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“This Guy has become a Complete Savage”—A Last Interview with Jan Vansina

HEIN VANHEE

Abstract: Professor Jan Vansina looks back at the early years of his rich academic career as a historian of Africa and more specifically at his field research among the Kuba peoples of the DR Congo. Learning their language and participating in the boys’ initiation allowed him to become a deeply involved participant observer. He worked on the current anthropological themes of the day, and more importantly, he also collected oral material for an innovative historiography that would later inspire hundreds of students and researchers. Blinded by cultural prejudice, missionaries and colonial administrators did not understand what he was doing, and saw him as a hopeless case, but Kuba people came to accept him everywhere in the country. As a junior researcher, Vansina had been sent to the Kuba kingdom because of the great reputation of its art in the West. He found out that this same reputation had played a crucial role in the survival of the kingdom, in particular after its initial encounter with the terror of King Leopold’s Free State. Kuba kings had learned to deal with the realities of the Belgian Congo, using their revered art for clever diplomacy and bending the model of indirect rule to their own benefit.

Introduction

The present interview took place at the home of Professor Jan Vansina in Madison, Wisconsin (USA) on May 12 and 13, 2016. Its main purpose was to video-record a number of statements about Vansina’s research on the history of the Kuba peoples of the DR Congo. These would be used in one of the new galleries of the renovated Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium. The gallery titled “Rituals and Ceremonies” has showcases displaying the objects of Kuba royalty, as a historic case to illustrate a broader narrative about diverse models of leadership in Central Africa. There I wanted to include the story of Jan Vansina’s field research in the 1950s among the Kuba peoples, in what was then still the Belgian Congo. This would provide visitors with an insight into how anthropological and historical knowledge is produced. Inspired by the book *Being Colonized* (2010), I also wished to convey a sense of the extraordinary importance of Kuba art for the survival of the Kuba kingdom under colonial indirect rule.

The interview was done in three sessions, as agreed beforehand, in order to not exhaust Professor Vansina who was then already suffering from a terminal disease. He had just made this public in an article titled “De Vita Sua” in the journal *Society*, of which he lent me his copy so that I could read it at night. The article contains a self-evaluation of his own trajectory as a scholar and a reiteration of a passionate argument in favor of a truly *African* history, written for and accessible to *African* audiences. Histories are important for the role

Hein Vanhee is a historian and curator at the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) in Tervuren, Belgium. His research interests include the history of Central Africa and its diasporas, colonialism, material culture and art, and cultural heritage. His latest exhibition is titled “Rituals and Ceremonies – African Testimonies” on view at the RMCA.

[http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v18/v18i2a1.pdf](http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v18/v18i2a1.pdf)

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they play “in sustaining or even creating collective identities” and thus in supporting collective and individual self-confidence and self-esteem. The article has a distinct melancholic feel, stemming from a continuing passion for a noble cause for which his own battles had now been fought, and from a seemingly inescapable wondering about how people will look back at himself, the historian.

Figure 1: Professor Jan Vansina at his home in Madison. Still from video-recorded interview by Hein Vanhee, 12 May 2016.

I had met Professor Vansina before, when he visited Belgium in 2001 and gave public lectures at several Belgian universities, and we had often corresponded about archives, collections and research. In 2010, Vansina donated his research archive to the Royal Museum for Central Africa, containing the original notebooks of his field research in Central Africa. These document his research among the Kuba intermittently from January 1953 until July 1956, and among the Tio from October 1963 until April 1964. In addition, the archive holds the series of oral history accounts which he collected in Rwanda (known as ibitéekerezo) and in Burundi, besides boxes with more research notes, drafts, vocabularies and offprints. The motivation behind Vansina’s choice was clear and simple: in “Tervuren” his archive would be both safe and (more easily) accessible to researchers from Congo, Rwanda and Burundi.

I enjoyed a warm welcome at the home of Jan Vansina and his wife Claudine. I had brought a large bottle of dark Belgian Trappist beer of a brand I thought would not be available in Madison stores (I had missed my connection at London Heathrow since it took a while for security staff to figure out that it would not explode). After our first interview session we spent a pleasant moment together up in the living room with Claudine, their son Bruno, and Professor Florence Bernault who had stopped by for the occasion. We chatted in French, English and Dutch, changing from one language to the other almost unwittingly, exchanging anecdotes and laughs. Jan Vansina said I absolutely needed to visit the University’s open stack library which he praised for its treatment of researchers. I remember
the strange sensation of feeling truly honored to be the guest of someone for whom I had such a great admiration while at the same time being comfortable as if I was at home.

We spent several hours in his downstairs study and library, where I recorded the interview. It felt like being in a sanctuary, where so many great ideas were born, where so many articles and books had been written. With large windows allowing a lot of light to come in, the place was stuffed with houseplants of various kinds and sizes, making it look like a greenhouse. A large map of Africa hung on the wall which had Mweka on it, where the colonial administration had set up headquarters in Kuba country. Explaining the empty bookshelves, Vansina told me he had given most of his personal library to the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee. He kept giving away the new books that were still coming in, as if he was leaving for a destination where he could only take a tiny suitcase. Hesitantly, I accepted Jelmer Vos’ “excellent book” on the late Kongo kingdom. Had I a copy of Nancy Hunt’s “fabulous” A Nervous State? “Oh no,” he changed his mind, “not this one, there’s a personal dedication written in it.”

My memory of the two days that I spent interviewing Jan Vansina will always be dominated by an image of the sheer pleasure with which he was telling about his first fieldwork among the Kuba peoples. The way the people initially responded to his presence, the incomprehension of colonial officials for what he was doing, his final acceptance by the Kuba after he had gone through initiation: the stories filled him with visible joy and nostalgia. In his mid-twenties he had been the rebellious researcher who sided with the Kuba against arrogant and ignorant colonial bureaucrats, and that still gave him great moral satisfaction.

At the end of our last conversation, almost as prompted by an afterthought, I showed him on my laptop the selection of Kuba art objects that would be on display in the new gallery I was working on. As I am used to Africanist historians being rarely interested in African art and material culture, I started explaining various items. He quickly took over, and instructed me about details of iconography and used materials, of which I had not been aware. I nodded. Then we sat outside waiting for my taxi. When it became clear that my taxi was late, he decided “Come on, we’re not going to wait any longer, I will take you back to your hotel.” Running through the hallway, he swung a coat around his shoulders and with a boyish grin he picked up a baseball cap with the inscription ‘ANGOLA.’ He laughed, “I got this from a doctoral student!” With a decided foot on the pedal and nervously pulling the steering wheel, he drove me back in his bright red sedan, explaining to me on the way the layout of downtown Madison and every smallest landmark that came into view.

Professor Jan Vansina passed away peacefully in Madison on 8 February 2017, aged 87. The obituary card distributed at the funeral service in Belgium identified him as a “historical anthropologist.” Reflecting values held high by his family in Belgium, the accompanying text praised his sense of duty, his professionalism and his honesty. “He received the highest honors in his field, but he remained easy to deal with.”

The Interview

Hein Vanhee: How was it to start doing fieldwork among the Kuba peoples in the 1950s in what was then still the Belgian Congo?

Jan Vansina: In the early 1950s, it was unusual for Belgians to do fieldwork. The reason for that was that anthropology was not taught at any Belgian university, it was an unknown discipline. Fieldwork was completely unknown. Actually, before I went, there had been only
two fieldworkers that we know of, Maquet and Biebuyck, who were both anthropologists, and who were attached to the same institution I was attached to. So, it was new.

The thing that made fieldwork different was that I went to live in a small town, on my own, and I did not come out of it. I did not go to the state post Mweka, which was one of the posts in this district, the most important one, the center. There all the Europeans went on weekends at least, if not more often, to drink, to see films and the like, and they did not see me coming!

**HV:** How far was that from the place where you were staying?

**JV:** Oh, that was about 80 kilometers, 80-85. The only other Europeans nearby were at the mission station. There was also one administrator, who was detached there to supervise the whole Kuba kingdom, a very large area, in administrative terms. He was different from all other administrators, in that he also did not go to Mweka, but was very concerned with the development of that chiefdom.

So, I learned a lot. I learned that I had to watch out for my health. I could not eat all the things that Kuba were eating, I had to eat some other food as well. But we adapted quite easily. I was not integrated in one family or another, as happens sometimes in fieldwork. No, I stayed separate, in an abandoned European gite d’étape, that is a lodging house for passing people. But I talked to everyone, and all the Kuba at the court pretty soon came to consider me as a pupil, that is, somebody who was there to learn. And that was fine with me, because that was what I was! So, our relationship in general was quite smooth. There were no particular difficulties.

With Europeans there were not many difficulties. They knew that I was there, at least the administrators knew, and when I came to Mweka they did not know how to talk to me, or what to talk about. Half of the times when I came to Mweka, anyway, was because I was so ill and I had to see a doctor. Eventually, the chief administrators realized that I could be useful to them. That was what they saw, because the things that I was collecting were also useful for their administration.

**HV:** How was it decided originally that you would go to the Kuba? Was it because they thought you would be useful?

**JV:** It was decided for me to go to Kuba country almost a full year before I went. It was decided by the board of the institute that I worked for, the Institut de Recherche Scientifique en Afrique Centrale (IRSAC). And it was decided in practice by the director of the museum in Tervuren. The director of the museum in Tervuren, Frans Olbrechts, wanted to send someone to do fieldwork in an area that was known for its objects and its art. He could not get someone in art history to do this, so he sent me as an anthropologist, after a period of training in London. That was the reason why I was sent.

Now the administrators... I did not come with letters of introduction, or not many. All the things that were normally done, like visiting the administrators, visiting this, visiting that, none of that occurred in my case, and this made it all the more questionable as to what I was doing there! So, when the administrators found out that much of what I was doing was useful to them, they accepted me. In fact, they probed a little to see if they could not order me to do things. The institute, however, was completely detached from the ordinary administration in Congo. It had no links whatsoever with it. So, that meant that I was completely independent.

After about six months, everything fell more or less in the groove, and the
administrators realized that, well, they had a queer person, an odd person, somewhere in
the bush, “who was going native,” but he wasn’t bothering anybody. The Catholic
missionaries had also accepted me more or less the way I was, and vice versa, of course. The
administrator in the capital of the Kuba – where I was – understood what I was doing, and I
was getting along very well with him, in fact.

The decisive point came when the Kuba asked me to go to initiation with them. That
meant that I would be initiated which, for the missions, both Catholic and Protestant, was
the ultimate in things you should not do! For Europeans in Mweka, it meant that, yes, this guy
has become a complete savage... Civilized persons don’t do things like that! But the Kuba
accepted me after this anywhere in the country. That spread like wildfire, that I had been
initiated.

Figure 2: Les garçons liés par la fibre de raphia (The boys bound by the raffia fiber). Mapey,

HV: Was this a matter of racial prejudice or was it fear?

JV: Well, there were at least two factors at work. Racial prejudice—remember, this is not
long after the war—was not really very prominent. But cultural prejudice, that’s something
else! You see, all these Europeans were convinced that they were civilized. They had never
thought about being civilized or not before they arrived there, but once they were there,
they started thinking that their ways of life were, of course, infinitely superior, although
they could not really defend this, but this was a feeling. So, going to a school—because that’s
what initiation really is—for inferior living, in their minds, meant that you were completely
hopeless.

HV: How did Kuba people initially respond to the questions that you were asking?

JV: Well, the first thing the Kuba people did was to find out where to classify me. So, I was
not a missionary, I was not an administrator, and I was not a trader. So, what was I? At their
capital they had answers for that, but elsewhere, you know, there was a fourth category of
Europeans that ... make no sense. So, as long as they don’t harm you, you just leave them alone, and if you can make a benefit of them, make a little benefit, and that’s it.

At the capital, they were far more advanced, because they had had a lot of foreign visitors. This was a famous kingdom, it had been known since the 1880s. It had had visitors, including two anthropologists, who were internationally very well-known, and who had been doing work there for a couple of months each time. One of these was called Emil Torday. Emil Torday was somebody who was not there for long, for a month or so, but he took in an enormous amount of information. He published that, and with the backing of the British museum, he introduced the notion that there was African art, that Kuba art was art! As a result the kingdom became very well-known. Now, that was important from the beginning, because it meant that a well-known kingdom would be included on the tour list of the British consuls who came to see how Belgium was taking over the mandate from the Congo Free State. So, after 1908, the Kuba were particularly either left alone, or well treated.

In any case, at the court, they realized the importance of such visits because they saw the effect Torday had had. And he was not the only one. From the 1920s onward, they got very illustrious visitors. There is no member of the Belgian royal family who did not go to the Kuba at various times. The last one before my visit had been Prince Charles, in 1947. And then, after that, King Baudouin, who came twice. He had contact with the Kuba twice in the 1950s, and after that still in the early 1960s. So, the Kuba were very well aware of the outside world. I found in the papers of the king, after he was dead and they arrived here, thirty years later, that he had received correspondence from California, from South Africa, so the court itself was very well informed about things.

**HV:** Did this have an impact on your work?

**JV:** It had an impact because local people tended to confuse the sort of anthropology I was doing either with photography—because a very famous photographer had been there in 1947—or, mostly in the 1950s, with object buying for galleries and for the art trade. There were traders around, practically, during much of the time I was there. They would not stay long, but they were people with money, and they would spend it or not spend it, and that was of a concern to villagers everywhere. But otherwise, my link with the center of things, with the capital, and with the king, was mainly conditioned by the visitors of political importance that they had had before. They didn’t know whether I was of political importance or not. I thought I was not. Back then I never thought even of that question. They seem to have thought that, well, I was harmless. Then, once this initiation had happened, and they realized that I stood completely on their side in whatever culture questions were going on, the whole relationship altered. I mean, after that, I was not cooped with any other kind of European, I was just, you know, above. I was given several Kuba names, and I was just one of these names and that’s all.
Figure 3: L’aîné et le cadet des initiés. Le cadet est paangl, le chef des initiés (The oldest and the youngest of the initiates. The youngest is paangl, the leader of the initiates). Mapey, Province of Kasai, DR Congo. Photographer unknown. October 1953.10

HV: You mentioned that Kuba saw you as a student of their culture. Does that mean that they decided what you could know about them?

JV: In certain areas, yes. The last day that I was in Kuba land in 1956, that is, after more than two years being there, some of the main elders of the court said to me “Oh boy! Now you are leaving, and we were just about thinking to tell you the secrets, to initiate you into the secrets that you have to know!” but there was a bit of grandstanding in that. Essentially, on most points, they just let me do what I wanted. I asked questions, they provided answers, and sometimes later they came up with more answers. The institute I was working for had a lot of funding which meant that I could and did get some assistants. I trained these assistants and some of them turned out to be quite gifted. So, I could do things like collect dreams. Dreams are important for the Kuba. The assistants would document these in their own language and bring them to me. I had one or two assistants who were just gossip, like the daily radio—what’s happening? Later that turned out to be very rich material, for all sorts of things. And when I wanted to make inquiries on particular points, I could send some of the assistants around and they would ask people who would answer. They would also sit in on court sessions, so that when questions came up in tribunals I would know about that. But you see, at the court, this was not considered special knowledge, this was not worthy of their high attention.

When it came to history, especially precolonial history, which was the justification of the polity itself that they were very careful about! Who I saw, who I did not see, who I could talk to... I benefitted from some rebellion against the central view, in other chiefdoms, or also in the capital itself, where some people simply did not agree with the control that the court had over them, the control that occasional visitors would not notice. The Catholic mission,
for instance, never realized how much control was exerted over the inhabitants of the capital, who were not directly royalties. At least, they never heard them speak of it. So, with such dissenting voices, along with the other voices, in fact, there was not much that escaped. After I had left, about ten years later or something like that, I came to be considered in Kuba country—as I still am today—as the person who knew everything! “He knows everything, but he’s not always telling everything, he doesn’t tell our secrets,” people would say, or “He knows everything, but he’s not publishing everything!” So, you know, that’s how the image of a person may develop in the minds of the people you are working with.

HV: It’s almost as if people came to see you as a Kuba elder, in a way.

JV: Yes, sure. I was not someone who came in to have a nice time and then leave, and from whom the people would never hear anything anymore, no.

HV: How did other Europeans respond to the fact that you stood much closer to the people than anyone else among them?

JV: Well, Europeans saw me differently according to where they were. Essentially, there were two main groups. One consisted of Europeans who knew the Kuba well. Actually, there was only one of them, one administrator who knew them very well. There were a few missionaries who were used to them, but did not know them well. The administrator knew them well not only because he was living at the capital, but also because he was constantly busy with Kuba cases. He was responsible for the management, for the running of the kingdom, as an advisor to the king, and he took this seriously.

His political views were completely different from what was current in Belgium at that time. His views were that Kuba had a religion and a civilization that seemed to suit them very well, that some of this needed to be adapted to modern living conditions, you know, like railroads, taxes, stuff like that, but other things needed not be. For instance, there was no question that he would ever ask the government or do himself persecutions of sects or religious movements of any kind. He believed that was Kuba religion and that they adhered to it more faithfully than Europeans did to their own religions. This was completely unheard stuff in the 1950s in those circles. He also thought that there was a danger that the Kuba were exploited by greedy merchants of all sorts. So, he pushed to impose rules, for instance, on the selling of art objects, amongst other things, by creating a co-op, and imposing co-op rules, which of course was hated on the railway line where all these objects were sold. But he was *sui generis*, his own guy, nothing else.

Other Europeans did not understand what I was doing. Their first idea was that this was just tax money being spent. But when I told them where the money came from, from the institute I worked with, they understood that this was not tax money, or not Belgian tax money. If anything, it would have been Congolese tax money. Also, most of them escaped paying taxes anyway, so that was all I had to argue with. On the whole, Europeans saw themselves as so far more civilized than Congolese that they just could not understand.

Europeans did not realize that already at that time, in the early 1950s, some local Congolese, local Kuba actually, who had been to school, were discussing independence. They were discussing whether it would be a good thing or a bad thing, whether it should happen soon or not soon, and there were arguments circulating, you know, amongst that tiny intelligentsia. But this was at the time that no single European in the territory understood anything. Once, out of curiosity, I brought this up in the main bar, and the question was to know what they thought of Liberia and Sierra Leone, well especially...
Liberia. “Liberia is an independent republic,” I said, “it is a black independent republic. Don’t you think that, well, you know...what are your conclusions from this?” And what I got was an impossible list of horror stories, of Belgian ships docking in Monrovia, and all the things that were wrong with blacks! And when you talked about black people who had gone to schools and universities, you know, these were the most impossible kind of people, because, as they believed, they had taken on all the bad things from one, and all the bad things from the other. In other words, this was prejudice without hope!

When I came back to Belgium, I began to hear what all these people had been writing to their friends, and what the opinion had become in Belgium. The opinion in Belgium was that I lived in trees, and that I ate savage food, and, you know, they were not sure whether that included bats or not… In other words, I was becoming as exotic as all the other things they were telling about Congo. It was just a hopeless story. But it was nothing to really worry about from my side. For me the question was what I could do in Kuba country, how I could bring back to Belgium, and to Europe, a meaningful story, an idea as to what the Kuba worldview was, how they viewed the contemporary times, and that this was all very different from what was happening in Europe.

I was also estranged a little bit from anthropology because I was claiming that history was important, and at that time anthropologists considered the present as important. They expected comparisons that were worldwide to bring up laws that were important, and here I came with Kuba data that showed that there were many differences indeed, but also many similarities. When you look at this over time, you find dynamics that are not unfamiliar at all. So, even decades later, you could find some anthropologists accusing me of being not an anthropologist but a historian. In Belgium, everybody was convinced that I was not a historian, including the people in my own institute. They were convinced that I was an anthropologist because they saw me as an ethnologist. An ethnologist meant a describer of foreign customs and foreign thoughts, and that seemed to be more or less what I was doing. It would take a whole struggle for me to get the university to recognize eventually that, no, I was a historian.

HV: Can I get back to an earlier remark, where you said that colonial officials thought that you could be useful to them. How was that?

