alienation of African local inhabitants from their resources and their portrayal as brutal poachers by the few highly-placed gatekeepers of this lucrative trade. The book is unbiased in its discussion and presentation of facts, figures, and motives. Besides its veracity and objectivity, it is carefully researched and written—an almost-typo-free book. It seems that its appropriate conclusion is rather found in its introduction because the very last sentence of the book apparently takes a stance contrary to its author's objectivity and distance from taking sides with the opposing camps involved in elephant/wildlife conservation. Its last sentence reads: "Demand reduction may help, but ultimately, aligning survival of elephants with workable, locally-acceptable forms of sustainable use is likely to be the **only** answer that combines conservation of the elephant population with the needs and interests of the human populations in range states" (p. 325). And the book's blurb/description seems to pick up from there, stating (misleadingly?) that for Somerville "regulation—not prohibition—of the ivory trade is **the best way** to stop uncontrolled poaching." The most compelling aspect of the book is its author's neutrality and objectivity. And this is rather captured in its introduction: "Readers will not find this a history of the elephant, or of ivory, or a defense of any one particular approach to the ivory trade and conservation" (p. 3). As Somerville notes, "There is no single dominant supply driver of illicit [elephant] hunting" (p. 317). And his book demonstrates this admirably, making it stand out as a remarkable, authoritative, indisputable and resourceful reference book on elephant and wildlife research in Africa.

Kenneth Toah Nsah, *University of St Andrews*

**Samia I. Spencer (ed.). 2016. *Daughters of the Nile: Egyptian Women Changing Their World*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 402 pp.**

This could also have been subtitled, "Egyptian women out in the world," since more than half of the subjects are not living in their native land. This tome is a kind of scrapbook or victory lap if you will of thirty-seven high-achieving Egyptian women in the business, public-service, and academic domains writing brief sketches of their lives. The proceeds of the book are being donated to charity and it doesn't claim to be a scientific study of Egyptian female achievers, so we can't judge it too harshly. Nevertheless, a reading of the book brings to light several common characteristics of these women and some noteworthy statistics. First of all, and getting out of the way a point which may disappoint some but will not surprise most: no social mobility emerges in these self-portraits; these were all daughters of the technocratic middle class, the elite or of the ionospheric sub-set of diplomatic families; no contributor fought her way up from humble beginnings. And the least of these women "merely" succeeded. However, many of the careers of the contributors do demonstrate gender pathbreaking; i.e. many of them achieved positions which are "firsts" on a global scale, not merely in Egypt. In

the domain of engineering, Tyseer Aboulnasr is currently Dean of Engineering at the University of Ottawa, Safaa Fouda rose to be a Deputy Director at Natural Resources Canada, and Awatef Hamed became the first woman to head a Department of Aerospace Engineering in the U.S. Others excelled in unexpected ways: Caroline Maher at one point was the global number three-ranked female Tae Kwan Do competitor and later entered the Egyptian parliament, Mona Risk pursued a career in chemistry but now pens bestselling romance novels, and Helene Moussa, who also did praiseworthy work with refugees, was at one point the Dean of the School of Social Work in Ethiopia. There is no sectarian point to be made, but the proportion of Christian contributors, about 25 percent, conforms to the estimated (but non-official) percentage of non-Muslims in the Egyptian population. Western education: nearly all the subjects attended a variety of western or Catholic elementary schools (nineteen per cent of them attended Notre Dame de Sion in Alexandria); a startling sixty-one percent attended or later taught at the American University in Cairo (AUC, one attended the American University in Beirut). We shouldn't read too much into the attendance at AUC, but it is interesting.

As might be expected in gender groundbreaking cases, many of these women launched themselves by conspicuous academic outperformance, as in: it's difficult to ignore or dismiss a young woman's achievements when she has been ranked number one in Physics at the country's premier university, etc. Even the most hardened male chauvinist is unable to argue away such a demonstration of excellence. Most of these women have taken such beginnings and proceeded on from there.

Nor do these women shy away from culture wars; indeed they are ready to enter the fray—though not speaking with a uniform voice. For example Azza Heikal, lamenting that the most famous book about Alexandria, Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*, was written by an English author (Durrell provokes the same complaint in Cyprus, about which he wrote *Bitter Lemons*) and panning the depiction of Egyptians in the work, penned her own *The Education of an Alexandrian* in 1996, in an attempt to redress the balance. But Mona Abeid, another contributor, speaks of Durrell positively. Cultural warriors don't always agree. Two of the contributors quote Constantine Cavafy, probably Alexandria's most famous 20<sup>th</sup> century poet—but who wrote in Greek. These women are well-read, aware of world cultural trends, and expect to play a role therein and in several cases have done so. Generally, the worldview of these women is inclusive, culture-spanning, and optimistic.

As I suggested, some of these individuals are not only high achievers but genuine non-conformists as well. When the Mubarak regime permitted the New Wafd party to be formed as a sop to democratic impulses, they forgot to tell Mona Ebeid (another AUC graduate) that the new party wasn't actually supposed to do anything. She entered parliament and debated, pushed legislation, and after the 2011 revolution participated in the Advisory Committee of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

When we view the 2014 photo of Ebeid with then-Minister of Defense El-Sisi, it is evident that the Field Marshal regards the parliamentarian with genuine affection and admiration. Readers will feel the same about Ebeid and most of these women.

Kenneth W. Meyer, *Western Washington University*

**Anders Themner (ed.). *Warlord Democrats in Africa: Ex-Military Leaders and Electoral Politics*. London: Zed Books, 2017. 254 pp.**

The editor of this book assembled chapters covering a very important political theme in post-Cold War Africa, roughly from the early 1990s to as recent as 2016. The contributors focus on sub-Saharan African countries that experienced civil wars, analyzing how the former warlords transitioned into civilian politicians under the democratic dispensation. Generally, there is an atmosphere of pessimism, about the prospects of democratization in the selected countries (DRC, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Liberia, Rwanda, Guinea Bissau, and South Sudan), particularly because of the practices of the former warlords, many of whom have continued to apply their wartime tactics even where ceasefires had been declared. Anders Themner describes such leaders as “Warlord Democrats” (WDs) or “Big Men,” who have not been fully committed to the democratization process, both as individuals and through the weak and dysfunctional political and state institutions which they oversee (pp. 1-2).

The book’s seven main chapters take the reader through various case studies of the so-called WDs, in each case the author(s) begins with a brief biographical account of the “Big Man” before discussing their involvement in a country’s civil war, and their conduct in the post-civil war era. Depending on circumstances, most of them tend to straddle between serving as “real democrats” or to fall back on their military/warlord background—characterized by aggressive or violent behaviors (pp. 3-5). The main theme that cuts across the main chapters is that the organization of democratic elections has not been enough to fully change the behavior of the WDs and their institutions. The chapter by Judith Verweijen focuses on the career Mbusa Nyamwisi of the DRC and leader of the RCD/K-ML. She highlights that while Mbusa seemingly transformed into a “democrat” and participated in the 2006 and 2011 general elections (and served as cabinet minister between 2003 and 2011), he returned to his civil war tactics of promoting violence and ethnic-based patronage when he was removed from his cabinet post by President Kabila, thereby threatening the fragile peace process (pp. 42-43 and 47-55).

The other chapters discuss the careers of Paul Kagame (Rwanda); Sekou Conneh and Prince Johnson (Liberia); Afonso Dhalkama (Mozambique); Joao Bernado Vieira (Guinea Bissau); Julius Bio and others (Sierra Leone); and Riek Machar (South Sudan). The chapter on Kagame, whose image is on the book’s cover page, is interesting to read, particularly because since the end of the Rwandan civil war and genocide (1994) he has emerged as a “darling” of the international community, due to his ability to stabilize the country and his promotion of the development agenda. On the ground, he has reportedly merely transformed the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) from a rebel

movement into a political party that the President (a Tutsi) uses to victimize political opponents (mostly Hutus)—many of whom have fled the country (pp. 72-74). Kagame is stated to be “presiding over a military government with civilians working under its authority” (p. 75). This is what could also be described as an “illiberal democracy” — where elections are rarely free and fair, and are often staged to rubber stamp the RPF’s continued dominance (pp. 82-84). In Mozambique, although Dhalkama has yet to win a presidential election through his party, RENAMO, he has on several occasions flouted the terms of the 1992 Peace Agreement, by resorting to violence whenever his demands are not addressed by the FRELIMO-led government (pp. 138-49).