JV: Well, part of the work of administrators in Congo, besides collecting taxes and maintaining law and order, was called political work. Political work was designed to supervise and arrange as much as possible the direction of African leadership at inferior ranks, under the level of European control. In most parts of Congo, this did not concern village headmen, that was too low, but just above the rank of village headmen, the smallest administrative categories. These had appointed heads or supposedly chosen heads, agreeable to the administration. So, it was the appointment of these heads, their legitimacy with regard to the people they were administering, and the dynamics of that, that the administration was interested in. For the Kuba kingdom, in the 1920s, they had codified the whole thing. They had worked two or three years at it, to set up their administrative chieftdoms, sub-chieftdoms, and all that, and all of that was documented in the archival records at Mweka – which means that archival records can be important!

What they were interested in was in a revision of this. After 1945, the colonial authorities of Kasai decided to review the whole situation in this particular territory. They wanted to do this, first of all, because there had been complaints from several other territories around it. Whatever they did not like seemed to come from this “indirect rule
territory,” where a king was more important than an administrator. Secondly, after 1947, after the war, a new economy had set in. Locally, the trade in maize had become very important and was a major money maker for foreign local settlers. It was an intricate situation and they were reviewing all this. So, what could be better than having somebody who was not linked to the administration to gather all this information, as I was doing in the normal course of affairs, and to find out what the kind of tensions were, and equilibria, between the various political forces in the kingdom? But I would not give all my results to them. There was confidential information, and there was non-confidential material. The non-confidential material I did not worry about. The truly confidential stuff, you know, I did not share. But what was confidential to me was usually also known to that local administrator in Nsheng, so I didn’t have to bother too much about it. So, that is what they called useful.

The people I did not get along with at all were, within the administration, the agricultural specialists, who were beneath everything at that time, and the tax collectors. There were no administrators who were only tax collectors, they always had multiple duties, but there was a level at which some of the Europeans were mainly concerned with collecting taxes and also with requiring people to work on things of public interest. They tended to be short-tempered, and they tended to have absolutely no understanding of what was going on, and of when it was a good time to ask people to work, and when it was a bad time to do that. They had no idea whatsoever, and I simply did not get along with any of these people!

HV: In 2010 you published a remarkable book about the experience of the Kuba people during colonialism, titled Being Colonized. In there you explain how the Kuba kingdom was first seriously impacted by the establishment of the Congo Free State, but later survived in part because of the particular policies of the Belgian Congo. How unique was the Kuba case?

JV: The Kuba kingdom lived on its reputation. When the first European explorers arrived from Angola and then from the Lower Kasai, the kingdom was believed to be very strong militarily. The king tended to say, you can go this far and not further, and when Europeans or Americans came this far, they found that yes, they could not go any further. There was a real administration over a large territory, with villages and districts that obeyed a central administration. Europeans were not used to this. And there was the reputation of this army, which in reality was nothing exceptional. It took a very long time for Europeans to realize that this army could not be that strong. They arrived in 1885, and it was not until 1899 that one of the military officers realized that the Kuba had no guns. So, how could they have a powerful military, if they had no guns?

It is in that year that a young Belgian territorial officer, who was 21 or 22 years old, and had no more than a primary school education, decided on his own to go with a troop of his soldiers and with a local ally into Kuba country in order to plunder whatever he could. He was after ivory, ivory being the measure of career success at the time. To his great surprise, it worked. There was a battle in front of the capital, which the Kuba obviously lost. He looted the capital for a few days and then he had to return, because it was not really safe. A few months later, the allies of another territorial officer attacked one of the southern Kuba subgroups, and the officer got away with it. And then, the next year, the Kuba capital was attacked again.11

So, by that time, the kingdom collapsed, in the sense that the capital was occupied twice and that, the second time, the king died, supposedly just before the attack occurred. The Belgian record says that he died long before, and that there were human sacrifices, and that
the Belgians came in to save the people. All the oral witnesses I found claimed that the king had died during the attack or after the attack. In any case, whatever the moment this happened, there were no more kings. They initially appointed a new king, but the new king died, then they appointed yet another king, and this king also died. We think, with our modern minds—and I still believe this—that this was the result of an epidemic of mumps, which was going around. We know that there was one. The Kuba, of course, believed that it was witchcraft, and eventually one of these ephemeral kings began to attack the supposed witches with foreign sorcery that came from another part of Kasai. For the Kuba, this is important.

What the Europeans saw, was that this new king managed, first, not to die, and secondly, to reorganize the whole kingdom in a very short time, in two or three years. Recently, after I had written that book, I learned from another piece of archive that, in fact, even when the kingdom had broken down, its internal administration continued to function. This sounds very strange: you have no king, you have no government at the center, but you still have tax collectors, going out to collect taxes and bringing it back home. Which home, one does not know. In such conditions two years is not unbelievable for somebody to establish control. He established control but then found that there was a rebellion in part of the kingdom itself, in the interior. That’s discussed in that book. Part of the kingdom in the south was rebelling against foreign labor. It was directed against the new Luba labor force that was becoming prominent in the south and which was working for Europeans. That was what the rebels were after, they feared that they would be demographically ousted from a part of the kingdom. This led to a rebellion in 1904 with, of course, a charm that was supposed to be superior to every other kind of charm.

The rebellion was put down and normal order returned. Now, the normal order in 1904-1905 is not what you would imagine. There was no territorial administration set up in the area itself, no. There was no administrator who did nothing but administrating. Even in the district, the only administrator in 1904-1905 was a military official who was set up to organize a district and who only represented a delegation from the central control in Luluabourg. So, it took four to five years to set up a genuine administration, one with archives and the like, starting in 1905, just after the rebellion. Then the rubber period broke out. The rubber in Kasai, and in the Kuba country in particular, was some of the best quality rubber in the whole world. So clearly, rubber was very important. And this rubber was now collected for concessionary companies, which was something very different from the old economic regime. In any case, the concessionary company ruined the country pretty quickly. This happened so quickly that only after four years, in 1908-1909—and with the Kuba being known internationally—there was a celebrated case where a court, at the instigation of the American Presbyterian missionaries, accused local rubber collectors of plundering the country and doing all sorts of things that were illegal. The government lost its case, in spite of this being in the context of Leopold II’s general policy.

By 1910 then, the Independent State was gone, and the Belgian colony had taken over. What most people do not realize is that Belgium’s ownership of the colony was not recognized without conditions by all international powers. It was, in fact, the reports by British consuls from 1910 to 1913 that established the international validity of Belgium’s rule. In 1913-14, there were no more of them, simply because of the impending world war. So, that question was then diplomatically finished. But it meant that for the years that there were consuls—1910, 1911, 1912 and 1913, I think—they came to the Kuba capital. There are
very good reports made by them, and the Kuba must have realized that they were somehow protected, that there was more than just Belgium.

If you add to this that Torday had placed Kuba art on the world map, so to speak, at least in Europe, the combination of both meant that by 1913, the Kuba had once again acquired the reputation of being a strong kingdom. It was considered strong from a political point of view, and it had a supreme art. Kuba art was classified internationally by art dealers and in art journals as the best art of Africa from about 1913 to about 1925 or so. This was a crucial period for the establishment of that kind of reputation. And that was, of course, one of the reasons why the royal family of Belgium was so attracted to the Kuba. They liked Kuba art. Kuba art was liked from the beginning because European tastes in the age of Art Nouveau corresponded perfectly with what the Kuba had to offer. Also, the fact that Kuba art consists so much of ordinary objects, you know, tied in perfectly with the European avant garde trends of around 1900. So, that’s just chance!

Figure 4: King Mbop Mabinc maKyeen of the Kuba meeting with King Baudouin of Belgium. Kananga, Province of Kasai-Central, DR Congo. Photograph by Henri Goldstein. 27 December 1959.

HV: So the Kuba kingdom in part survived because of the reputation of its art?

JV: Yes, indeed. One of the things about art in general, or at that time, was that the upper classes in Europe or America were very interested in art. And Kuba art was already international. To give you just one example of how far the Kuba kingdom was known: in 1937-1938, there were two films made by commercial businesses in New York about the Kuba kingdom. One was about the Protestant mission and the other only about kingship and the kingdom. Those films were used by an American anthropologist who wrote a general textbook on political anthropology, a person called Lowie, already before 1940. Then, if you look at Kuba on the ground, the indirect rule, in the time of the depression, you
may have a hard time connecting all the lines together and see that yes, indeed, it was the same thing. But the indirect rule system worked, and it was genuine indirect rule, it was not a fancy one as in Eastern Congo, where you had some other supposedly indirect rule chiefdoms, but not like this one.

HV: Indirect rule meant that within the framework of the Belgian Congo the Kuba kingdom was allowed to have its own life and to continue its own business.

JV: Yes. The degree to which it could pursue its own business and its own life varied with time. Before the depression, the latitude was fairly great. For instance, justice was almost completely out of the hands of the Belgian authorities. It was completely, most of the time, an internal affair. From the late 1920s, and especially during the depression, the central administration became more important in Congo. Its edicts had to be observed, and whatever kind of rule there was. It was only in the application of those rules that there still was some autonomy. Then after 1945, the central administration became even stronger. In the name of economic development and the reforms of the ten year plan of 1949 various measures were taken which made the Kuba lose more of their autonomy. But as late as the early 1950s and mid-1950s, on the ground it was still very visible. So, it was a real thing.

HV: The Kuba had learned how to live with the colonial situation?

JV: Right. My own idea is that this began early, with King Kot aFe. He started in 1902, and then, you know, had the rebellion, and after the rebellion he came back. He is the one who then really worked out how to work with the Europeans. He taught the first administrators how to work with him. Essentially, it worked, to the point that the last king was one of the strongest forces in Kasai against independence at the time. He found that the way it was worked very well for him, whereas an independent Congo, that would be one that would rely much more on elections. Leadership that came from elections was far too unsafe, in his mind.

HV: Your work on the Kuba has been most appreciated for your critical use of oral traditions. How hard was it to convince people of their validity as sources for the writing of history?

JV: Oral tradition and oral history have existed since ever and ever, but they were not trusted by historians. Historians of Europe, or of China for that matter, only believed in written sources. They thought that oral testimonies, or oral witness accounts even, would change over time, and therefore could not be used by historians. However, on a popular level, in Europe, in the Far East, in South Asia, people used oral histories and oral tradition very much in their own lives. If you think of Belgium, just ask people, really old people, about the cholera epidemics, and they will still remember, in their cities or in their regions, what they were. Or ask about emigration to America. Few people will know that directly, but they have heard stories about it. And about the potato famine, and so on. So, for ordinary people it was clear that that was a source of history. But historians did not accept them.

It turned out after examination in the field, after doing fieldwork amongst the Kuba people in Central Africa, that it was possible to apply the standard method for evaluating the value of testimony in history, which we call the rules of evidence, in English. It was possible to apply the rules of evidence to oral material. And I wrote a handbook about that. First, I wrote a dissertation, which was eventually accepted by all universities in Belgium.
Then it spread out as a method. Over time there were critiques to this method, and there were revisions, and I wrote another revised version of it. But it spread all over the world, not just in Belgium or in Africa, and it spread from historians of antiquity to historians of the modern era, and to historians of recent times who, like political scientists, had always used interviews, which is oral material.

HV: When did it become clear to you that the study of oral traditions would provide the key to unlock histories that otherwise were not possible to write?

JV: Well, this began in fact before I ever went to Africa. The MA dissertation that I did, in medieval history, dealt with oral presentations that were later recorded in writing. So, I had an idea as to what kind of problems I would encounter. I arrived in Kuba country, to be an anthropologist, and after about two months or so, some older person with whom I was talking said “We have our newspapers too! Our newspapers are oral. We do remember things from the past.” You know, immediately, I made this connection with that medieval material. And while it was still universally acknowledged that oral sources were not valid, I thought, it is worth checking! So, as I had been trained in method especially, I began to check first data that were remembered word by word, like poetry, things that are the closest you can come to written versions, and I found that there was a great fund of them. Now, it took a year, or more than a year, to assemble all the data that I could use for a history of the Kuba. It was a history that was entirely based on oral material, with very little written stuff in it. It was also based on oral material primarily of the ruling group in the kingdom. I knew that because I had worked out the genealogies of who knew what from whom, but I didn’t imagine that this was going to be a major problem. But of course, eventually, it was a problem, because it was the story as remembered and as told by the ruling group in a polity, where it was, of course, its legitimacy. So later on, after a number of years, the issue of oral traditions had to be improved, something had to be done about Kuba history, to back it up.
by other items than the oral tradition of the court. And this is where I used linguistics.

Now we stand at the threshold of a new era, in that very recently it has been shown that there are two sorts of oral history, as far as the human brain goes. We remember things directly and we do that in one part of the brain that is closely connected to emotions. We also know things, like two plus two is four, and oral traditions of longer date. Things like epics, or stories of origin, tend to be stored in the brain in the section of knowledge, which is in the cortex, in the top of the brain. This is much less linked to emotion. This means that there were two sorts of oral histories and oral traditions. Oral histories about recent times, from interviews, which may go back to about hundred and twenty years ago, let’s say to the time of your grandparents or perhaps a little earlier, those can be used and evaluated by standard methods. There is no problem left. And they can be used anywhere in the world. For the older oral traditions, there are a number of problems. We know that some of the very old oral traditions are strongly associated with emotions, but these are emotions from the present, not emotions from the time that supposedly the events happened. So, there is a whole further study to write and to work out as to how these older traditions were actually preserved, how they got to be endowed with new emotions about what sort of issues. Most of these issues are identity questions, and that is a research domain that is not completely finished.

Notes

1 The Royal Museum for Central Africa, now also called the Africa Museum, reopened on December 8, 2018. For visits and any other information see www.africamuseum.be.
2 I did an earlier interview with professor Vansina in 2001 together with Karel Arnaut, which was published in Dutch in the newsletter of the (now dissolved) Belgian Association of Africanists and in English on H-Africa.
3 This administrator was René Schillings (Vansina 1994: 260).
4 Jan Vansina Archives, RMCA, Tervuren, HA.01.0331. This photograph shows Jan Vansina participating in the boys initiation of the Kuba at the village of Mapey in 1953.
5 The Hungarian ethnographer Emil Torday visited the Kuba in 1908, shortly after the German ethnographer Leo Frobenius who had been there in 1905 (Vansina 2010).
6 The Congo Free State was taken over by Belgium on 15 November 1908, and became the colony of the Belgian Congo.
7 Prince Charles of Belgium (1903-1983) led the Belgian monarchy as regent from 1944 to 1950, and he visited Congo in July 1947.
8 Before the declaration of Congolese independence, King Baudouin (1930-1993) had visited Congo in May 1955 and in December 1959.
9 The famous photographer was Eliot Elisofon who visited Nsheng in January 1947. His photographs are in the Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives at the National Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C.
10 Jan Vansina Archives, RMCA, Tervuren, HA.01.0331.
11 The catastrophic events of 1899-1900 are described in Being Colonized (Vansina 2010: 69-79).
12 In Being Colonized this is attributed to smallpox (Vansina 2010: 75).
13 Photographic archives, RMCA, Tervuren, HP.1960.4.42.
Anaclet Mikwepy was one of Vansina’s main research assistants among the Kuba in 1953. He taught Vansina Bushoong, the language spoken in and around Nsheng, the Kuba capital. On the left is a list of Kuba markets and on the right is the beginning of a version of the Kuba story of origin, mentioning the primordial ancestors Woot and Mweel. Jan Vansina Archives, RMCA, Tervuren, HA.01.0331, notebook 5, pp. 8-9.

References


Congresswoman Frances Payne Bolton and the Trip to Africa, 1955

ARAN MACKINNON

Abstract: This article considers the opportunities that emerged during the 1950s for American interests in Africa through consideration of a unique story, that of Congresswoman Frances Bolton and her trip to Africa in 1955. Frances Payne Bolton (b. 1885, d. 1977) heiress to the Payne family Standard Oil fortune, and one of United States’ longest serving Congresswomen, made a significant though largely unrecognized contribution to shaping America’s cold war perspectives and policies on Africa. Following the United States’ development with Congolese uranium of the atomic bomb in the early 1940s, Americans intensified their commercial and political interests in Africa. They did so in the context of rising African nationalism and continent-wide struggles for liberation from European colonial powers. American leaders then found themselves in a deeply ambiguous position vis-à-vis Africa and Africans, caught as they were between paying deference to European paternalist interests in the continent and largely unfulfilled aspirations to deal with the looming civil rights movement on the domestic front. The principal focus of the article is a consideration of Bolton’s remarkable and unprecedented three month tour of the African continent in 1955. During a critical period in African states’ struggles to gain independence, Bolton was deeply engaged in cultivating America’s growing interest in economic and political opportunities in post-colonial Africa. As chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, her ‘Special Study Mission to Africa, South and East of the Sahara’ included stops in twenty-four countries and meetings with African political leaders as well as colonial officials. Upon her return over the next year or so, Bolton penned a report of mission for Congress, and made a fascinating film chronicle – Africa: Giant with a Future, 1955. The article seeks to highlight significant facets of Bolton’s trip, and its influence on how Americans in and outside of government perceived Africa.

Introduction

Frances Payne Bolton (b. 1885, d. 1977), heiress to the Payne family Standard Oil fortune and one of the United States’ longest serving congresswomen (1939-1960), made a significant, though largely unrecognized, contribution to shaping America’s Cold War perspectives and policies on Africa. During a critical period in the struggle for African states to gain

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independence, Bolton was deeply engaged in cultivating America’s growing interest in economic and political opportunities in post-colonial Africa. Owing in part to her son Kenyon’s work as a military intelligence officer for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and liaison to the Free French in Congo during WWII—he was likely involved in efforts to secure uranium for America’s atomic bomb project—Frances took an abiding interest in the continent beginning from the mid-1940s. By that time, she had used her deep pockets to assist in securing the congressional seat for Ohio’s 22nd district left vacant by her husband, Chester, who died in late 1938. Thereafter, she served in several key foreign affairs posts in the Eisenhower and subsequent administrations. In 1946, when Republicans won a house majority, Bolton moved up to chair the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Near East and Africa in addition to chairing the Subcommittee on National and International Movements. The latter produced the Report on the Strategy and Tactics of World Communism and Supplement I: One Hundred Years of Communism and Supplement II: Official Protests of the United States Government against Communist Policies or Actions, and Related Correspondence which helped Bolton establish her cold warrior credentials. She also promoted many enlightened and progressive measures and was often a champion of civil and equal rights for minorities and women.

While in Congress as a Representative for Ohio, Bolton played an important role in shaping America’s transition from the Eisenhower administration’s apparent indifference to the Kennedy administration’s more deeply nuanced engagement with independent Africa and its leaders. She began her more influential work on America’s engagement with Africa in 1953 as Eisenhower’s appointee to the United Nations (UN) where she spoke passionately about extending democracy and equal rights in various African cases, including the plight of Indian South Africans. Public interest in her involvement with Africa led many in the Washington D.C. press corps to dub her the “African Queen,” an honorific reference to the then popular John Huston film of the same name and the later president of Niger, Hamani Diori referred to her as the “Godmother of Africa.” By 1958, arguably mostly through Bolton’s efforts, the State Department finally established an Africa Bureau, and by 1964, she personally helped make possible the wildly popular Africa Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair.

The principal focus of this article is a consideration of Bolton’s remarkable and unprecedented three-month tour of the African continent in late 1955. This entirely self-funded expedition was a barn-storming tour-de force of American neo-imperial diplomacy. Her Committee on Foreign Affairs’ ‘Special Study Mission to Africa, South and East of the Sahara’ included stops in twenty-four countries and territories where she met with African political leaders as well as colonial officials heads of states, and significantly, key representatives of industry and commercial enterprises. At the age of 70, accompanied by the physician Dr. Corrin Hodgson of the Mayo Clinic and Capt. Kenneth Elk of the U.S. Army Signal Corps (who was responsible for recording the trip in film and photographs), Bolton both conveyed American interests in the development of African regions and affirmed those on the ground who supported these interests. Upon her return, Bolton penned an extensive report of the mission for Congress, followed by a fascinating film chronicle—Africa: Giant with a Future, 1955.
This article seeks to highlight significant facets of Bolton’s trip, and its influence on how Americans inside and outside of government perceived and then started to open their eyes to development and investment possibilities in Africa. It also reveals the unique gendered approach Bolton took to the development question, with her emphasis on African women in nursing, leadership, and issues related to motherhood. Thus, this article explores a pivotal moment in American diplomatic foreign relations as they intersected with Africa at the onset of the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement and emerging independent Africa.  

Figure 1: The “Godmother of Africa”
America and Africa in the Civil Rights Era

Bolton was a significant exception to mainstream white American views of Africa. In the context of the Civil Rights era, the majority of white Americans, and even some African Americans, still relied on deeply prejudiced stereotypes of Africa. These were offered up by the likes of the sensationalist journalist Robert Ruark, who wrote melodramatic magazine articles in *Life* that emphasized ‘savage natives’ in Kenya and Tarzan movies. Coupled with the federal government’s focus on Europe and Latin America at the time, most Americans possessed only the most rudimentary, jaundiced understanding of the African societies and the continent’s diversity. Bolton, however, had a personal appreciation for African people as well as for the commercial potential of the continent, including American interests in mining and agricultural enterprises. Bolton, therefore, sought to shape what she saw as the ill-informed and ambiguous American efforts to transform colonialism through development and democracy, or, as Fred Cooper has argued, to ‘internationalize imperialism’ with the United States at the forefront. As importantly, Bolton was prepared to get on the ground in the continent and engage directly with Africans.

In contrast to white America, most African American cultural and intellectual leaders had a far greater appreciation and nuanced understanding of anti-colonial movements dating back into the 19th century, and a long-standing intellectual and cultural synthesis with Africa. Many prominent African Americans had travelled to various parts of Africa in the first half of the 20th century and provided insightful analyses of their experiences. Better-known among these were the academic Eslanda ‘Essie’ Robeson’s (wife of Paul Robeson) story of her and her son’s 1936 trip to South Africa, Kenya and Uganda in the critically acclaimed *African Journey* and Ralph Bunche’s 1937-38 trip to South Africa (though the latter was not written about until after Bolton’s trip.) More famously, Paul Robeson, W.E.B.Du Bois, Max Yergen and the Council on African Affairs had highlighted African struggles for liberation since 1937. If, as Penny Von Eschen has argued, the language of anti-imperialism could be shared widely because it could mean different things to different people, then why did mainstream America pivot away from supporting Africans in their calls for more immediate and direct action toward decolonization? Was the specter of communism a greater threat to American values, and more importantly, capitalist interests than the political imperatives for self-determination, or was it more simply and insidiously the prevalent, virulent racism of America society? These were among the pressing political questions of the day. Yet, as American society approached the painful and deeply divided Civil Rights era, African-American understanding of and appreciation for Africa seemed mostly lost on dominant culture or to foster greater fear and resentment. As James Meriwether has argued, even some leading African American mainstream newspapers decried what they saw as the ‘savage’ African violence of the ‘Mau Mau’ resistance. Frances Bolton, however, appeared not only to appreciate Africa’s potential, she also recognized it would be a critical arena in the unfolding Cold War.

America and Africa in the Cold War

Bolton’s engagement with Africa was unique for a white woman, and especially a Republican Congresswoman (there were only fifteen women in Congress in 1955) at a time when the U.S was only beginning to consider a policy for independent African states. President Eisenhower,
for example, was more concerned with ensuring that the colonial policies and interests of European NATO allies were respected than in courting African leaders seeking to gain independence. As of 1950, American policy for and in Africa was still an inchoate set of aspirational statements which paid full deference to European colonial interests, and seemed to embrace the standard line of a protracted gradual transfer of responsibility to a host of African dependent territories.\textsuperscript{13} It would not be until the end of the Eisenhower administration, as civil rights tensions escalated and Ghana won independence, that the United States, with Bolton’s influence, more seriously engaged with emergent independent Africa. Despite extensive trade, educational (including substantial Carnegie and Rockefeller funded academic research), military, and political relations between Americans and Africa spanning at least the previous one hundred years and a significant corpus of monographs, novels, travelogues, films and photo essays, much of ‘middle America’ remained blithely unaware of African societies, cultures, politics, geography or American interests there.\textsuperscript{14}

The post-war federal government fared little better in its understandings and awareness of Africa, clouded as it was by its own problematic view on race relations. This left the United States vulnerable to Soviet propagandists who sought to embarrass the country over the persistent and growing problems of segregation and racism.\textsuperscript{15} Washington was still struggling to formulate a comprehensive, rational policy toward Africa through the 1950s that could deal with the potential of emerging independent African states. As of 1950, Africa was to be included in the new Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs as part of a plan for a broader global reach from the State Department.\textsuperscript{16} There was serious debate about whether U.S. support for Europe, and particularly the envisaged protracted and European-managed process of decolonization—as opposed to an alternative policy of open support for independence movements—would alienate emergent African states. Yet, until the end of the decade and the Kennedy administration, it seemed the die was cast in favor of support for the metropoles. The U.S. still lacked any great insights into African societies and so had to defer to the jaundiced European views. Frances Bolton, however, sought to initiate a new approach to Africa by making direct connections with Africans in the continent and by urging greater American government engagement with African leaders who were about to be caught up in the Cold War.

\textbf{Planning the Study Mission to Africa}

Into the divide between mainstream white Americans’ and African Americans’ political and cultural interests stepped an unlikely advocate for a better understanding of Africa and Africans, Frances Bolton. While the grander political rhetoric swirled around the containment of communism, thought to be best served by the continuation of white-dominated rule in Africa, Frances Bolton’s message to Congress through her special study mission to Africa appeared a more targeted and pragmatic expression of post-war American desire for a lion’s share of the neo-imperialist resources and markets of the future. Her trip not only highlighted potential areas for American engagement with African states and development, it also revealed just how wide and deep were existing U.S. interests in mining, rubber and agriculture. As Bolton toured the continent and was hosted by various and sundry official and unofficial representatives of American enterprises and consulates, her trip clearly demonstrated the extent of an established U.S. presence in a number of important and strategic places.
The exact genesis of the 1955 trip is not entirely clear. Bolton noted that her work at the UN and on the Congressional Foreign Affairs Sub-committee on the Near East and Africa revealed the profound lack of American understanding of Africa and inspired her to gather the facts. On a more personal note as a woman and a mother, Bolton replied to the inquiry of the Queen Mother of the Tutsi, Rosalie Gicanda’s as to the purpose of the trip by saying,

“I have come these many miles because I believe it is important that women of opportunity and responsibility everywhere in the world should look into each other’s faces and speak together. I believe that through such an approach to world problems, peace can be achieved. We who bear the world’s children, once we know each other, can, if we will, exert a very potent influence upon the great future.”

At Bolton’s request, Eisenhower authorized the trip for the Subcommittee on the Near East and Africa in 1953, but owing to Bolton’s appointment to the UN, and then an apparent inability or disinterest among other committee members, it was left to Bolton to forge ahead with the plans. She intended that her “Special Study Mission to Africa, South and East of the Sahara,” which culminated in a full 150-page report to Congress, be an extensive tour and fact-finding mission which would serve to provide: “a general impression of Africa…, the terrain, the climate, the health, the education, and the political situations.” It would be an opportunity to “…talk with those in authority as well as the rank and file…to bring back as much information as possible…to visit all embassies, consulates general…” An ulterior motive was likely the growing U.S. and Ohio demand for central African minerals, especially copper from Northern Rhodesia. In the end, it was primarily Frances, at the age of 70, who organized and funded the trip out of her own money, ostensibly to save the American taxpayer.

Bolton was already a fairly well-noted figure in the public’s eye by the time of her trip. She had achieved some positive attention when she took over and then won in her own right, the Congressional seat held by her husband. Perhaps best-known is her work in developing the nursing profession following her service as a nurse during WWI, and her Bolton Act of 1943 which supported nursing education through an armed forces Nurses Cadet Corps, which she helped fund with $5 million. A fascinating case study of a powerful female political figure in
war-time America, she exhibited a curious and often paradoxical profile. A staunch isolationist prior to the onset of WW II, she moved rapidly thereafter to support the assertion of American nationalist interests overseas under a broader banner of internationalism. A social and political conservative who condemned the ‘communist menace’ overseas, she was rightly credited for opposing the tyranny of Joseph McCarthy. She also advocated for rights for African Americans and women, and insisted on being referred to as a congressman because she did the same work as her male counterparts.21

Bolton had an impressive command of public relations and appeared to enjoy the limelight, an important skill in the increasingly media conscious world of 1950s America. Her public patrician political persona was highlighted in a popular Saturday Evening Post article.22 She also valued and was adept at the new and increasingly popular medium of television. The Longines Chronoscope, a television news journal interview series which ran between 1951 and 1955 featuring a range of important political figures such as John F. Kennedy, Eleanor Roosevelt, Earl Warren and even Joseph McCarthy, aired an episode on Bolton in October 1953. She appeared in high society garb, replete with fur stole and drop diamond earrings, as she deftly deflected the gendered and paternalist questions of Edward Morgan and Don Hollenbeck of CBS News. She was able, nevertheless, to emphasize the importance of the United Nations, where she was then serving as U.S. ambassador and assigned to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee working on the trusteeship question. Of particular interest was the comment that her committee “had to deal with so many of the little countries that haven’t gotten anywhere yet” and that the metropolitan powers were making efforts to “give opportunities” to people in trusteeship territories and that while they were not doing all they should, their efforts were “very impressive.” She moreover opined that the processes for becoming independent states in these areas would be complicated and take a very long time. This seemed to square clearly with emerging American policies that favored supporting the lead role of colonizers in managing whatever processes of decolonization were to take place. She argued, however, that members of the committee and representatives from trusteeship territories very much wanted Americans to understand their point of view.

Paradoxically, Bolton seemed to uphold a paternalist view of most sub-Saharan African states in terms of requiring continued oversight from the colonial powers while she roundly condemned social and racial injustices. So, at the UN prior to the trip, on the one hand, she strongly recommended the continuation of trusteeship status for Togoland in the face of rising Ewe aspirations for independence. On the other hand, noting America’s own struggle with race relations, she lamented the UN’s inaction on addressing the unfair treatment of Indian South Africans.24 Of particular interest are the ambiguities of Bolton’s perspectives and reporting on her trip. While she evinced a profoundly optimistic, and at times very progressive tone, she also paid deference to Cold War concerns. Over the course of the tour, in addition to official diplomatic and courtesy calls on embassies and consulates, she made an effort to inspect “certain installations important to world peace”—a thinly veiled reference to key U.S. military installations, bases and ports. She later referred to the communications center at Kagnew Station in Ethiopia, where Americans had been advising Emperor Haile Selassie on strategic and political matters for some time, as one of “the most important radio facilities in the world [and] the greatest factor in [American] security in the whole area.”25
The Trip to Africa

The study mission was remarkable for its time: no other single American political representative had undertaken such an extensive political tour. Over the course of ninety-nine days she and her retinue visited every region and made over fifty stops in twenty-four countries. Beginning in Dakar, they continued on to Abidjan, and then to Liberia, where she had an extensive visit with American businessmen and President Tubman, a valued Cold War ally. Other key sites included Gold Coast and Nigeria, as well as the UN Trusteeship Territories of Togoland and the Cameroons. She had already gained some familiarity with these latter territories, and affirmed the value of continuing their trusteeship status while serving as the U.S. Delegate to the United Nations in 1953. Of particular interest for this region, Bolton noted the value and effect of the United States Information Service in Nigeria. While she acknowledged that the Emir of Kano, Muhammudu Sanusi I, regretted the service was not widely available in his region, she pointed out that “films concerning the President of the United States and his press conferences [were of interest to Nigerians because] the people were amazed that the Head of the United States was available for questioning by the press and as such was accessible to all people.” Ironically, the popular independence leader and premier of the Eastern Region, Dr. Nnamdi ‘Zik’ Azikiwe, was in the U.S. during Bolton’s visit. His absence and the emphasis on the Emir in the subsequent film may have been a not-too-subtle nod to the British policies for continued indirect rule in Nigeria. Then it was on to Douala and Yaounde and an extensive arc through the Belgian Congo and Rwanda and Burundi before doubling back to Luanda. From there, the tour continued through central southern Africa including the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland before reaching South Africa.

Figures 3 and 4: Botlon with President Tubman & Bolton with Emir of Kano

In the context of the unfolding Civil Rights battles to come in the U.S., Bolton seemed keenly aware of race relations especially in the mining areas of central and southern Africa. This may have been, in part, because in 1944 her son Kenyon, then an OSS officer seconded to the Belgian colonial secret police, had reported on a major strike by Congolese miners in Katanga province and drawn attention to the wide-spread African grievances against mine corporations’ low wages and harsh labor practices. During her tenure at the UN, Bolton had also sought to highlight the racist policies of South Africa and various mining companies. She nevertheless
seemed to believe that in Northern Rhodesia, efforts at ‘racial partnership’ were bearing fruit especially among workers at American mining companies in contrast to the persistence of a labor color bar maintained by South African mining companies operating there. As the trip continued, Bolton stopped in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban, and made a point of addressing the problems of segregation and apartheid while also noting the significant rates of American investment in South Africa.

Bolton sought to connect her trip with significant emerging American political and commercial interests in the continent. She travelled through areas which would become increasingly sensitive for the Civil Rights movement in the coming decades such as South Africa, and to areas where there were already considerable American commercial interests such as the Firestone plantation in Liberia and the mining areas of central and southern Africa. From South Africa, the tour headed back north, through Mozambique, then to Southern Rhodesia, Tanganyika, Kenya, and Uganda. While in Northern Rhodesia, for example, Bolton stayed at the home of Safeli and Martha Chileshe. Safeli, was an elected African member of the colonial Representative Council, a leading figure in the Northern Rhodesia African Congress and later friend to Kenneth Kaunda (first president of Zambia, 1964-1991) who opposed the British colonial scheme to create a federation of Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Although the U.S. eventually recognized the creation of the Federation, Bolton’s visit with the Chileshes was suggestive of emerging American sensitivities to African concerns about how federation might affect race relations among whites and blacks in the region. As with other countries, Bolton noted the ubiquitous use of migrant labor in Southern Rhodesia. While she observed what she felt was the slow progress of trade unionism in the region, and attributed this to labor migration, she did not appear to make the connection between socio-economic ills and the dislocations of this system. As with most of her commentary on the trip, Bolton tended to accept, if not fully affirm, the standard imperial perspectives on questions relating to independence and the ‘readiness’ of Africans to take this on. Such was the case at the stop in Kenya, where she affirmed the “rehabilitation” of ‘Mau Mau’ Kikuyu through the “pipeline camps,” and the “communistic style of their Moscow-educated leader,” Jomo Kenyatta. As with her other writings about the trip intended for public and governmental audiences, Bolton emphasized “the tremendous efforts being made by the metropolitan countries to raise the standards of the many millions for whom they have taken the responsibility.” Even though she made an exception of South Africa as a place where race relations and apartheid had set the stage for the “deepest potentialities for trouble in the future,” she nevertheless believed progress was being made in education and against disease despite the racially divided governmental ministries. From Nairobi, the group ventured to Ethiopia, Sudan and finally Egypt, before returning to the U.S. Seen as critical for U.S. strategic and military interests in the Horn, these stops provided an opportunity to solidify good will with the decidedly un-democratic kingdom of Haile Selassie I. Indeed, at the emperor’s personal request, on her return to Congress, Bolton delivered a special message of thanks and support to the 84th Session of Congress following on his address to that body the previous year.
Filming *Africa: Giant with a Future*

In *Africa: Giant with a Future*, 1955 Bolton presented a remarkably professional, sensitive, and positive visual film record of the trip.\(^{35}\) The film, of course, did not offer any more or less of a candid portrayal of Africa and Africans than other images of the day.\(^{36}\) Scenes appeared to have been clearly staged with a view to emphasizing both Bolton’s presence (see images) as well as the power and authority of colonizers and, where possible, the American presence. It was, nevertheless, exceptionally affirming of the dignity and humanity of many Africans, elite and commoner alike. In her opening remarks to the film, Bolton wonders at the incredible natural diversity and vast scope of the continent as well as the diversity of people and emphasizes the role of women, the importance of education and healthcare, and vitality of American trade interests and opportunities in Africa. In a clear affirmation of the emerging American support for an attenuated process of European-guided decolonization, Bolton also makes frequent reference to all the invaluable supports that colonial governments provide for the welfare and ‘upliftment’ of Africans. What is perhaps most extraordinary about the film are the frequent shots of the close physical contact Bolton has with Africans. During a time when American anxieties about race relations and so-called miscegenation were acute, Bolton appears to make a bold, positive visual statement about the normalcy of familiarity and intimacy among whites and blacks. This feature of the film, and many other of her efforts to promote equality and recognition of Africans and African Americans, contrasted sharply with mainstream media and film depictions of blacks.\(^{37}\)

Throughout the film, Bolton is shown out among people and their activities, including everything from agricultural and cattle-herding work to meetings with mothers and children, school classes, and hospital settings. She appears comfortable and completely at ease with people on the ground, enjoying the hospitality of and dining in the gracious homes of African hosts. The film shows here in close proximity to and in physical contact with commoners and chiefs, workers and official elite alike as she shares in routine social activities such as shopping and dining, shaking hands, and hugging. In one scene, she cuddles and soothes a Rwandan infant; in another she warmly hugs family friends, the parents of a Nigerian youth she hosted on a study trip to Cleveland. These images of Bolton and Africans socializing and consulting contrasted markedly with the brutal realities of segregationist America in the 1950s and the

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**Figures 5 and 6**: Bolton with Maasai & Bolton with Chileshes
increasing range of images on television and newspapers depicting the rigid, demeaning and increasingly violent relations between black and whites. They also countered the increasingly negative perceptions of Kenyans caught up in the British suppression of ‘Mau Mau’ resistance portrayed in newsreels and popular cinema. Ever mindful of her own district in Ohio, Bolton took advantage of post and telegraph to keep up with her usual regular weekly newsletter to her constituents and had staffers send updates out from her letters home about the trip. Later collected in a booklet, her newsletter reports from Africa read like a cross between a tantalizing travel brochure and an informational primer on Ohioan and American business interests on the continent.

Bolton sought to portray a balanced image of Africa and Africans, noting the many challenges for development, as well as how progressive and modernizing Africans were. The film devotes as much time to shots of modern, planned urban buildings and space as it does to rural natural settings, and very little attention is paid to flora or fauna beyond productive pastoral or plant products such as cattle, goats, rubber trees and fruits. Significantly, Bolton pointed to the example of West African boatbuilding to show that while many Africans still use “primitive ways” of construction, at the same time, many others use modern tools; and that while some still followed traditional ways, others are “rapidly adjusting to the sophistication of the big city.” From images of various natural settings, the film shifts to the urban setting of Dakar and appears to highlight some of the impressive modern, western-style architecture, and especially the industrial and port facilities. In perhaps a not too subtle attempt at family-related public relations and product placement, an Esso (derived from ‘S’ & ‘O’ for ‘Standard Oil’) Corporation oil bunker facility features prominently in the shot of the harbor. She then praises the French colonial government for technological and infrastructural improvements, as well as the planned implementation of the Loi Cadre reforms aimed at the ‘Africanization’ of French West Africa.

The trip also took her to Monrovia, and the film makes much of the important and long-standing connections between America and Liberia. President William Tubman is described as a close friend of the United States and a “determined foe of communism.” Bolton notes the many ‘Point Four’ (part of U.S. President Harry Truman’s post-war assistance plan for
developing nations) investment and aid projects in the country as well as the considerable investment and operations of the notorious Firestone Rubber Corporation’s Harbel plantation which is depicted as a benevolent provider of jobs and family housing. She goes on to urge further American investments in roads, hospitals and schools as a means of supporting the considerable iron-ore mining operations in Liberia that shipped ores direct to industry in Cleveland, her home town and part of her congressional district.