This book has some shortfalls, most notably, the omission of the roles played by women during the civil wars and the transition to the democratic dispensation. Recent scholarship on Africa has shown that women also played pivotal roles, sometimes not necessarily as the main leaders, in such historical processes. Works by Iris Berger, *Women in Twentieth-Century Africa* (2016) and Jean Allman, *Women in African Colonial Histories* (2002), have emphasized the notion of not treating African women as “passive victims” of historical processes but rather as “active participants”. The authors also failed to properly explore how the “civic culture” of the sampled WDs and their societies has historically supported the flourishing of “Big Man” politics—which has hampered the democratization process in many countries, even where there was no civil war. These shortfalls aside, I would recommend this book to scholars and general readers interested in studying the dynamics of the state, institutions, and political leadership in post-Cold War Africa. Those with interest in evaluating Africa’s so-called “Second Wave of Democratization” will also find this book captivating.

Paul Chiudza Banda, *West Virginia University*

**Ambassador Omar Alieu Touray. 2016. *The African Union The First Ten Years*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Rowman & Littlefield. 241 pp.**

The trajectory of Africa’s economic and political development, continentally, since the independence decade of the 1950’s, is vividly portrayed by the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and its evolution into the African Union (AU). Whilst the OAU was seen as an embodiment of Africa’s trials and tribulations after colonialism, the African Union is widely perceived as the economic progression from Nkrumah’s slogan: “Seek ye first the political kingdom and all things shall be added unto you.” This transition from political preoccupations, such as independence, imperialism, and neocolonialism, was in reality hoisted upon Africa by global events of cooperation and integration (principal among which was the European Union of 1993) as well as the experience of the so-called “lost decade” of the 1980’s. Touray’s book stands out for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it was written by someone who is both an insider and outsider. As an insider, he served for about six years as The Gambia’s Permanent Representative to the Union and Ambassador to Ethiopia, host country of the OAU and the AU. Later, as Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, he served in the Executive



Council. As an outsider, he published this book seven years after leaving. Secondly, the author was able to employ seemingly contradictory schools of sociopolitical thought and harmonize them into one approach ("fusionism") in order to understand the motivations for and the process and outcomes of the Union. Thirdly, he was able to use his first-hand experience for the benefit of the reader.

Chapter 1 outlines the arguments of the various schools and combines their common postulations into a fusionist theory. It proceeds to apply this to the experience of the AU in its first ten years of existence. Chapter 2 looks at Africa at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, cataloging the usual negative picture of a continent in economic, political and social crisis. The statistics are chilling: Africa accounted for 12.5 percent of the world's population but produced only 3.7 percent of global GDP; the share of FDI dropped to 5 percent of GDP; external debt accounted for 80 percent of GDP; 70 percent of the world's HIV/AIDS cases; 80 percent of countries in the world with low human development; and a long list of violent conflicts. Chapter 3 looks at the genesis of the AU from the adoption of the Sirte Declaration in 1999 to the appointment of Zuma in 2012. Chapter 4 goes back to decolonization and the challenges faced by the OAU. It points out a fact that many observers ignore; that the OAU's shortcomings were reflections of those of its member states. This chapter should have been the second in the book. Chapter 5 ploughs through the historic development blueprints of Africa from the Lagos Plan of Action (1980) to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (2002). Chapter 6 assesses the human development agenda of the AU and observes that: "It was often much easier for African Union officials to report on the legal instruments that have been signed and ratified, or the workshops and conferences that had been convened than to demonstrate the impact that these activities had at the ground level" (pp. 103-104). The chapter concludes that at the ground level the "grim figures" continued in 2010, with half of the continent's 800 million people suffering from poverty, disease and lack of access to basic services. Although it recognizes "the impressive advances that some countries made" (p. 103), such successes were limited to "a handful of cases" (p. 103). Chapter 7 examines the theory and practice of collective security and shows a disjuncture between the Union's ambition and capacity. Chapter 8 catalogues human rights and governance norms and ends with a "balance sheet" which shows that the Union's progress in governance remained modest and fragile. Chapter 9 presents the policy organs of the Union and makes a comparative analysis with the European Union (EU). Chapter 10 zeroes in on the "voice of the people: the African parliament," which faced "considerable challenges, but also held considerable prospects" (p. 182). Chapter 11 focuses on the "continental bureaucracy: the commission" and its balance sheet reveals internal managerial difficulties and poor relations with the Permanent Representatives' Council (PRC). Chapter 12 concludes.