In Gold Coast, Bolton is shown meeting with Sir Charles Arden-Clarke (the soon-to-be outgoing governor) followed by a rural paramount chief in the colonial administration, as opposed to Kwame Nkrumah—though she did meet with him privately—perhaps to highlight the British role in the decolonization process and the continued role of chiefly authority. The importance to America, especially for the sensitive nature of domestic race relations, of Ghana’s move to independence was not lost on her. In the report of the trip, Bolton notes how the then upcoming election to determine who would lead the independent government “is being watched by every country in Africa as well as by American Negroes, many of whose forbears came from this region.” She then emphasizes the significant trade Britain had through Accra, and especially the wide range of imports going into the growing markets of West Africa. Bolton is seen walking among shoppers and merchants and she comments, with emphasis, that the bustling central markets were run by African women. Ironically, the film shows children in the midst of plentiful market vegetables and seafood while Bolton’s voice-over ascribes the challenges of apparent malnutrition to African ignorance of a balanced diet inclusive of protein, rather than the real culprit of economic inequality.

Bolton praises the leadership of the Emir of Kano in the next segment which shows him in full, majestic regalia while also noting the importance and vitality of Islam in West Africa. She also points out the importance of Kano for over a thousand years as a major trade center while extolling the virtues of Islamic trade networks. Also, in Nigeria, the film highlights the challenges of the need for healthcare and education in the “war on poverty and disease.” In the spirit of her internationalist outlook, Bolton explains how the various local African governments working with the World Health Organization and UNICEF have been successful: “Thanks to
world cooperation and modern medicine tragic [victims of diseases such as yaws] will get well.”

A significant feature of the film is the treatment of the Congo region. Consistent with a time before environmental impact was a consideration, Bolton depicts the natural resources of the area, including valuable tropical wood and timber, as almost limitless and the growth of exports, up to a quarter of which were destined for the United States, as a positive factor in development. Ignoring the notorious history of the Belgian colonial regime, the film seems to suggest that disease among Africans was of their own making. She notes in a somewhat patronizing though empathetic way that efforts by the Belgians to bring in young doctors and establish hospitals was addressing the crisis and helping teach Africans “how to care for themselves and each other” as well as to understand “the need for a balanced diet” and that through government, missionaries and private food centers, “the African is learning how to eat” and “mothers were being taught to give milk to their children.”

These occasional paternalistic, or rather maternalistic, images and rhetoric are in contrast to Bolton’s glowing praise and the film’s positive images of African women. In addition to praise for mothers and market, she makes special mention of the Queen of the Tutsi, Rosalie Gicanda, as a powerful female figure with “rare understanding and dignity, tall and commanding yet gentle.” Bolton remarks that “one can appreciate why the king, Mutara III Rudahigwa [ruled 1931-1959], turns to her in vital matters.”

The Rwandan footage includes a demonstration of the King’s royal ballet by Ntore dancers, a dance which would soon be mimicked in the west as the ever-popular ’Wah Watusi.’ Women are shown throughout the film in a range of positive images, as industrious in domestic and agricultural work, but also as nurses—a key concern of Bolton, who lobbied successfully during the war years for the federal government support of nursing training through the armed services as well as establishing the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing at Case Western Reserve University.

In yet another pointedly ironic twist for the intended audience of white middle-America, Bolton comments on the racial dissention that plagued South Africa, where apartheid had recently become government policy. She explains how this policy meant “fear, tension and unhappiness for everyone” and surmises that it “really must be a very expensive way to run a country.” Yet, in a passage that could have been taken directly from a South African government policy statement, Bolton argues in the film that ‘detribalization’ was one of the biggest problems facing the people of Africa. In reference to wide-spread labor migration to cities and mines, Bolton comments, without reference to policies and wages that prevented family unity, that when men are away in these jobs for long periods, “their horizons are broadened, but at the same time, their ties with their tribes and their families are loosened...the women are left behind both literally and culturally.”

In closing remarks, Bolton stresses how the continent is in a new phase of questing for dynamic growth and development. Interestingly, there is little reference to broader strategic interests in Africa other than trade and brief mention of Ethiopian troops standing side-by-side with American soldiers and performing well in the Korean conflict. She imagines that Americans feel they have much to give to Africa, but that there is much that can be learned from it as well. In a more pragmatic vein suggestive of the demographic importance of Africans to come, Bolton observed that “220 million uncommitted people can swing the balance of world
power in either direction.” The film is, in sum, a hopeful positive message that contrasts greatly with the standard images and myths of a ‘dark continent’ without history or future. Bolton encourages all Americans to learn more about Africa, stating “it would be good if more and more Americans learned more and more about Africa,” and the contributions it can make to the “development of man from the continent that God kept in reserve.”

**Bolton’s Continuing Advocacy for an American Understanding of Africa**

Following the trip, Bolton continued to work assiduously for a greater understanding of and engagement with Africa, though clearly within the accepted Cold War framework of deferring to metropolitan powers in all matters of decolonization. Still, she did advocate, without reference to colonial politics, seeking opportunities for as many bilateral relations in business, education and healthcare and general development as newly independent African states requested. Among her most noted achievements in this regard were that on her urging, CIA director Allen Dulles agreed that “the United States [should] have a really senior representation for Independence Day in Ghana (now The Gold Coast)...Vice President and Secretary of State [were] being requested to make this [trip].” Indeed, Vice President Richard Nixon as well as Bolton herself and others attended Ghanaian independence festivities as part of a celebrated ‘goodwill tour’ of just three weeks and seven countries that paled in comparison to Bolton’s 1955 continental tour. Perhaps the most important recommendation to be fulfilled, however, was Bolton’s insistence that a new, separate Bureau for Africa be established at the State Department, though this effort has erroneously been attributed to Nixon and Ralph Bunche. Immediately after her return, moreover, she pressed for and was granted—despite Dulles’s efforts to discourage her—the opportunity to provide a lecture for the CIA’s Office of Training course on ‘Africa and the United States’ thus continuing her efforts to inform and shape opinions about Africa.

These efforts spanned both the corridors of power and popular culture. After meetings with high-ranking South African officials in Johannesburg during her trip, Bolton denounced through her committee report that nation’s system of apartheid, which she described as “contrary to the universal law of evolution.” The South African foreign minister, Eric Louw, claimed that Bolton, and her committee colleague, Senator Theodore Green of Rhode Island, had ostensibly threatened that the U.S. would intervene in South Africa if the country did not grant racial equality and in so doing, delivered a “distorted picture” of apartheid. Louw added, “A more flagrant intrusion into the political affairs of another country... would be difficult to imagine.” By 1964, Bolton had expanded her work to include the promotion of African cultures at the New York World’s Fair. With a personal investment of $550,000, Bolton made it possible for the Africa Pavilion to open and showcase the work of many sub-Saharan African artists, architects and cultural performers and to bring over participants who would otherwise not have been able to afford to attend. This hugely successful event exceeded expectations, and Bolton more than made a return on her investment. Such was her reputation that by 1967, Diori Hamani, the autocratic first president of Niger and ally of the U.S., referred to Bolton as “the godmother of Africa” for her interest in the continent.

**Conclusion**
Clearly a remarkable women and politician, Frances Bolton was an important interlocutor for Africans and Americans during critical period in independent Africa’s emergence into a troubled Cold War world. She embarked on what perhaps started as a personal quest to gain a better understanding of the ‘dark’ continent, and parlayed it into a major State Department initiative which laid the groundwork for future U.S.-Africa relations. In so doing she was able not only to provide trenchant arguments for the importance of Africa to American interests, both political and commercial, but also to point the way to a more flexible internationalist stance in foreign relations. Certainly, her work is suggestive that even staunch anti-communists could see a path forward which embraced engagement rather than isolation in the Cold War, a path that leaders in the developing world were clearly interested in promoting as well. Perhaps most importantly, she provided white-dominated ‘middle America’ with an opportunity to see Africans, and by extension African Americans, as fully human, with a history and range of sophisticated cultures and achievements worthy of respect and appreciation.

How these and other efforts to raise awareness of Africa and new opportunities for America there played out before her death in 1977 are the subject of further enquiry. It is difficult to gauge the full impact of her public relations efforts such as the film, *Africa. Giant with a Future*. Who actually saw the film beyond State Department functionaries and some CIA trainees, for example, is not clear but merits further investigation. Given the struggles the Kennedy Administration had with integrating African nations and statesmen into the Washington D.C. culture of the late 1950s and early 1960s, it would be worth considering what role she may have played in shaping those relationships. Similarly, further exploration of her financial support and work in making possible the Africa Pavilion at the 1964 World’s Fair in New York City would, no doubt, yield even more fascinating perspectives on the way Americans viewed Africa and Africans. Her effort to support the extremely popular African contingent there, seems significant at a time during and just after the Kennedy era, when at least some of the sorts of engagements she supported with Africa were gaining traction. It also raises critical and unresolved questions as to why America turned away from the possibilities of more open and fair relations with African states even within the context of an intensifying Cold War. Finally, it would be critical to consider her work as a woman at the intersection of gender and international politics in this period.

Still, Frances Payne Bolton played a significant role in highlighting not only the important resources that Americans could develop in Africa but also in portraying Africans and Africa in a far more positive way than did mainstream politics and the media in the 1950s. While she did still cling to some of the racist and paternalist views of the old colonizers, seeking to ‘uplift’ Africans and prepare them for ‘civilization,’ she did also seek to engage with individual Africans as human beings who had important contributions to offer the world, and that Africa was a significant natural resource for global development. The limits of her efforts, however, belie, tragically, the deeply rooted American sense of xenophobia and racism. Her work, therefore, provides something of a partial but compelling counter-narrative to the predominant ways Americans would continue to view Africa into the present. Although her approach and understanding fell far short of the sophisticated and deeper ways that African Americans appreciated Africa, and there is no evidence she served as a bridge to their understanding, it
was something of a positive exception to mainstream views. As such, it remains a tantalizing episode in American relations with Africa.

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Image Credits

Figure 1: Frances Payne Bolton, ‘The Godmother of Africa, 1955’. Photo and permission courtesy of the Cleveland Press Collection, Michael Schwartz Collection, Cleveland State University.

Figure 2-8: Still images reproduced from Reaching Out For Liberty and Light –The Life of Frances Payne Bolton Telos Productions, 2000. Images and permission courtesy of the Payne Family Fund and Telos Productions.

Notes

1 Her uncle, Oliver Hazard Payne, a trustee of Standard Oil established a vast trust fund for her, and she preferred to be referred to as ‘congressman’. See Loth 1957.
2 Williams 2016 and for Kenyon’s work with the secret police in Congo, including his reporting on the major strike in the Belgian Congolese mines in 1944, see Higginson 1989 pp. 196 and 202.
3 United States House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs Report Subcommittee No. 5, National and International Movements.
4 Muehlenbeck 2012.
5 Weller 1955; Cleveland Press Collection 1955.
7 Muehlenbeck 2012.
9 See Cooper 2002 and Roberts 1987.
10 See Robeson 1945; Edgar 1992; De Roche 2011, p. 274; Roberts 1987.
12 Meriwether 2002, ch. 4.
14 For a splendid review of the literature on these relations up to 1987 see: Roberts 1987; De Roche 2011, pp. 299-335.
15 Dudziak 2011; Borstelmann 2003.
17 Loth 1957, p.287.
18 Bolton 1956.
20 Bolton 1948.
21 DeRoche 2010, pp. 34-7.
22 Saturday Evening Post 1953, 81-4.
23 For a video of the show see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=436Q7DmxP3Y
And for details of the show, see https://www.archives.gov/research/guides/catalog-tv-interviews-1951-to-1955.html
26 Teddy Roosevelt rampaged through East Africa on a Smithsonian-sponsored hunting trip where he and his companions slaughtered over 11,000 animals. He emphasized the natural ‘savage’ beauty of Africa in his chronicle of the trip See Roosevelt. See also the Smithsonian online exhibit at: https://naturalhistory.si.edu/onehundredyears/expeditions/SI-Roosevelt_Expedition.html President Dwight Franklin Delano Roosevelt made brief stops in Gambia and Liberia on his way to and from Morocco for secret peace negotiations to end WW II. See https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/president/roosevelt-franklin-d.
29 As Andrew DeRoche, perhaps the only historian so far to have given serious scholarly attention to Bolton and her trip to Africa, has noted, Bolton was a vociferous critic of South African policies. See DeRoche 2011 and Report of the Special Study Mission 1957, pp. 58-59.
30 De Roche 2011.
32 Bolton 1956, pp.121-27.
34 See the text of the message in Report of the Special Mission 1957 , p. 88. For the emperor’s visit in 1954, see Vestal 2011.
35 U.S. National Archives ARC 46358.
37 Cowan 2015.
38 Hale 1998.
39 See for example the films, Simba, The Mark of Mau Mau (1955); Mau Mau (1955); and Something of Value (1957).
40 Bolton 1956.
42 Bolton 1956.
43 Bolton 1955.
44 For the colonial construction of the imposing figure of Tutsi Queen Mother, see Beyene 2014.
45 CIA Confidential Memo, Deputy Director to Director of Central Intelligence, 14 Jan. 1957. CIA files 2011.
46 Ibid.
49 Hunt 1957.
50 Bolton ended up getting a return of her investment and profiting some hundreds of thousands of dollars from attendance receipts that far exceeded expectations. See Cincinnati Enquirer, 14 June 1964; and NP 1963.
51 Pittsburgh Press, 7 October 1967.

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The Nigerian Diaspora in the United States and Afropolitanism in Sarah Ladipo Manyika’s *Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun*

SANDRA SOUSA

**Abstract**: This essay explores Sarah Ladipo Manyika’s *Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun* (2016), one of the most innovative novels of the Nigerian U.S. diaspora, from the perspective of “Afropolitanism.” Occupying a unique place within African writing and African diasporic writing, the novel does not conform to the traditional understanding of Afropolitanism as the celebration of cultural hybridity and transnationalism. Insofar as its portrayals focus on the individual identities and lives of its African and other non-Western characters and their families, the novel further departs from the conventions of earlier Afropolitan narratives, which tendentially center the whole national or racial community. Because *Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun* rejects the kind of caricature that passes for life in many works of African diasporic literature, it avoids the Afro-pessimism of previous Afropolitan novels, in which the transnational movement of characters occurs as a result of precarious conditions in the home countries, and which forms part of the search for a dream that could be fulfilled by the modernity and the advancements of technology to be found in the host western country. Instead, Manyika’s novel asks readers to dissect meanings between the lines and peel off dense layers of signification. The narrative achieves this nuanced communication of Afropolitanism through its main character, Morayo Da Silva, whose representation extends the cultural politics of Afropolitanism to include subjective politics in the analysis of how we exist in the world. In this way, *Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun* highlights Morayo’s affirmation of the value of diasporic life over and against the ironic posture of black self-negation that can result from the diasporic experience.

**Keywords**: Nigerian diaspora; Afropolitanism; diasporic experience; cultural and subjective politics

**Introduction**

In a 2018 article in the international online magazine *Ozy*, Molly Fosco reports on the successes and achievements of Nigerian-Americans in the United States: “Nigerians are entering the medical field in the U.S. at an increased rate, leaving their home country to work in American hospitals, where they can earn more and work in better facilities. A growing number of Nigerian-Americans are becoming entrepreneurs and...”

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http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v18/v18i2a3.pdf

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CEOs, building tech companies in the U.S. to help people back home.”¹ Even though racism is still prevalent in the country, this hasn’t stopped Nigerian-Americans from creating jobs, treating patients, teaching students and contributing to local communities in their new home, all while confidently emerging as one of the country’s most successful immigrant communities, with a median household income of $62,351, compared to $57,617 nationally, as of 2015.² Nonetheless, voluntary migration from Africa is a relatively new trend and one that seems to be growing, according to the Pew Research Center’s analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data. According to Monica Anderson, compared with other recent arrivals, Africans had the fastest growth rate from 2000 to 2013, increasing by 41 percentage.³ The reasons that lead Africans to migrate vary: “socio-economic issues such as political discontent, wars, the quest for economic empowerment and so on…environmental factors such as drought, flood, famine, volcanic eruptions…spiritual and other diverse reasons.”⁴

In this general picture, the Nigerian diaspora in the United States is the largest among the African population. According to a 2015 study prepared by the Migration Policy Institute for the Rockefeller Foundation-Aspen Institute Diaspora Program (RAD):

Approximately 376,000 Nigerian immigrants and their children (the first and second generations) live in the United States, and Nigeria is the largest source of African immigration to the United States. The size of the Nigeria-born population in the United States has grown from a small base since 1980, when an estimated 25,000 Nigerian immigrants were U.S. residents. Today, Nigerian immigrants account for about 0.6 percent of the United States’ overall foreign-born population, about half of whom arrived before 2000. A similar proportion of Nigerian immigrants are naturalized U.S. citizens.⁵

According to Ajima, the main reasons why Nigerians leave their country is to search for a better education, commerce, and political asylum along with other socio-economic factors.⁶ Given its large numbers in the U.S. and some of its demographics—such as figuring among the best educated—the Nigerian diaspora is thus one of deep interest, and particularly through literature.⁷ As social scientist Karen Amaka Okigbo put it:

As social scientists, we endeavor to explain some truths about the social world through the use of empirical data. In a similar manner, novelists endeavor to explain some truths about the social world but do so through the use of creative writing. While we often fail to concede the similarities between both fields, the mutual aim of uncovering social truths ensures that as social scientists, we are in an often unacknowledged conversation with the world of fiction. I believe that there is an undercurrent of truth in all great works of fiction. In fact, it seems that great works of fiction tend to traverse the same intellectual terrain as scholarly writings by social scientists. But because novelists are not restricted with charges of generalizability, reliability, and representability, they are free to present critical examinations of the social world in the most provoking and provocative manner

¹ African Studies Quarterly | Volume 18, Issue 2 | February 2019
² http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v18/v18i2a3.pdf
possible...Therefore, these two fields are quite complementary, particularly when investigating complex topics such as international migration and the assimilation experiences of immigrants.8

Works of fiction can thus be a valuable resource for understanding and augmenting the perception of past and contemporary issues that populations face in their daily lives. As for the concept of “truth” mentioned in the passage by Okigbo, it brings to mind the epigraph by Brazilian author João Ubaldo Ribeiro in his famous novel An Invincible Memory: “o segredo da Verdade é o seguinte: não existem factos, só existem histórias” (“the secret of the Truth is the following: there are no facts, just stories”). Ribeiro’s epigraph signals the precariousness and subjectivity of “truth.” We can only aim for approximations, and each story told conveys its own truth. He calls into question, therefore, the very classification between social scientific “truth” and fiction by eliding (as it does) the distinction between the two fields (social sciences and fiction). Both rely on narrative; both are selective in their portrayal of events; and in both events are inevitably portrayed from a particular perspective.

One of the most recent novels of the Nigerian U.S. diaspora, Sarah Ladipo Manyika’s Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun, certainly does not count, in the words of Ikhide R. Ikheloa, as “your traditional fare from the dusty shelves of orthodox African literature.”9 Manyika is a Nigerian born writer who is also part of the diaspora in the United States. Specifically, she resides in San Francisco and has formerly lived in Kenya and in the UK. She published In Dependence in 2009, and Like a Mule in 2016. In a 2016 interview, Manyika was asked if she considered herself an African writer. Her answer can help shed light on the way in which she has construed the main character of her main character: “Yes I’m an African writer and a British writer and an American writer and a global writer and a female writer and a black writer and a serious writer and a silly writer and...All this to say that my being African is a salient part of my identity but only one part.”10

In her review of the Like a Mule, Ikheloa states that it “harkens to a time when African writers were not so consumed by superciliousness, a time when the dialogue was respectful and deeply insightful, a time when African characters were not Stepin Fetchit stick figures mumbling in the dark, caricatures hastily erected by African writers for the poverty porn single story that sells in the West.”11 In this sense we are faced here with a unique and innovative novel, one that is deceptive because of its short length, but richer since it requires the reader to dissect meanings between the lines and peel off dense layers of signification.

The main goal of this study is to analyze how this new piece of fiction by a Nigerian diaspora writer fits into the typical of the concept that links Afropolitanism to consumerism and commodification, one that has been challenged by critiques of the term. Does Like a Mule portray a negative diaspora, a way of living where reality is cruel and obstacles need to be overcome? Is adaptation to the new environment shown as a challenge? Are characters regularly faced with racism and discrimination? Is sexuality a taboo? In a general sense, does the novel challenge and revise the present world order in the way that Walter Mignolo envisages in his concept of “critical” cosmopolitanism? The article contends that Manyika implements Afropolitanism as critical assessment of global culture that defies a reduction of the concept simply to its commercial dimension.
Like a Mule relates the story of Morayo da Silva, a retired literature professor from Nigeria who has worked and lived in San Francisco since divorcing Caeser, a Nigerian ambassador. She is on the verge of her seventy-fifth birthday: “‘ancient’ by her home country’s standards, having ‘outfoxed the female life expectancy by nearly two decades.’” Living in the city, “she is surrounded by the debris that you accumulate in an ordinary life: papers, unopened bills, junk mail, books, unfinished mugs of tea. She has no family and likes her freedom. Then an accident at home forces her to spend lonely days in hospital and a nursing home.”

The novel is written in the first person, but the narrating “I” is shared by the characters who incidentally touch Morayo’s life, for example: a passing homeless woman and a man whom Morayo meets at the nursing home. These characters occupy the same narrative space as the main character’s friend, Sunshine, and her ex-husband. But some “of her dearest companions” are books and “literary friends.” Morayo is also a deeply sexual character, an old woman with an unusual sense of adventure.

The novel was published with a Nigerian imprint launched in the UK. It won a place on the short list of the Goldsmiths Prize—a prize that sets out to “reward fiction that breaks the mould” and “as a result, [the Prize] occasionally unearths buried gems.” As one of the Goldsmiths Prize judges, Bernardine Evaristo, stated with regard to the novel’s publication, “A fiction about a septuagenarian black woman is almost completely uncharted territory in British literature.” This “uncharted territory” is also a call for the implementation of Afropolitanism as a form of critical cosmopolitanism which at the same time widens the concept to include the exploration of black female sexual identity, or the category of sexual identity in general. Afropolitanism can both be politically and sexually transformative.

Afropolitanism and the “New African”

Bernardine Evaristo identifies Manyika’s novel as British literature and not Nigerian and/or African literature. Some years ago, this comment would have caused some members of the Nigerian literary circuit to smile ironically. According to Nigerian writer and journalist Eyitayo Aloh, a singular event in 2004 affected the Nigerian literary circuit, which afterwards “was never the same.” In his words,

The Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) company announced the birth of a new literary prize in Lagos, Nigeria, with the highest prize money in Africa (£20,000). There were mixed reactions amongst the literati as the organization had announced that the prize would be open only to Nigerian writers resident in Nigeria. This they believed would truly make it a ‘national’ prize. By definition, to be truly classified as ‘Nigerian’ you have to be living in Nigeria. A writer in a foreign land can no longer be referred to as Nigerian as their ‘experience and identity has changed over time.’

This decision was contested by Nigerian writers living in the United Kingdom and in the United States of America who felt discriminated, stripped from their citizenship and identity by their contemporaries at home. This produced feelings akin to suffering a blow from a two-edged sword, since abroad they faced the same kind of denial of citizenship and exclusion. Aloh goes on to develop a convincing argument regarding
the identity question insofar as it relates to the works of a writer and his/her heritage. He concludes that:

Migration will continue to influence the path of African literature as writers continue to strive to endogenise what is known as African literature. More stories will be developed and told, more will be disturbing, yet more will soothe. The migration writer may face the crisis of identity and acceptance but in his writings, he can always be assured that his African roots are established.19

His final words are revealing: “African writers and writings have evolved and embraced the modern developments especially in the digital field and with migration at its epicentre, the voices are being heard in the open square of the world. The new African writer is a world writer and the story told, while inherently African, is universal in nature.”20 From this perspective, Manyika’s novel is mis-classified as “British literature” by Evaristo, just as it would be wrong to consider it an example of “American literature” on the basis that Manyika completed her Ph.D. at the University of California-Berkeley, teaches at San Francisco State University, and has resided in the U.S. for two decades.

Controversies like this echo Nigerian-Ghanaian writer Taiye Selasi 2005 essay “Bye-Bye Babar, or ‘Who is an Afropolitan?’” In this seminal essay she coins the term “Afropolitanism” a term that she defines as “not being citizens but Africans of the world.”21 This term came from her own experience and from the sense of helplessness she felt when asked where she was from: born in London, raised in Boston and studied at Yale and Oxford Universities. Africans who emigrated between 1960 and 1975 had children overseas. Selasi, like many others, is a product of that immigration. As she explains,

What distinguishes this lot and its like (in the West and at home) is a willingness to complicate Africa – namely, to engage with, critique, and celebrate the parts of Africa that mean most to them. Perhaps what most typifies the Afropolitan consciousness is the refusal to oversimplify; the effort to understand what is ailing in Africa alongside the desire to honor what is wonderful, unique. Rather than essentialising the geographical entity, we seek to comprehend the cultural complexity; to honor the intellectual and spiritual legacy; and to sustain our parents’ cultures.22

It is a generation composed of different nationalities, countries, cultures — diasporic individuals who blend “London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes” — or as Selasi parodies in her essay: “aren’t-we-the-coolest-damn-people-on-earth?”23 Nevertheless, she recognizes that “most Afropolitans could serve Africa better in Africa.” She concludes that:

To be fair, a fair number of African professionals are returning; and there is consciousness among the ones who remain, an acute awareness among this brood of too-cool-for-schools that there’s work to be done. There are those among us who wonder to the point of weeping: where next, Africa? When will the scattered tribes return? When will the talent repatriate? What lifestyles await young professionals at home? How to invest in Africa’s future? The prospects can seem grim at times. The
answers aren’t forthcoming. But if there was ever a group who could figure it out, it is this one, unafraid of the questions.24

Selasi thus sees Afropolitans as not possessing a rooted identity, but rather a fluid one. Afropolitans are characterized by careers, fashion, ethnicity, multilingualism, and self-expression as well as by a connection with both Africa and the West.

Other scholars have also attempted to define Afropolitanism from a more cultural or artistic perspective. Mbembe contends that:

Afropolitanism is not the same as Pan-Africanism or négritude. Afropolitanism is an aesthetic and a particular poetic of the world. It is a way of being in the world, refusing on principle any form of victim identity—which does not mean that it is not aware of the injustice and violence inflicted on the continent and its people by the law of the world. It is also a political and cultural stance in relation to the nation, to race and to the issue of difference in general.25

On the other hand, Gikandi asserts that, “[t]o be Afropolitan is to be connected to knowable African communities, nations, and traditions…to live a life divided across cultures, languages and states. It is to embrace and celebrate a state of cultural hybridity—to be of Africa and of other worlds at the same time.”26 In this sense, Gikandi considers Afropolitanism “to be a positive mode of intellection and self-apprehension, through which a younger generation of Africans—and scholars of Africa—is beginning to question [the] idiom [of Afro-pessimism] and to recover alternative narratives of African identity in search of a hermeneutics of redemption.”27

Ultimately, Mbembe defines Afropolitanism rather differently from Selasi, since for Mbembe the center of Afropolitan cultures is not the West but Africa. While Selasi implies that Africa experienced cosmopolitanism late—only after colonialism had opened Africa to the culture of the North—Mbembe argues that Africa witnessed cultural contact with European as well as non-European cultures prior to colonialism. African cosmopolitanism was thus shaped long before the timeline set by Selasi, who places the West at the center of cosmopolitanism and modernity. According to Mbembe, it was colonialism and the African nationalist discourses from the 1950s through the 1970s that erased the cosmopolitan past of the continent.28

Despite this fundamental difference—one which raises the obvious issue of how Selasi situates the repetition of Western discourse at the core of her interpretation of Afropolitanism—these three voices together nonetheless contribute to a more precisely defined perspective on Afropolitanism, bringing a better awareness (and greater complexity) to the discussion of the representation of African identities or, even positioning Afropolitanism as a new form of transnational “African modernity.” These views do not sit easily with many scholars and artists. As Sarah Balakrishnan notes, some found the image created by Selasi and Mbembe “alternately provocative and objectionable: an African modernity that seeks to let go of an essential ‘Africaness,’ to dissolve ‘Africa’ into the world.”29 Therefore Afropolitanism is simply a celebratory, apolitical, and commercially-driven phenomenon. Writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, for example, have been recently labeled Afropolitan. as “her public persona and her work have been appropriated by the Afropolitan global community.”30 Nonetheless, as some scholars have implied, the way authors such as Adichie, Teju Cole, and others examine the power differentials of globalization demonstrate that
commercially successful writing can still be critical and transformational. In this manner, the Afropolitan concept is emancipatory.

Without losing sight of these nuances and controversies in the present article, it is important to also stress that Afropolitanism articulates newer representations of identities that counter either colonial or nationalist regimes of representation. Afropolitanism can first of all be described as involving Africans who have lived or are living outside of the African continent, and who can call multiple places “home.” Secondly, Afropolitans embody multiple points of cultural reference and may be considered as “unrooted Africans” despite their geographical movement. Afropolitans identify with Africa, retaining a strong link with their home countries or the countries of their progenitors. A third aspect concerns cultural hybridity, as Afropolitans live their lives across cultures and concomitantly have an inner desire to return or invest in Africa. Hicham Gourgem summarizes, “Afropolitanism is not a homogeneous discourse...Afropolitanism is a narrative of African identities which rejects the systems of representation used by Western imperialism and African nationalism and, instead, conceives of identities as hybrid and relational.”

Within this framework we can place not only Manyika’s life story, but also that of her main character Morayo da Silva in Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun—a title inspired by Mary Ruefle’s eclectic poem “Donkey On.” As the intertextual reference to Ruefle’s poem intimates, Manyika may fall into the category of Afropolitan writers who show a tendency for transnationalism, but her novel also differs in two main aspects from the majority of Afropolitan writers that depict the experience of migration. Gourgem defines transnationalism as a phenomenon describing, “the connectivity of people, places and cultures across nations” and referring “particularly to the ways in which the main characters in some Afropolitan novels are connected both to the West and to Africa either biologically (through parents and family), physically (through movement) or mentally (through imagining, dreaming and desiring), and the manner in which this connectedness shapes the lives and identities of individuals within and outside country of origin.”

Moraya da Silva clearly does not fit the experience of migration among young Africans to the Global North: she did not recently migrate to the U.S. and is also an elderly, retired woman. Morayo’s connection to Africa after twenty years of living in San Francisco is mainly through imagination and, in some sense, dreaming and desiring. Arguably, she is dominated much more by Western influences than African, but her personality may also contradict the relation of power which positions the West as the center of modernization. As we shall see, Morayo da Silva is a character that conforms and disturbs. The fact that Manyika’s novel does not constrain itself to African characters and includes family histories from other non-Western nationalities also disrupts the commonplaces of Afropolitan fiction writing.

**Morayo Da Silva: an Afropolitan Woman**

Living in the same apartment building in San Francisco for twenty years with a “magnifique” view even though the “apartment is nothing spectacular,” Morayo Da Silva is arguably one of the most eclectic characters in modern African fiction. She has entered an elderly stage, she is turning seventy-five soon, but her narrative voice contradicts not only her age — but also the broad and commonly accepted notion of
aging in general. She is a retired English literature teacher, but she conserves a keen mind and a sharp wit that borders on hilarity. There is some edginess to Morayo. She remains a lively woman who is beginning to suffer from poor vision, but still has a positive and careless way of looking at her present situation:

Once upon a time I was diligent, extraordinarily diligent, but life’s too short to fuss over such small things. That at least is what I tell myself until the diligence, never truly lost, reappears, and I return to the past.34

Her sense of adventure also belies her years. Every year at her birthday she does something new:

For this is my second tradition, to do something new and daring with each passing year. Last year it was scuba diving, and the year before learning to swim. This year it’s the tattoo and it’s not just the fact of getting a tattoo but it’s where I intend to have it done that thrills me. I’d decided that something on the wrist or ankle would be too ordinary...35

Morayo is also very much attached to her car which she named Buttercup—an old Porsche usually badly parked on the curbs of the city. “But what the hell!” is Morayo’s attitude towards her small infractions of the law in her daily life.36 She is certainly an unconventional woman, and that is the way she is seen by the characters that cross paths with her. Morayo’s best friend, a younger Indian woman who helps her and keeps an eye on her, states at some point: “Morayo was so uninhibited, so open and unconventional in comparison to most old people.”37 That unconventionality probably came from the fact that Morayo was a worldly person, having lived in different places—boarding school in England, residence in India, and so forth—and who left behind a comfortable life on her own as an ambassador’s wife to pursue an academic career in the United States. When she revisits her past memories of the nights she had dinner with ministers, business leaders, and other ambassadors, she is hit with the reality she once escaped from:

And so the evening continues, as such functions did, filled with superficial chit-chat until the men retired to discuss the important things and the women were left gossiping and complaining about their servants. Then I would sneak off for a smoke in the gardens or a protracted visit to the powder room where I always kept a book of poetry.38

Nonetheless, she is not immune to the passing of time as she complains that nobody writes letters anymore, and she conserves the habit of hiding money everywhere, in books, in the kitchen—“It’s everywhere” asserts the handyman, Francisco.39

Morayo displays the divided feeling of an Afropolitan: she thinks about returning to her home country, but at the same time feels at home in San Francisco:

I’ve often thought of returning to Lagos and sometimes dream that I’ve already moved back to this big crazy city where everyone calls me ‘Auntie’ or ‘Mama’; the land of constant sunshine and daily theatre. I think of cousins and wonder what it might be like to reconnect with them, to live nearby...But even as I find myself searching the Internet for homes in Ikoyi, I know that I’m not likely to feel at home in such a
crowded city…Deep down, I know that my desire to return comes more from nostalgia than a genuine longing to return. Those days of being able to deal with the daily headaches of Lagos life are gone. In any case it’s Jos, the city of my childhood, that I’d most like to return. But this is even more implausible…And now that my parents are gone and school friends have moved away or died, all that really remains are the memories.\footnote{40}

The reader knows that she will probably never go back, but her memories are a way of keeping that strong connection. Memories are actually an important part of the narrative. Smells, sounds, mundane activities trigger Morayo’s memories: “Today I select a new Ankara in vibrant shades of pink and blue and then bring it to my nose. When I open the folds of cloth I’m delighted to find the smell of Lagos markets still buried in the cotton – diesel fumes, hot palm oil, burning firewood. The smell evokes the flamboyance and craziness of the megacity that once was mine in between my husband’s diplomatic postings.”\footnote{41} Besides Morayo’s justification that her old age is an impediment to go back, she later admits that vanity is also a factor. What makes Morayo an interesting old woman is that she “doesn’t feel old” — she keeps her pride, independence and, perhaps, “womanhood” alive:

And what’s more, here in San Francisco, both men and women seem to admire my sense of style. Whereas if I were back in London or certain parts of New York, where buba and gele are commonplace, I know that I wouldn’t turn heads, not at this age at least. And back in Nigeria, where so many are dressed like me, I wouldn’t draw any attention at all. So I treasure this city…But it’s the people of San Francisco, so often quirky but always friendly, that makes it feel like home to me.\footnote{42}

At the same time Morayo feels the need to help those who stayed behind and who suffered the dramatic events of September 11, 2001 in Nigeria. At least 165 people were killed over four days of supposedly religious fighting in Jos—events that went largely unnoticed in the United States because of the tragic events in New York City.\footnote{43} Faced with the news and the pictures of dead bodies as she opens the morning newspaper, Morayo decides to send money back home, “to the orphans, even though I couldn’t always be sure whether the money would reach those most affected.”\footnote{44} In any case, “It felt better to be doing something rather than nothing.”\footnote{45} The reader later finds out that this educated woman was taken by scammers who take advantage of dramatic situations and exploit the vulnerability of those emotionally affected by tragedy to extract money:

It’s just that I’m usually so careful, but that particular email just got me. It didn’t have any of the usual hallmarks of scam email – no funny spelling errors or formal salutations, so it never crossed my mind this might be another prank. And you know how upset I’ve been by everything happening in Nigeria recently…I thought the money would go to the victims. But then, of course, when I realized my mistake, well I didn’t want to bother you.\footnote{46}

In spite of her “flaws,” Morayo feels comfortable in her skin and in the place she has chosen to live. She does not conform to Amatoritsero Ede’s argument that Afropolitanism’s celebration of cultural hybridity and transnationalism mutates “into
an ironic and symbolic collective black self-negation,” such that Afropolitanism, “as cultural politics, can be viewed as a coping mechanism against the nausea of history.”

Perhaps due to her old age and education, Morayo’s character extends the cultural politics of Afropolitanism to include subjective politics in the analysis of how we exist in the world. She does not repeat history by going back, and she has no children who could possibly inherit any sense of a lack of history or their mother’s displacement. She does not strive to belong in any of her worlds; she just belongs to both, past and present—one physically, the other in her memory. Morayo’s strong sense of identity is also shown when she tells her friend Sunshine that she should not bother with comments about not being “Indian enough” from her in-laws: “There’s no such thing, darling, as being ‘Indian enough,’ no such thing as one Indian culture.”

Morayo is thus a woman at peace with herself and the world.

This sense of peace and enjoyment comes also from the way she deals with her sexuality, in a manner opposite to other characters in novels by diaspora writers. For example, in Selasi’s Ghana Must Go, Sadie suffers from bulimia and hates her body. Her negative preoccupation with her body “is not just the negative articulation of culture; it is symbolic of her intricate and intimate navigation of culture.” Morayo, in contrast, has the confidence that her younger counterpart does not: “He just thinks he’s being charming to an old lady. And yet, had he seen me in my youth—even in my middle years, things would have been different. Back then he would have had to work hard to get my attention.”

And at the nursing home she feels comfortable enough to flirt with the physical therapist:

It’s not as if I’m going to mistake his touch for one of flirtation, or even want to flirt with him in the first place. But the latter isn’t true. I am flirting when I joke about my creaky knees and stiff joints, all the while hoping he’ll compliment me on what good shape I’m in. And whether or not he’s aware that I’d like him to congratulate me on my fitness (but who am I kidding, of course he knows), I thrive on his praise, diligently doing all my assigned exercises and more.

But this is on the surface, since later Morayo shares her writings with Reggie, who she encounters in the nursing home while visiting his wife—a former colleague at the university—and to whom she reveals the secrets of her body. Morayo was raped: “Your body unsuspecting when opening the door to welcome the neighbor. Your body fighting, Flailing, Being flailed. Your body in hospital, exposed, and shamed. Your body shaking uncontrollable spasms, wracked with memories.”

Having gone through such an experience, which she appears to release through writing, Morayo still finds a sense of pride in her body and sexuality. In the end, she is dreaming of a possible future life with Reggie since, after all, he sees better than her.

While Morayo’s rape is left unexplained—the reader does not know if it was due to gender or race—in Reggie’s case we come upon the racism faced by the diasporic population in the U.S. In his memories we hear:

Years later, my body with muscle memory reminds me not to fall in love with another white woman. But then I met Pearl, and what do I do? My body should have known better. It should have known that Pearl’s children would be suspicious of a black man with little money wanting to marry their mother. I shouldn’t have been surprised when the
children disowned their mother on account of me, but I was. And it was this that my body so clearly remembered, the other day, when the old man began to rant. My body knowing that when the man spoke of his fears for his granddaughters, he was speaking of my body in the way that white men have spoken of black men’s bodies for millennia. As threats. As rapists.54

Reggie is referring here to a verbal attack by an old man during a dinner at the nursing home. The man had shouted:

‘What do you see when you see black folks?’ the man shouts. ‘They are either in prison or they’re walking around, pants hanging down their butts. They’re loud, they cuss and they’re dangerous’

‘That’s what you see,’ Reggie shouts back, ‘because you’re a racist bigot.’

‘I don’t give a fuck what you say. All I know is that my granddaughters now can’t even play in the park across their stress because of all the black thugs who wanna hurt them.’

‘You!’ Reggie threatens, pushing back his chair. ‘You!’55

This is, of course, a common stereotype heard and experienced daily by African communities in the U.S. Reggie reacts and gets ready to go punch the man; but Morayo stops Reggie, and he apologizes for his reactions. Morayo’s answer signifies her understanding of race politics: “You’re not the one who should be apologizing.”56 She understands that, in the face of ignorance, the best answer is sometimes silence. Nonetheless, with this single episode, the novel underlines and conveys the idea that race and racism are still issues of great relevance in the history of the United States and ones that should not be dismissed. These interactions of Morayo and Reggie demonstrate that to be Black is to be considered an anomaly in America. As Gourgem affirms, “We are reminded of the serious impediment this condition causes to several Blacks and Africans who are reminded on a daily basis of their difference and inferiority in many places and situations.”57 Like a Mule indeed suggests that even though Morayo and Reggie belong to middle to upper social classes, the stigma of their color does not stop them from suffering. In this sense, Manyika’s novel uses Western discourse to criticize certain aspects of life in the United States.