I recommend this book to all those interested in Africa's international relations, politics and development.

Although more attention should have been paid to the continent's progress from 2000-2010, compared to the earlier record, the book is well researched, well written, and easy to read.

Karamo NM Sonko, *Heeno International*

**Sadia Zulfiqar. 2016. *African Women Writers and the Politics of Gender*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 223 pp.**

Sadia Zulfiqar's *African Women Writers and the Politics of Gender* offers a deep insight into the marginalized status of African women, their resistance to patriarchal structures in their communities, and their opposition to Eurocentric forms of feminism. Zulfiqar navigates difficult terrains to proffer solutions to the lack of an adequate agency for African women. She supports new platforms created by new female African writers, and she adequately historicizes the gender battle in the African literary canon. She does so, so impeccably; not from a position of inferiority, but from a high pedestal by reclaiming and reconstructing the identity of African women through the narration of Leila Aboulela, Mariama Ba, Buchi Emecheta, Chimamanda Adichie, and Tsitsi Dangaremba. She attempts to decenter male hegemony in the African literary sphere by affirming that African women are creators of African oral literature rather than perpetrators of it.

In the first part of her book, she explores the theme of abandonment in Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter* and *Scarlet*. She navigates the history of women's oppression in Senegalese society; this oppression manifests itself through the limitation of feminine rights backed by strong patriarchal, religious, and cultural doctrines. She suggests that both Ba and Buchi Emecheta advocate for the need to have men and women as allies. The lack of a positive male character and a reliable female ally in their narrations, she suggests, show that there is a lot of hills to climb when it comes to the attainment gender equality and an equitable justice system for men and women in many African societies. She cites the oppression of married women by their mother in laws in Ba's *So Long a Letter*. The absence of sufficient male and female allies is also evident in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and Jewell* and Ramonu Sanusi's *Le Bistouri des Larmes*. This allyship is supported by Motherism and Womanism, variants of Western Feminism.

The second and third sections of Zulfiqar's book explores Emecheta's interrogation of the treatment of women by tribal authorities and the notion of motherhood. She notes how Emecheta asserts that motherhood should not be what defines African women; an opinion that has been suppressed by African male scholars who have infiltrated and hijacked the African feminist sphere by promoting an idealized and suffering mother as a symbol of true womanhood. She also explores how Adichie and Emecheta demystify the travails that women go through during wars caused by men in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Destination Biafra*, which are remarkably different from the Biafra war narrations of the likes of Chinua Achebe and Ken Saro-Wiwa whose Biafra war narrations are more egocentric and tribal, not paying attention to how the actions of men have perpetuated the suffering of women.

The fourth chapter explores the representation of Islam in Leila Aboulela's fiction, the western media's representation of Muslims as terrorists. Zulfiqar's navigation of the terrain of islamophobia is problematic because of her religion. She becomes sentimental and illogical by quoting from the Quran. This is the only taint to a well-researched book, rich in its scholarly engagement in the African literary sphere both in sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb.

In conclusion, Zulfiqar gives a proper appraisal of African women's writing by engaging in the challenges they face in exerting agency. She adequately explores how colonialism, polygamy, and islamophobia remain limiting factors in the process of the reclamation of identity by African women. She also evaluates how western patriarchy has been mixed with African patriarchy to perpetuate male hegemony in the African literary and social sphere. She proffers solutions and strategies to reclaim women's positions in the African literary field by creating new platforms. This book is significant because it reinforces the identity of African women writers; it serves as an authentic document worthy of consultation in the continued research on various aspects of gender in Africa, especially in the field of resistance of colonial power and the reinforcement of the power of women. It is also worthy of consultation because it highlights the quintessential role of African female writers in their communities despite their inability to wield much force in the African literary canon. It repositions African women as the founders of African literature, and as its most important voice; not out of sheer conceit or a tumultuous compendium, but out of class, superiority, and purpose.

Ademolawa Michael Adedipe, *University of Saskatchewan*