Conclusion

In Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun, we encounter the voice of Morayo, a mature African character, a sage one because of her age and worldly experience, yet one who conserves youth and playfulness. Her life as a member of the Nigerian diaspora intermingles with the lives of others who share the same situation in the U.S. It is interesting to note that none of the other characters in the book—whether they are given a voice or not—are white American citizens, which is a message in and of itself. It also places the novel in a different position within the range of Afropolitan novels, since it speaks less about Africa than about cosmopolitan Africans.

Some scholars might wonder whether Morayo’s (and Manyika’s) extended residence in America, as well as the novel’s hardy Afropolitan focus, disqualifies Like a Mule from being considered as an authentic work of the Nigerian/African diaspora.
Despite such concerns, which we have earlier seen to arise from a failure to appreciate the full range and variety of Afropolitan fiction, African diasporic identity undeniably remains one of the novel’s primary themes. Is Morayo Nigerian? After living for so long in the U.S., is she American? To these questions the text responds that Morayo is the sum of all the places she has been, her past memories and the ones she is still building while “roaring, we go” in her Buttercup. In short, Morayo (and Manyika) is an Afropolitan.

The novel is an account of the identities and lives of African and other non-Western individuals and their families a thus a departure from earlier Afropolitan novels which concentrate on the whole national or racial community. The problems of the birth country appear in Manyika’s narrative, but are not central to it and do not form its main concern. The construction of African identity occurs in relation to the West. This is strikingly visible in the books that Morayo reads—a variety of authors that expands from Charlotte Brontë, Paul Auster, Émile Zola, Beatrix Potter, Ernest Gaines, e.e. cummings, Gwendolyn Brooks to James Baldwin. In other words, overwhelmingly Western writers. In an interview given to Vela, Sarah Ladipo Manyika explains the origin and meaning of her character’s name:

The name, Morayo, means “I see joy” in Yoruba, so this already signals to some readers that joy has encircled her from birth. At the same time, Morayo works hard to stay optimistic through the challenges that life brings. She is someone who is interested in narrative and in the same way that she enjoys changing the endings of some of her favorite books, she also tries to embrace narratives that help move her forward rather than getting her stuck or depressed.

Manyika’s novel thus does not offer the kind of caricature that passes for life in many works of African diaspora literature. Nor does it reflect the Afro-pessimism of some previous Afropolitan novels, where the transnational movement of characters occurs as a result of precarious conditions in the home countries and forms part of a search for the dream that could be fulfilled by the modernity and the advancements of technology to be found in the host western country. Upon arrival Manyika’s characters are not enchanted by the mass-mediated imaginary of the host country and do not find themselves faced with life’s harsh and disillusioning realities, at the least in the mundane sense of economic difficulties.

At the same time, however, Manyika’s work of fiction transcends disillusionment and brings a new breath to the life of African persons in America. The reader feels and absorbs the joy of Morayo. Even if her life is not easy, and old age may pose impediments, Morayo’s Wittiness and approach to her surroundings break with all conventions: national, racial, social, and, perhaps most importantly, sexual. She is an Afropolitan, but an unconventional one, i.e, she widens the exploration of black female sexual identity in the concept of Selasi’s Afropolitanism (and in this sense, at an older age and differently from Ifemelu in Adichie’s Americanah, for instance). In this way, Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun highlights Morayo’s affirmation of the value of diasporic life over and against the ironic posture of black self-negation that can result from the diasporic experience. The novel stands out as an Afropolitan novel, one that breaks with the past, and simultaneously establishes itself as a Nigerian novel—but also as much more than that, since it does not run away from a discussion on critical
contemporary issues. Racism, social discrimination, migration are present, but the emphasis is placed on the overcoming of these situations in the foreign country. Like most of the real Nigerian-American accomplishments, Manyika and her character, Morayo, are also migrants, successfully crossing borders, and, as Mbembe theorizes, having the “ability to recognize one’s face in that of a foreigner...to domesticate the unfamiliar.” Manyika’s novel is thus an example of the diverse layers of Afropolitanism, one that acknowledges migration as a natural human phenomenon and undermines national boundaries.64

Notes

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2 Fosco 2018.
3 Anderson 2017.
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37 Manyika 2016, p. 37.
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Official Bilingualism in Cameroon: An Endangered Policy?

NGUH NWEI ASANGA FON

Abstract: At the dawn of independence and reunification in 1961, Cameroon opted for a bilingual republic with English and French as its two official languages. “Official bilingualism”—which for a long time became a source of pride and distinguished Cameroon in the international community has been eroded in recent years by a number of factors militating for its demise: controversy over its meaning; challenges in its application; challenges in the safeguard of the English-subsystem of education and law; among others. Can bilingualism survive in Cameroon? This paper sets out to examine factors militating against the survival of bilingualism in Cameroon and factors supporting its continued existence. The analysis is predicated on the hypothesis that though facing significant challenges, bilingualism still stands a good chance to survive in Cameroon. The paper begins with a succinct definition of what is meant by bilingualism in Cameroon and concludes with some proposals on how to better improve on its implementation. The collapse of bilingualism might trigger further political instability in the country as it may be used as leverage for secession, especially with the Anglophone minority which has for long lamented their marginalization. At the international level, such an occurrence (secession) may inspire a similar pursuit to linguistic or ethnic minorities in the Africa and beyond.

Keywords: Bilingualism, Official bilingualism, Anglophone, Francophone

Introduction

Bilingualism in Cameroon is the constitutional recognition of French and English as the two official languages of the country equal in status and guaranteed promotion by the state. This is what is termed “official bilingualism” which differs from the ordinary or basic definition of bilingualism—fluency in or use of two languages. Official bilingualism was given its most unequivocal definition by Cameroon’s first President Ahmadou Ahidjo who underscored: “By bilingualism we mean the practical usage of our two official languages, English and French, throughout the national territory.”1 This paper examines the potential for the survival of bilingualism in Cameroon. It starts with a brief historical background to bilingualism by tracing the origins of the phenomenon in the governance of the country. The second section contrasts factors inhibiting and enhancing the survival of bilingualism in the country. The paper concludes with some proposals on the effective implementation of bilingualism in Cameroon. The paper draws its significance to the current volatile socio-political situation prevailing in Cameroon, as a result of protests staged by Anglophone Cameroonians (notably teachers and Common Law lawyers) against their marginalization. This predicament has put to question the effectiveness of bilingualism as a state policy and makes such analysis all the more expedient.

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Historical Background of Bilingualism

Bilingualism in Cameroon is largely a colonial construct bequeathed to the country by its former colonial masters (Britain and France). After the capitulation of Germany at the end of World War I, the German Protectorate of “Kamerun” was partitioned to Britain and France first as a Mandated Territory of the League of Nations and later as a Trusteeship Territory of the United Nations. The British administered their own portion of Cameroon as part of their Nigerian colony with English as the official medium of expression. The French administered their part of Cameroon as a full-fledged colony with French as the official language.

The English-French colonial dichotomy was not limited to language as it encompassed the systems of administration they pursued. There was a clear variation in the educational, legal and governance systems used by both colonial powers in their territories. In the domain of education, Dupraz points out that the educational system in British Cameroon was less centralized and confined to religious missions supported by “grants-in-aid” from the British government. British missionaries, whose educational enterprise was geared towards conversion, had an all-inclusive approach which sought to reach as many children as possible. The French in contrast put in place a secular, free public network of schools oriented towards training a limited number of administrative elites.

The British instituted ”Common Law” in both the Southern and Northern Cameroons. Since both Southern and Northern sections were governed as an integral part of Nigeria, the colonial administration simply extended several of its laws enforced in Nigeria to Cameroon. The framework for the application of the Common Law was solidified in section 11 of the Southern Cameroons High Court Law of 1955 which underscored:

Subject to the provisions of any written law and in particular of this section … (a) the common law; (b) the doctrines of equity; and (c) the statutes of general application which were in force in England on the 1st day of January, 1900, shall insofar as the legislature of the Southern Cameroons is for the time being competent to make law, be in force within the jurisdiction of the court. (Provisions enacted under powers granted by the Foreign Jurisdiction Act of 1890).

The British system of “indirect rule” also provided for upholding customary laws deemed non-repugnant and compatible. The retention of customary law was regulated under section 27 (1) of the Southern Cameroon High Court Law (SCHL) of 1955 which stipulated: “The High Court shall observe, and enforce the observance of every native law and custom which is not repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience, nor incompatible with any law for the time being in force, and nothing in this law shall deprive any person of the benefit of any such native law or custom.” Therefore, the legal system Anglophone Cameroonians inherited from colonialism was not limited to the “Common Law” as it included customary laws (local usage and beliefs regulating a particular ethnic community) given recognition by the British.

The French instituted the “Civil law” in French Cameroon through a decree enacted on 22 May 1922, which extended to the territory all the laws and decrees promulgated for French Equatorial Africa. However, distinctions were made in the application of the Civil law. Two parallel court systems where put in place: one dubbed justice de droit Française for whites as well as “assimilated” Cameroonians and the other called justice de droit indigène for the ‘ordinary’ Cameroonians.
The British pursued the administrative policy of indirect rule in the Cameroons. This policy developed by Lord Lugard was first practiced in Northern Nigeria where local emirs where used to enforce the authority of the Governor.\textsuperscript{8} Indirect rule was seen as a cost effective means of administering a huge territory without expending resources. Importantly, by using traditional authorities to enforce their rule, local languages were retained and used in administration. To this end, Echu (1999) maintains: "local languages remained an indispensable medium of communication at the service of the colonial administrator."\textsuperscript{9}

The French governed their section of Cameroon through a system of administration known as "assimilation" whose goal was to transform the indigenous population. This policy presumed that French culture was superior and that colonialism was part of their civilizing mission.\textsuperscript{10} Local African cultures were therefore dismissed as parochial or of no value. French language and culture was therefore given priority.\textsuperscript{11} Educated segments of the indigenous population were granted French citizenship and the legal rights of Frenchmen.\textsuperscript{12}

**Bilingualism and Independence**

French Cameroon gained its independence as the “Republic of Cameroon” (La République du Cameroun) on 1 January 1960 with Ahmadou Ahidjo as President. British Southern Cameroons subsequently attained independence after opting to join the Republic of Cameroon following a United Nations administered plebiscite on 11 February 1961. To cement this reunification and work out a constitution for the country, the leaders of both parts of the territory (President Ahidjo of the Republic of Cameroon and Prime Minister John Ngu Foncha of erstwhile British Southern Cameroons) and their accompanying delegations met in Foumban in July 1961. The outcome of this meeting was a Federal Constitution which went into effect on 1 October 1961 making Cameroon a bilingual country with French and English as official languages.

The option of a federation of two heterogeneous communities (in terms of system of governance, language and culture) has been criticized by political scientists. Johnson postulates the foundation of national unity and integration on which the federation emerge was always precarious. He argues that not enough empirical evidence existed for cultural homogeneity to support the pursuit of what was then known as the "Kamerun Idea"—the reunification of former British and French controlled parts of the former German colony. He goes further to point out that the establishment of the Federal Republic tilted more to the favour of the Francophone majority as their English counterparts had to conform to a preference of a centralized, presidential government system.\textsuperscript{13} Based on the benchmark of political integration through nation-building, Johnson points out the establishment of the Federal Republic represented the successful creation of a state rather than the emergence of a nation.

Nevertheless, some scholars view the adoption of the policy of bilingualism as an endeavour toward national integration and nation-building. Anchimbe posits that Cameroon's adoption of bilingualism at independence was aimed at shaping a unique identity for the country.\textsuperscript{14} To this end Cameroon's first President Ahmadou Ahidjo underscored:

\[W]\text{e must in fact refrain from any blind and narrow nationalism and avoid any complex when absorbing the learning of other countries. When we consider the English language and culture and the French language and culture, we must regard them not as the property of such and such a race, but as an acquirement of}
the universal civilisation to which we belong. This is in fact why we have followed the path of bilingualism since...it offers us the means to develop this new culture...and which could transform our country into the catalyst of African unity.\textsuperscript{15}

However, the aforementioned enterprise was shrouded with controversy from the beginning. On the one hand, scholars and statesmen such as Prof. Bernard Fonlon advocated an expansion from official or state-level bilingualism to individual bilingualism. Fonlon underscored this in 1969: “the target to aim at, for us, should be, not merely State bilingualism, but individual bilingualism: that every child that passes through our education system shall be able to speak and write both English and French.”\textsuperscript{16} On the other hand, other forms of bilingualism were also prevalent. Ayafor identifies a strand of individual bilingualism consisting of the alternate usage of indigenous languages in the Bantu and Congo-Kordofanian families.\textsuperscript{17} Another form of individual bilingualism, which was more widespread, involved the use of one (or more) indigenous language and one official language.

**Challenges to the Survival of Bilingualism**

More than fifty years after independence many scholars and observers of Cameroon history and politics are pessimistic about the prospect of survival of bilingualism in the country. Some factors have been identified as substantiating this pessimism. Though Cameroon is well known internationally as bilingual country (sharing with Canada a dual membership of the Anglo-Saxon heritage organization “Commonwealth of Nations” and its French counterpart “La Francophonie”), bilingualism in Cameroon remains a subject of controversy. What defines bilingualism? Who is bilingual or supposed to be bilingual? These are some of the questions that continue to be a subject of hair-splitting debate among Cameroonian scholars and the common folk. On the meaning of bilingualism, there are two interpretations that have emerged with strong arguments. Some view bilingualism as the ability to function in more than one language which may not necessarily be the two official languages. Others insist on “official bilingualism” which is the state endorsed interpretation that is based on functional ability in both official languages. As noted above, it is also easy to find many who speak one official language and an indigenous language.\textsuperscript{18} Though this is administratively useful, it is still not “officially” considered bilingualism.

Closely related to the above is controversy over who bears the onus to be bilingual? Is it the state or the citizen? Some argue that bilingualism in Cameroon should be incarnated by the state and be present in state institutions and governance. This perspective embodies the government perception of bilingualism which, according to Ayafor, is limited to the use of both official languages in government domains and formal transactions in private sector domains.\textsuperscript{19} However, ordinary Cameroonians adhere more to the popular maxim: “C’est le Cameroun qui est bilingue, pas les Camerounais” (“It is Cameroon that is bilingual not Cameroonians”).\textsuperscript{20} This interpretation understands official bilingualism as limited to governance and state institutions. The controversy over what actually constitutes bilingualism and who is supposed to be bilingual represents a serious impediment to official bilingualism and a factor that could lead to its demise.
Another factor militating against the survival of bilingualism is the gross violation or neglect in governance and administration. Official bilingualism requires that all decrees, texts and official government documents be translated in both languages and that public services be accessible to citizens of both language expressions. However, the reality several decades after independence has been the “francophonization” of the Cameroonian administration. On this score, Fouda points out that French dominates most administrative communication in Cameroon.\textsuperscript{21} Administrative documents (decrees and laws) are drafted frequently in French and where the English version exist they are marred by errors.\textsuperscript{22} Nsom corroborates this, noting a lack of political will to promote usage of both languages at the highest level. President Paul Biya has often cautioned state officials to ensure that official communications are prepared and signed in English and French, but the documents he signs himself are often exclusively in French.\textsuperscript{23} This apparent language bias does not portend a good future for bilingualism in Cameroon.

Yet another sector that creates pessimism over the survival of bilingualism is education. One of the cornerstones of bilingualism is the dual educational system inherited from the colonial period. While the state sought to promote bilingualism by introducing the teaching of both official languages throughout the national territory, it also had to ensure the cohabitation of heterogeneous English and French educational sub-systems. However, attempts were made to undermine the English sub-system of education in favour of the French through “harmonization.” To this end, the government promulgated an order in 1983 modifying the anglophone “General Certificate of Education” (GCE) to be more in line with the French “Baccalauréat.”\textsuperscript{24} This attempt spurred boycotts and demonstrations by anglophone university students at the State University in Yaounde and anglophones in other urban centres. As illustrated in Nyamnjoh and Akum, the struggle against dilution of the English subsystem of education through harmonization culminated in the creation of the Cameroon GCE Board in 1993.\textsuperscript{25} The uneasy cohabitation of the two sub-systems of education adds to the difficulty of effectively pursuing bilingualism.

Those pessimistic about the survival of bilingualism also point to the legal system and its domination by French Civil Law as a stumbling block. As with the educational sector, Cameroon inherited a dual legal system from the former colonial powers. Bridging the gap between British Common Law and French Civil Law at times resulted in conflicts so the state sought to harmonize both systems. This process engendered a unitary Penal Code (1967), a common Labour Code (1992), and a single Criminal Procedure Code (2005).\textsuperscript{26} Though well intended, the pursuit of harmonization took on a French character as state officials sometimes undermined the Common Law. The Ministry of Justice deployed magistrates to Common Law jurisdictions who lacked a sound knowledge of the Common Law or sometimes even fluency in the English language. The unavailability of an English version of some key legal instruments and other issues provoked Common Law lawyers to go on a strike in November 2016. The relegation of the Common Law in Cameroon’s legal system adds fuel to the perceived “francophonization” of the country’s administration and further complicates chances for survival of bilingualism. Furthermore, Soule argues that the lack of a legal and institutional framework to sanction or supervise the implementation of bilingualism remains a serious issue. Although bilingualism is enshrined in the constitution, there are no provisions to guide
implementation. Violators of the principle of bilingualism go scot-free in the absence of any sanction or supervisory institution.27

Another cause for concern is linguistic bias in elite formation. Political appointments under the Ahidjo and Biya regimes have been heavily in favour of Francophones. A member of parliament from the Social Democratic Front (SDF) Hon. Fonso decried this situation in a question and answer session at the National Assembly in March 2009, telling the Prime Minister bluntly: “The Anglophones have been discriminated against in the Ministerial appointments.”28 His worries were echoed in a letter by the Bishops of the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province to the President in the wake of the 2016 teachers and lawyers strike that escalated to an “Anglophone crisis.” The Bishops pointedly state: “There seem to be key ministries that have been reserved for Francophone Ministers only and Anglophones do not even qualify to be Secretaries of State under them. These include, but are not limited to, Defence, Finance, Territorial Administration, and Economy.”29

Elite formation and party affiliation are significantly influenced by linguistic identities. With the advent of multiparty politics in the early 1990s, leadership and membership affiliation among the top political parties were significantly swayed by the language divide. The ruling Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM) constituted its leadership and found adherents more among Francophone than Anglophone Cameroonians. The reverse was true of the main opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF). This linguistic bias in elite formation is inimical to a pluralistic culture which is important for the survival of bilingualism as a common heritage in Cameroon.

Cameroon’s ethnic plurality has also been a source of ethno-nationalism and primordialism, often exploited by political elites, demagogues, and opinion leaders. Fearon and Laitin identified more than 250 ethnic groups in Cameroon.30 With such a vast pluralistic ethnic heritage, ethno-nationalism has an adverse effect on efforts, policies and instruments devised to build and consolidate national identity. The attachment ethnicity evokes tends to frustrate attempts to encourage individual bilingualism. Hastings posits that ethnicity "constitutes the major distinguishing element in all pre-national societies, but may survive as a strong subdivision with a loyalty of its own within established nations.”31 Brass highlights the potential of ethnic and national identities being exploited or "instrumentalised" by competing political elite as tools to mobilise support in their quest for prestige, wealth and power.32 To this end he underscores that:

The study of ethnicity and nationality is in large part the study of politically induced cultural change. More precisely, it is the study of the process by which elites and counter-elites within the ethnic groups select aspects of the group’s culture, attach new value and meaning to them and use them as symbols to mobilize the group, to defend its interest, and to compete with the other groups.33

The arguments put forward by Hasting and Brass are largely applicable in the context of Cameroon where linking citizenship and voter registration to regions of origin has produced official distinction in eligibility based on place of birth and place of residence.34 The prevalence of a distinction between original ethnic settlers (autochthones/allogènes) and strangers meant that ethnicated elite associations replaced political parties as the major force in regional politics. Eyoh notes that the ethnicated politics driven by the bureaucratic-administrative elite led to an
ethnic realignment of the power structure of the state under President Biya as the Beti, Bulu and Ewondo elites sought to contain the challenges to their grip on power from the Hausa-Fulani. These ethnicised elite struggles persisted even after the reintroduction of multiparty politics in the 1990s, undercutting the unity and integration bilingualism seeks to create.

The Survival of Bilingualism

Perhaps the prospects for the survival of bilingualism in Cameroon are not as gloomy as the foregone analysis seems to suggest. There are a number of factors enhancing the chances of survival of bilingualism in the domains of governance, educational policy, legal reform, and administrative structure.

The impetus for bilingualism from political authorities began from independence with Cameroon’s first President Ahmadou Ahidjo. While launching the first bilingual secondary school created by his government in Buea in 1962, Ahidjo exhorted his compatriots to be practical about bilingualism. Constable noted that policy statements on bilingualism had been a recurrent theme in speeches from state officials since independence. In recent years, President Paul Biya has been consistent not just in stressing the importance of bilingualism but giving some of his speeches in English. This eloquent demonstration of political will on bilingualism goes to strengthen its prospect of survival.

The policy of “regional balance” instituted by Ahidjo and continued under Biya also consolidates bilingualism. Ahidjo introduced regional balance as a policy of equity which sought to promote “balanced development” and “redress regional inequalities by providing education, infrastructures and the public amenities necessary for bridging the country and the town.” Under this policy, special attention was focused on the particular needs of different communities. For example, it created state universities in the two Anglophone regions (Southwest and Northwest).

The government has pursued other educational policies to enhance bilingualism. The Ahidjo regime created bilingual high schools, e.g., the Bilingual Grammar School Buea (established in 1962) and the Bilingual High School Yaounde (established in 1977). Attempts were made during the Ahidjo regime to also introduce bilingualism in primary schools. This process continued under Paul Biya with an educational policy that made English and French compulsory for students at the primary and secondary levels of education. Rather than limiting the two educational sub-systems exclusively to their respective regions, the government permitted them to run in all the regions of the country. This enabled the creation of English schools in the French part of the country and vice-versa thereby giving all Cameroonian the opportunity to acquire a bilingual education. Another advantage drawn from this policy is that of language immersion. Etchu notes that since the 1970s there have been many francophone students attending English primary schools. Soule extends this phenomenon, arguing that the immersion is from both sides (French to English and vice-versa) and continues up to secondary school. Immersion is a strong factor that consolidates bilingualism and could ensure its preservation in Cameroon.

In March 2017, the government passed sweeping reforms to address the concerns raised by Common Law lawyers about relegation of the Common Law. President Biya signed a decree creating a Common Law Bench at the Supreme Court and a Common Law Division in the
This came after the January 2017 handing over of an official English version of business laws to the President of the Cameroon Bar Council by Minister of Justice and Keeper of the Seals Laurent Esso. The Common Law Bench was officially installed on 20 August 2017 with an Anglophone Chief Justice—Epuli Mathias Aloh—also installed as President of the Judicial Council of the Supreme Court. The aforementioned measures are crucial to the resolution of the fundamental grievances of the Common Law lawyers and the creation of a legal environment for bilingualism to continue.

The Cameroonian government has also taken major administrative steps to promote bilingualism and ensure its survival. It established the Bilingual Training Programme, which is placed under the supervision of the General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic. This department coordinates bilingualism training centres that operate in all ten regions and provide bilingual training to civil servants and citizens. The Office of the President, Prime Minister’s Service, National Assembly, Senate, and all government ministries run translation units to ensure that official texts are translated in both languages.

January 2017 saw the creation of a National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism. While commissioning members to their function on 27 April 2017, Prime Minister Philemon Yang pointed out that the role of the Commission constituted inter alia: submitting reports and recommendations on issues relating to the protection and promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism to the President of the Republic and the Government; monitoring the implementation of constitutional provisions establishing English and French as two official languages of equal status, and especially ensuring their use in all government services, semi-public bodies as well as any State-subsidized body; conducting any study or survey and proposing measures likely to strengthen Cameroon’s bilingual and multicultural character; preparing and submitting to the President of the Republic draft instruments on bilingualism, multiculturalism and togetherness.

The creation and functioning of the Commission helps to allay worries about the lack of supervision of the implementation of bilingualism. National social integration, the cultural blending of Cameroonian and the emergence of cosmopolitan communities in most of Cameroon’s major cities, also enhances bilingualism. Intermarriages between Anglophone and Francophone, and their resettlement or integration outside their areas of origin has led to the birth of ethnically diverse communities in urban centres. This mitigates the pressure of linguistic nationalism and stabilizes social relationships.

Conclusion

It is evident from the foregone analysis that there are strong factors threatening the existence of bilingualism in Cameroon. These factors range from controversy about the meaning and application of bilingualism to linguistic bias in elite formation. Notwithstanding, it would be a premature judgment to yield to this pessimism without a proper consideration of the grounds for optimism. As demonstrated above, efforts made by successive Cameroonian governments to promote bilingualism and policies put in place to remedy present challenges provide measured hope for bilingualism. This paper also offers a few suggestions to improve on the implementation of bilingualism in Cameroon:
• Creation of a “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” under the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism. This would provide a forum for victims of marginalization from both linguistic communities to air injustices and heal divisions.
• Inclusion of bilingualism as an important criterion in the appointment of state officials and high level civil servants.
• Drafting, adoption and implementation of a national policy on bilingualism that will assist the Commission on Bilingualism and Multiculturalism to better coordination and supervise the implementation of bilingualism in Cameroon.

Examining official bilingualism in Cameroon and efforts being made towards its sustenance may be helpful for other African countries which have already adopted or desire to pursue official bilingualism in their system of governance. Currently, apart from Cameroon, some twenty-one other African countries have two or more official languages: Algeria, Botswana, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Swaziland, South Africa, Tanzania, and Tunisia. The issue of effective management of the policy of official bilingualism therefore resonates deeply among African states. It represents a crucial tool in national integration and nation-building. The Cameroon example can therefore serve as a cautionary model to other states on how to pursue such a policy and address the challenges that emerge in its implementation.

Notes

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“This Guy has become a Complete Savage”
A Last Interview with Jan Vansina

HEIN VANHEE

Abstract: Professor Jan Vansina looks back at the early years of his rich academic career as a historian of Africa and more specifically at his field research among the Kuba peoples of the DR Congo. Learning their language and participating in the boys’ initiation allowed him to become a deeply involved participant observer. He worked on the current anthropological themes of the day, and more importantly, he also collected oral material for an innovative historiography that would later inspire hundreds of students and researchers. Blinded by cultural prejudice, missionaries and colonial administrators did not understand what he was doing, and saw him as a hopeless case, but Kuba people came to accept him everywhere in the country. As a junior researcher, Vansina had been sent to the Kuba kingdom because of the great reputation of its art in the West. He found out that this same reputation had played a crucial role in the survival of the kingdom, in particular after its initial encounter with the terror of King Leopold’s Free State. Kuba kings had learned to deal with the realities of the Belgian Congo, using their revered art for clever diplomacy and bending the model of indirect rule to their own benefit.

Introduction

The present interview took place at the home of Professor Jan Vansina in Madison, Wisconsin (USA) on May 12 and 13, 2016. Its main purpose was to video-record a number of statements about Vansina’s research on the history of the Kuba peoples of the DR Congo. These would be used in one of the new galleries of the renovated Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium. The gallery titled “Rituals and Ceremonies” has showcases displaying the objects of Kuba royalty, as a historic case to illustrate a broader narrative about diverse models of leadership in Central Africa. There I wanted to include the story of Jan Vansina’s field research in the 1950s among the Kuba peoples, in what was then still the Belgian Congo. This would provide visitors with an insight into how anthropological and historical knowledge is produced. Inspired by the book Being Colonized (2010), I also wished to convey a sense of the extraordinary importance of Kuba art for the survival of the Kuba kingdom under colonial indirect rule.

The interview was done in three sessions, as agreed beforehand, in order to not exhaust Professor Vansina who was then already suffering from a terminal disease. He had just made this public in an article titled “De Vita Sua” in the journal Society, of which he lent me his copy so that I could read it at night. The article contains a self-evaluation of his own trajectory as a scholar and a reiteration of a passionate argument in favor of a truly African history, written for and accessible to African audiences. Histories are important for the role

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they play “in sustaining or even creating collective identities” and thus in supporting collective and individual self-confidence and self-esteem. The article has a distinct melancholic feel, stemming from a continuing passion for a noble cause for which his own battles had now been fought, and from a seemingly inescapable wondering about how people will look back at himself, the historian.

Figure 1: Professor Jan Vansina at his home in Madison. Still from video-recorded interview by Hein Vanhee, 12 May 2016.

I had met Professor Vansina before, when he visited Belgium in 2001 and gave public lectures at several Belgian universities, and we had often corresponded about archives, collections and research. In 2010, Vansina donated his research archive to the Royal Museum for Central Africa, containing the original notebooks of his field research in Central Africa. These document his research among the Kuba intermittently from January 1953 until July 1956, and among the Tio from October 1963 until April 1964. In addition, the archive holds the series of oral history accounts which he collected in Rwanda (known as ibitéekerezo) and in Burundi, besides boxes with more research notes, drafts, vocabularies and offprints. The motivation behind Vansina’s choice was clear and simple: in “Tervuren” his archive would be both safe and (more easily) accessible to researchers from Congo, Rwanda and Burundi.

I enjoyed a warm welcome at the home of Jan Vansina and his wife Claudine. I had brought a large bottle of dark Belgian Trappist beer of a brand I thought would not be available in Madison stores (I had missed my connection at London Heathrow since it took a while for security staff to figure out that it would not explode). After our first interview session we spent a pleasant moment together up in the living room with Claudine, their son Bruno, and Professor Florence Bernault who had stopped by for the occasion. We chatted in French, English and Dutch, changing from one language to the other almost unwittingly, exchanging anecdotes and laughs. Jan Vansina said I absolutely needed to visit the University’s open stack library which he praised for its treatment of researchers. I remember...
the strange sensation of feeling truly honored to be the guest of someone for whom I had
such a great admiration while at the same time being comfortable as if I was at home.

We spent several hours in his downstairs study and library, where I recorded the
interview. It felt like being in a sanctuary, where so many great ideas were born, where so
many articles and books had been written. With large windows allowing a lot of light to
come in, the place was stuffed with houseplants of various kinds and sizes, making it look
like a greenhouse. A large map of Africa hung on the wall which had Mweka on it, where
the colonial administration had set up headquarters in Kuba country. Explaining the empty
bookshelves, Vansina told me he had given most of his personal library to the University of
Wisconsin - Milwaukee. He kept giving away the new books that were still coming in, as if
he was leaving for a destination where he could only take a tiny suitcase. Hesitantly, I
accepted Jelmer Vos’ “excellent book” on the late Kongo kingdom. Had I a copy of Nancy
Hunt’s “fabulous” A Nervous State? “Oh no,” he changed his mind, “not this one, there’s a
personal dedication written in it.”

My memory of the two days that I spent interviewing Jan Vansina will always be
dominated by an image of the sheer pleasure with which he was telling about his first
fieldwork among the Kuba peoples. The way the people initially responded to his presence,
the incomprehension of colonial officials for what he was doing, his final acceptance by the
Kuba after he had gone through initiation: the stories filled him with visible joy and
nostalgia. In his mid-twenties he had been the rebellious researcher who sided with the
Kuba against arrogant and ignorant colonial bureaucrats, and that still gave him great moral
satisfaction.

At the end of our last conversation, almost as prompted by an afterthought, I showed
him on my laptop the selection of Kuba art objects that would be on display in the new
gallery I was working on. As I am used to Africanist historians being rarely interested in
African art and material culture, I started explaining various items. He quickly took over,
and instructed me about details of iconography and used materials, of which I had not been
aware. I nodded. Then we sat outside waiting for my taxi. When it became clear that my taxi
was late, he decided “Come on, we’re not going to wait any longer, I will take you back to
your hotel.” Running through the hallway, he swung a coat around his shoulders and with a
boyish grin he picked up a baseball cap with the inscription ‘ANGOLA.’ He laughed, “I got
this from a doctoral student!” With a decided foot on the pedal and nervously pulling the
steering wheel, he drove me back in his bright red sedan, explaining to me on the way the
layout of downtown Madison and every smallest landmark that came into view.

Professor Jan Vansina passed away peacefully in Madison on 8 February 2017, aged 87.
The obituary card distributed at the funeral service in Belgium identified him as a “historical
anthropologist.” Reflecting values held high by his family in Belgium, the accompanying
text praised his sense of duty, his professionalism and his honesty. “He received the highest
honors in his field, but he remained easy to deal with.”

The Interview

Hein Vanhee: How was it to start doing fieldwork among the Kuba peoples in the 1950s in
what was then still the Belgian Congo?

Jan Vansina: In the early 1950s, it was unusual for Belgians to do fieldwork. The reason for
that was that anthropology was not taught at any Belgian university, it was an unknown
discipline. Fieldwork was completely unknown. Actually, before I went, there had been only
two fieldworkers that we know of, Maquet and Biebuyck, who were both anthropologists, and who were attached to the same institution I was attached to. So, it was new.

The thing that made fieldwork different was that I went to live in a small town, on my own, and I did not come out of it. I did not go to the state post Mweka, which was one of the posts in this district, the most important one, the center. There all the Europeans went on weekends at least, if not more often, to drink, to see films and the like, and they did not see me coming!

HV: How far was that from the place where you were staying?

JV: Oh, that was about 80 kilometers, 80-85. The only other Europeans nearby were at the mission station. There was also one administrator, who was detached there to supervise the whole Kuba kingdom, a very large area, in administrative terms. He was different from all other administrators, in that he also did not go to Mweka, but was very concerned with the development of that chiefdom.

So, I learned a lot. I learned that I had to watch out for my health. I could not eat all the things that Kuba were eating, I had to eat some other food as well. But we adapted quite easily. I was not integrated in one family or another, as happens sometimes in fieldwork. No, I stayed separate, in an abandoned European gite d’étape, that is a lodging house for passing people. But I talked to everyone, and all the Kuba at the court pretty soon came to consider me as a pupil, that is, somebody who was there to learn. And that was fine with me, because that was what I was! So, our relationship in general was quite smooth. There were no particular difficulties.

With Europeans there were not many difficulties. They knew that I was there, at least the administrators knew, and when I came to Mweka they did not know how to talk to me, or what to talk about. Half of the times when I came to Mweka, anyway, was because I was so ill and I had to see a doctor. Eventually, the chief administrators realized that I could be useful to them. That was what they saw, because the things that I was collecting were also useful for their administration.

HV: How was it decided originally that you would go to the Kuba? Was it because they thought you would be useful?

JV: It was decided for me to go to Kuba country almost a full year before I went. It was decided by the board of the institute that I worked for, the Institut de Recherche Scientifique en Afrique Centrale (IRSAC). And it was decided in practice by the director of the museum in Tervuren. The director of the museum in Tervuren, Frans Olbrechts, wanted to send someone to do fieldwork in an area that was known for its objects and its art. He could not get someone in art history to do this, so he sent me as an anthropologist, after a period of training in London. That was the reason why I was sent.

Now the administrators... I did not come with letters of introduction, or not many. All the things that were normally done, like visiting the administrators, visiting this, visiting that, none of that occurred in my case, and this made it all the more questionable as to what I was doing there! So, when the administrators found out that much of what I was doing was useful to them, they accepted me. In fact, they probed a little to see if they could not order me to do things. The institute, however, was completely detached from the ordinary administration in Congo. It had no links whatsoever with it. So, that meant that I was completely independent.

After about six months, everything fell more or less in the groove, and the
administrators realized that, well, they had a queer person, an odd person, somewhere in
the bush, “who was going native,” but he wasn’t bothering anybody. The Catholic
missionaries had also accepted me more or less the way I was, and vice versa, of course. The
administrator in the capital of the Kuba – where I was – understood what I was doing, and I
was getting along very well with him, in fact.

The decisive point came when the Kuba asked me to go to initiation with them. That
meant that I would be initiated which, for the missions, both Catholic and Protestant, was the ultimate in things you should not do! For Europeans in Mweka, it meant that, yes, this guy has become a complete savage... Civilized persons don’t do things like that! But the Kuba accepted me after this anywhere in the country. That spread like wildfire, that I had been initiated.

![Figure 2: Les garçons liés par la fibre de raphia (The boys bound by the raffia fiber). Mapey, Province of Kasaï, DR Congo. Photographer unknown. October 1953.]

HV: Was this a matter of racial prejudice or was it fear?

JV: Well, there were at least two factors at work. Racial prejudice—remember, this is not long after the war—was not really very prominent. But cultural prejudice, that’s something else! You see, all these Europeans were convinced that they were civilized. They had never thought about being civilized or not before they arrived there, but once they were there, they started thinking that their ways of life were, of course, infinitely superior, although they could not really defend this, but this was a feeling. So, going to a school—because that’s what initiation really is—for inferior living, in their minds, meant that you were completely hopeless.

HV: How did Kuba people initially respond to the questions that you were asking?

JV: Well, the first thing the Kuba people did was to find out where to classify me. So, I was not a missionary, I was not an administrator, and I was not a trader. So, what was I? At their capital they had answers for that, but elsewhere, you know, there was a fourth category of
Europeans that ... *make no sense*. So, as long as they don’t harm you, you just leave them alone, and if you can make a benefit of them, make a little benefit, and that’s it.

At the capital, they were far more advanced, because they had had a lot of foreign visitors. This was a famous kingdom, it had been known since the 1880s. It had had visitors, including two anthropologists, who were internationally very well-known, and who had been doing work there for a couple of months each time. One of these was called Emil Torday. Emil Torday was somebody who was not there for long, for a month or so, but he took in an enormous amount of information. He published that, and with the backing of the British museum, he introduced the notion that there was African art, that Kuba art was art! As a result the kingdom became very well-known. Now, that was important from the beginning, because it meant that a well-known kingdom would be included on the tour list of the British consuls who came to see how Belgium was taking over the mandate from the Congo Free State. So, after 1908, the Kuba were particularly either left alone, or well treated.

In any case, at the court, they realized the importance of such visits because they saw the effect Torday had had. And he was not the only one. From the 1920s onward, they got very illustrious visitors. There is no member of the Belgian royal family who did not go to the Kuba at various times. The last one before my visit had been Prince Charles, in 1947. And then, after that, King Baudouin, who came twice. He had contact with the Kuba twice in the 1950s, and after that still in the early 1960s. So, the Kuba were very well aware of the outside world. I found in the papers of the king, after he was dead and they arrived here, thirty years later, that he had received correspondence from California, from South Africa, so the court itself was very well informed about things.

**HV:** Did this have an impact on your work?

**JV:** It had an impact because local people tended to confuse the sort of anthropology I was doing either with photography—because a very famous photographer had been there in 1947—or, mostly in the 1950s, with object buying for galleries and for the art trade. There were traders around, practically, during much of the time I was there. They would not stay long, but they were people with money, and they would spend it or not spend it, and that was of a concern to villagers everywhere. But otherwise, my link with the center of things, with the capital, and with the king, was mainly conditioned by the visitors of political importance that they had had before. They didn’t know whether I was of political importance or not. I thought I was not. Back then I never thought even of that question. They seem to have thought that, well, I was harmless. Then, once this initiation had happened, and they realized that I stood completely on their side in whatever culture questions were going on, the whole relationship altered. I mean, after that, I was not cooped with any other kind of European, I was just, you know, above. I was given several Kuba names, and I was just one of these names and that’s all.
Figure 3: L’aîné et le cadet des initiés. Le cadet est paangl, le chef des initiés (The oldest and the youngest of the initiates. The youngest is paangl, the leader of the initiates). Mapey, Province of Kasai, DR Congo. Photographer unknown. October 1953.10

HV: You mentioned that Kuba saw you as a student of their culture. Does that mean that they decided what you could know about them?

JV: In certain areas, yes. The last day that I was in Kuba land in 1956, that is, after more than two years being there, some of the main elders of the court said to me “Oh boy! Now you are leaving, and we were just about thinking to tell you the secrets, to initiate you into the secrets that you have to know!” but there was a bit of grandstanding in that. Essentially, on most points, they just let me do what I wanted. I asked questions, they provided answers, and sometimes later they came up with more answers. The institute I was working for had a lot of funding which meant that I could and did get some assistants. I trained these assistants and some of them turned out to be quite gifted. So, I could do things like collect dreams. Dreams are important for the Kuba. The assistants would document these in their own language and bring them to me. I had one or two assistants who were just gossip, like the daily radio—what’s happening? Later that turned out to be very rich material, for all sorts of things. And when I wanted to make inquiries on particular points, I could send some of the assistants around and they would ask people who would answer. They would also sit in on court sessions, so that when questions came up in tribunals I would know about that. But you see, at the court, this was not considered special knowledge, this was not worthy of their high attention.

When it came to history, especially precolonial history, which was the justification of the polity itself that they were very careful about! Who I saw, who I did not see, who I could talk to... I benefitted from some rebellion against the central view, in other chiefdoms, or also in the capital itself, where some people simply did not agree with the control that the court had over them, the control that occasional visitors would not notice. The Catholic mission,
for instance, never realized how much control was exerted over the inhabitants of the capital, who were not directly royals. At least, they never heard them speak of it. So, with such dissenting voices, along with the other voices, in fact, there was not much that escaped. After I had left, about ten years later or something like that, I came to be considered in Kuba country—as I still am today—as the person who knew everything! “He knows everything, but he’s not always telling everything, he doesn’t tell our secrets,” people would say, or “He knows everything, but he’s not publishing everything!” So, you know, that’s how the image of a person may develop in the minds of the people you are working with.

HV: It’s almost as if people came to see you as a Kuba elder, in a way.

JV: Yes, sure. I was not someone who came in to have a nice time and then leave, and from whom the people would never hear anything anymore, no.

HV: How did other Europeans respond to the fact that you stood much closer to the people than anyone else among them?

JV: Well, Europeans saw me differently according to where they were. Essentially, there were two main groups. One consisted of Europeans who knew the Kuba well. Actually, there was only one of them, one administrator who knew them very well. There were a few missionaries who were used to them, but did not know them well. The administrator knew them well not only because he was living at the capital, but also because he was constantly busy with Kuba cases. He was responsible for the management, for the running of the kingdom, as an advisor to the king, and he took this seriously.

His political views were completely different from what was current in Belgium at that time. His views were that Kuba had a religion and a civilization that seemed to suit them very well, that some of this needed to be adapted to modern living conditions, you know, like railroads, taxes, stuff like that, but other things needed not be. For instance, there was no question that he would ever ask the government or do himself persecutions of sects or religious movements of any kind. He believed that was Kuba religion and that they adhered to it more faithfully than Europeans did to their own religions. This was completely unheard stuff in the 1950s in those circles. He also thought that there was a danger that the Kuba were exploited by greedy merchants of all sorts. So, he pushed to impose rules, for instance, on the selling of art objects, amongst other things, by creating a co-op, and imposing co-op rules, which of course was hated on the railway line where all these objects were sold. But he was sui generis, his own guy, nothing else.

Other Europeans did not understand what I was doing. Their first idea was that this was just tax money being spent. But when I told them where the money came from, from the institute I worked with, they understood that this was not tax money, or not Belgian tax money. If anything, it would have been Congolese tax money. Also, most of them escaped paying taxes anyway, so that was all I had to argue with. On the whole, Europeans saw themselves as so far more civilized than Congolese that they just could not understand.

Europeans did not realize that already at that time, in the early 1950s, some local Congolese, local Kuba actually, who had been to school, were discussing independence. They were discussing whether it would be a good thing or a bad thing, whether it should happen soon or not soon, and there were arguments circulating, you know, amongst that tiny intelligentsia. But this was at the time that no single European in the territory understood anything. Once, out of curiosity, I brought this up in the main bar, and the question was to know what they thought of Liberia and Sierra Leone, well especially
Liberia. “Liberia is an independent republic,” I said, “it is a black independent republic. Don’t you think that, well, you know...what are your conclusions from this?” And what I got was an impossible list of horror stories, of Belgian ships docking in Monrovia, and all the things that were wrong with blacks! And when you talked about black people who had gone to schools and universities, you know, these were the most impossible kind of people, because, as they believed, they had taken on all the bad things from one, and all the bad things from the other. In other words, this was prejudice without hope!

When I came back to Belgium, I began to hear what all these people had been writing to their friends, and what the opinion had become in Belgium. The opinion in Belgium was that I lived in trees, and that I ate savage food, and, you know, they were not sure whether that included bats or not... In other words, I was becoming as exotic as all the other things they were telling about Congo. It was just a hopeless story. But it was nothing to really worry about from my side. For me the question was what I could do in Kuba country, how I could bring back to Belgium, and to Europe, a meaningful story, an idea as to what the Kuba worldview was, how they viewed the contemporary times, and that this was all very different from what was happening in Europe.

I was also estranged a little bit from anthropology because I was claiming that history was important, and at that time anthropologists considered the present as important. They expected comparisons that were worldwide to bring up laws that were important, and here I came with Kuba data that showed that there were many differences indeed, but also many similarities. When you look at this over time, you find dynamics that are not unfamiliar at all. So, even decades later, you could find some anthropologists accusing me of being not an anthropologist but a historian. In Belgium, everybody was convinced that I was not a historian, including the people in my own institute. They were convinced that I was an anthropologist because they saw me as an ethnologist. An ethnologist meant a describer of foreign customs and foreign thoughts, and that seemed to be more or less what I was doing. It would take a whole struggle for me to get the university to recognize eventually that, no, I was a historian.

HV: Can I get back to an earlier remark, where you said that colonial officials thought that you could be useful to them. How was that?

JV: Well, part of the work of administrators in Congo, besides collecting taxes and maintaining law and order, was called political work. Political work was designed to supervise and arrange as much as possible the direction of African leadership at inferior ranks, under the level of European control. In most parts of Congo, this did not concern village headmen, that was too low, but just above the rank of village headmen, the smallest administrative categories. These had appointed heads or supposedly chosen heads, agreeable to the administration. So, it was the appointment of these heads, their legitimacy with regard to the people they were administering, and the dynamics of that, that the administration was interested in. For the Kuba kingdom, in the 1920s, they had codified the whole thing. They had worked two or three years at it, to set up their administrative chiefdoms, sub-chiefdoms, and all that, and all of that was documented in the archival records at Mweka – which means that archival records can be important!

What they were interested in was in a revision of this. After 1945, the colonial authorities of Kasai decided to review the whole situation in this particular territory. They wanted to do this, first of all, because there had been complaints from several other territories around it. Whatever they did not like seemed to come from this “indirect rule
“territory,” where a king was more important than an administrator. Secondly, after 1947, after the war, a new economy had set in. Locally, the trade in maize had become very important and was a major money maker for foreign local settlers. It was an intricate situation and they were reviewing all this. So, what could be better than having somebody who was not linked to the administration to gather all this information, as I was doing in the normal course of affairs, and to find out what the kind of tensions were, and equilibria, between the various political forces in the kingdom? But I would not give all my results to them. There was confidential information, and there was non-confidential material. The non-confidential material I did not worry about. The truly confidential stuff, you know, I did not share. But what was confidential to me was usually also known to that local administrator in Nsheng, so I didn’t have to bother too much about it. So, that is what they called useful.

The people I did not get along with at all were, within the administration, the agricultural specialists, who were beneath everything at that time, and the tax collectors. There were no administrators who were only tax collectors, they always had multiple duties, but there was a level at which some of the Europeans were mainly concerned with collecting taxes and also with requiring people to work on things of public interest. They tended to be short-tempered, and they tended to have absolutely no understanding of what was going on, and of when it was a good time to ask people to work, and when it was a bad time to do that. They had no idea whatsoever, and I simply did not get along with any of these people!

HV: In 2010 you published a remarkable book about the experience of the Kuba people during colonialism, titled Being Colonized. In there you explain how the Kuba kingdom was first seriously impacted by the establishment of the Congo Free State, but later survived in part because of the particular policies of the Belgian Congo. How unique was the Kuba case?

JV: The Kuba kingdom lived on its reputation. When the first European explorers arrived from Angola and then from the Lower Kasai, the kingdom was believed to be very strong militarily. The king tended to say, you can go this far and not further, and when Europeans or Americans came this far, they found that yes, they could not go any further. There was a real administration over a large territory, with villages and districts that obeyed a central administration. Europeans were not used to this. And there was the reputation of this army, which in reality was nothing exceptional. It took a very long time for Europeans to realize that this army could not be that strong. They arrived in 1885, and it was not until 1899 that one of the military officers realized that the Kuba had no guns. So, how could they have a powerful military, if they had no guns?

It is in that year that a young Belgian territorial officer, who was 21 or 22 years old, and had no more than a primary school education, decided on his own to go with a troop of his soldiers and with a local ally into Kuba country in order to plunder whatever he could. He was after ivory, ivory being the measure of career success at the time. To his great surprise, it worked. There was a battle in front of the capital, which the Kuba obviously lost. He looted the capital for a few days and then he had to return, because it was not really safe. A few months later, the allies of another territorial officer attacked one of the southern Kuba subgroups, and the officer got away with it. And then, the next year, the Kuba capital was attacked again.11

So, by that time, the kingdom collapsed, in the sense that the capital was occupied twice and that, the second time, the king died, supposedly just before the attack occurred. The Belgian record says that he died long before, and that there were human sacrifices, and that
the Belgians came in to save the people. All the oral witnesses I found claimed that the king had died during the attack or after the attack. In any case, whatever the moment this happened, there were no more kings. They initially appointed a new king, but the new king died, then they appointed yet another king, and this king also died. We think, with our modern minds – and I still believe this – that this was the result of an epidemic of mumps, which was going around. We know that there was one. The Kuba, of course, believed that it was witchcraft, and eventually one of these ephemeral kings began to attack the supposed witches with foreign sorcery that came from another part of Kasai. For the Kuba, this is important.

What the Europeans saw, was that this new king managed, first, not to die, and secondly, to reorganize the whole kingdom in a very short time, in two or three years. Recently, after I had written that book, I learned from another piece of archive that, in fact, even when the kingdom had broken down, its internal administration continued to function. This sounds very strange: you have no king, you have no government at the center, but you still have tax collectors, going out to collect taxes and bringing it back home. Which home, one does not know. In such conditions two years is not unbelievable for somebody to establish control. He established control but then found that there was a rebellion in part of the kingdom itself, in the interior. That’s discussed in that book. Part of the kingdom in the south was rebelling against foreign labor. It was directed against the new Luba labor force that was becoming prominent in the south and which was working for Europeans. That was what the rebels were after, they feared that they would be demographically ousted from a part of the kingdom. This led to a rebellion in 1904 with, of course, a charm that was supposed to be superior to every other kind of charm.

The rebellion was put down and normal order returned. Now, the normal order in 1904-1905 is not what you would imagine. There was no territorial administration set up in the area itself, no. There was no administrator who did nothing but administering. Even in the district, the only administrator in 1904-1905 was a military official who was set up to organize a district and who only represented a delegation from the central control in Luluabourg. So, it took four to five years to set up a genuine administration, one with archives and the like, starting in 1905, just after the rebellion. Then the rubber period broke out. The rubber in Kasai, and in the Kuba country in particular, was some of the best quality rubber in the whole world. So clearly, rubber was very important. And this rubber was now collected for concessionary companies, which was something very different from the old economic regime. In any case, the concessionary company ruined the country pretty quickly. This happened so quickly that only after four years, in 1908-1909 — and with the Kuba being known internationally — there was a celebrated case where a court, at the instigation of the American Presbyterian missionaries, accused local rubber collectors of plundering the country and doing all sorts of things that were illegal. The government lost its case, in spite of this being in the context of Leopold II’s general policy.

By 1910 then, the Independent State was gone, and the Belgian colony had taken over. What most people do not realize is that Belgium’s ownership of the colony was not recognized without conditions by all international powers. It was, in fact, the reports by British consuls from 1910 to 1913 that established the international validity of Belgium’s rule. In 1913-14, there were no more of them, simply because of the impeding world war. So, that question was then diplomatically finished. But it meant that for the years that there were consuls — 1910, 1911, 1912 and 1913, I think — they came to the Kuba capital. There are
very good reports made by them, and the Kuba must have realized that they were somehow protected, that there was more than just Belgium.

If you add to this that Torday had placed Kuba art on the world map, so to speak, at least in Europe, the combination of both meant that by 1913, the Kuba had once again acquired the reputation of being a strong kingdom. It was considered strong from a political point of view, and it had a supreme art. Kuba art was classified internationally by art dealers and in art journals as the best art of Africa from about 1913 to about 1925 or so. This was a crucial period for the establishment of that kind of reputation. And that was, of course, one of the reasons why the royal family of Belgium was so attracted to the Kuba. They liked Kuba art. Kuba art was liked from the beginning because European tastes in the age of Art Nouveau corresponded perfectly with what the Kuba had to offer. Also, the fact that Kuba art consists so much of ordinary objects, you know, tied in perfectly with the European avant garde trends of around 1900. So, that’s just chance!

Figure 4: King Mbop Mabinc maKyeen of the Kuba meeting with King Baudouin of Belgium. Kananga, Province of Kasai-Central, DR Congo. Photograph by Henri Goldstein. 27 December 1959.

HV: So the Kuba kingdom in part survived because of the reputation of its art?

JV: Yes, indeed. One of the things about art in general, or at that time, was that the upper classes in Europe or America were very interested in art. And Kuba art was already international. To give you just one example of how far the Kuba kingdom was known: in 1937-1938, there were two films made by commercial businesses in New York about the Kuba kingdom. One was about the Protestant mission and the other only about kingship and the kingdom. Those films were used by an American anthropologist who wrote a general textbook on political anthropology, a person called Lowie, already before 1940. Then, if you look at Kuba on the ground, the indirect rule, in the time of the depression, you
may have a hard time connecting all the lines together and see that yes, indeed, it was the same thing. But the indirect rule system worked, and it was genuine indirect rule, it was not a fancy one as in Eastern Congo, where you had some other supposedly indirect rule chiefdoms, but not like this one.

HV: Indirect rule meant that within the framework of the Belgian Congo the Kuba kingdom was allowed to have its own life and to continue its own business.

JV: Yes. The degree to which it could pursue its own business and its own life varied with time. Before the depression, the latitude was fairly great. For instance, justice was almost completely out of the hands of the Belgian authorities. It was completely, most of the time, an internal affair. From the late 1920s, and especially during the depression, the central administration became more important in Congo. Its edicts had to be observed, and whatever kind of rule there was. It was only in the application of those rules that there still was some autonomy. Then after 1945, the central administration became even stronger. In the name of economic development and the reforms of the ten year plan of 1949 various measures were taken which made the Kuba lose more of their autonomy. But as late as the early 1950s and mid-1950s, on the ground it was still very visible. So, it was a real thing.

HV: The Kuba had learned how to live with the colonial situation?

JV: Right. My own idea is that this began early, with King Kot aFe. He started in 1902, and then, you know, had the rebellion, and after the rebellion he came back. He is the one who then really worked out how to work with the Europeans. He taught the first administrators how to work with him. Essentially, it worked, to the point that the last king was one of the strongest forces in Kasai against independence at the time. He found that the way it was worked very well for him, whereas an independent Congo, that would be one that would rely much more on elections. Leadership that came from elections was far too unsafe, in his mind.

HV: Your work on the Kuba has been most appreciated for your critical use of oral traditions. How hard was it to convince people of the validity as sources for the writing of history?

JV: Oral tradition and oral history have existed since ever and ever, but they were not trusted by historians. Historians of Europe, or of China for that matter, only believed in written sources. They thought that oral testimonies, or oral witness accounts even, would change over time, and therefore could not be used by historians. However, on a popular level, in Europe, in the Far East, in South Asia, people used oral histories and oral tradition very much in their own lives. If you think of Belgium, just ask people, really old people, about the cholera epidemics, and they will still remember, in their cities or in their regions, what they were. Or ask about emigration to America. Few people will know that directly, but they have heard stories about it. And about the potato famine, and so on. So, for ordinary people it was clear that that was a source of history. But historians did not accept them.

It turned out after examination in the field, after doing fieldwork amongst the Kuba people in Central Africa, that it was possible to apply the standard method for evaluating the value of testimony in history, which we call the rules of evidence, in English. It was possible to apply the rules of evidence to oral material. And I wrote a handbook about that. First, I wrote a dissertation, which was eventually accepted by all universities in Belgium.
Then it spread out as a method. Over time there were critiques to this method, and there were revisions, and I wrote another revised version of it. But it spread all over the world, not just in Belgium or in Africa, and it spread from historians of antiquity to historians of the modern era, and to historians of recent times who, like political scientists, had always used interviews, which is oral material.

**Figure 5:** Pages from a notebook by Anaclet Mikwepy. 1953.

**HV:** When did it become clear to you that the study of oral traditions would provide the key to unlock histories that otherwise were not possible to write?

**JV:** Well, this began in fact before I ever went to Africa. The MA dissertation that I did, in medieval history, dealt with oral presentations that were later recorded in writing. So, I had an idea as to what kind of problems I would encounter. I arrived in Kuba country, to be an anthropologist, and after about two months or so, some older person with whom I was talking said “We have our newspapers too! Our newspapers are oral. We do remember things from the past.” You know, immediately, I made this connection with that medieval material. And while it was still universally acknowledged that oral sources were not valid, I thought, it is worth checking! So, as I had been trained in method especially, I began to check first data that were remembered word by word, like poetry, things that are the closest you can come to written versions, and I found that there was a great fund of them. Now, it took a year, or more than a year, to assemble all the data that I could use for a history of the Kuba. It was a history that was entirely based on oral material, with very little written stuff in it. It was also based on oral material primarily of the ruling group in the kingdom. I knew that because I had worked out the genealogies of who knew what from whom, but I didn’t imagine that this was going to be a major problem. But of course, eventually, it was a problem, because it was the story as remembered and as told by the ruling group in a polity, where it was, of course, its legitimacy. So later on, after a number of years, the issue of oral traditions had to be improved, something had to be done about Kuba history, to back it up
by other items than the oral tradition of the court. And this is where I used linguistics.

Now we stand at the threshold of a new era, in that very recently it has been shown that there are two sorts of oral history, as far as the human brain goes. We remember things directly and we do that in one part of the brain that is closely connected to emotions. We also know things, like two plus two is four, and oral traditions of longer date. Things like epics, or stories of origin, tend to be stored in the brain in the section of knowledge, which is in the cortex, in the top of the brain. This is much less linked to emotion. This means that there were two sorts of oral histories and oral traditions. Oral histories about recent times, from interviews, which may go back to about hundred and twenty years ago, let’s say to the time of your grandparents or perhaps a little earlier, those can be used and evaluated by standard methods. There is no problem left. And they can be used anywhere in the world. For the older oral traditions, there are a number of problems. We know that some of the very old oral traditions are strongly associated with emotions, but these are emotions from the present, not emotions from the time that supposedly the events happened. So, there is a whole further study to write and to work out as to how these older traditions were actually preserved, how they got to be endowed with new emotions about what sort of issues. Most of these issues are identity questions, and that is a research domain that is not completely finished.

Notes

1 The Royal Museum for Central Africa, now also called the Africa Museum, reopened on December 8, 2018. For visits and any other information see www.africamuseum.be.
2 I did an earlier interview with professor Vansina in 2001 together with Karel Arnaut, which was published in Dutch in the newsletter of the (now dissolved) Belgian Association of Africanists and in English on H-Africa.
3 This administrator was René Schillings (Vansina 1994: 260).
4 Jan Vansina Archives, RMCA, Tervuren, HA.01.0331. This photograph shows Jan Vansina participating in the boys initiation of the Kuba at the village of Mapey in 1953.
5 The Hungarian ethnographer Emil Torday visited the Kuba in 1908, shortly after the German ethnographer Leo Frobenius who had been there in 1905 (Vansina 2010).
6 The Congo Free State was taken over by Belgium on 15 November 1908, and became the colony of the Belgian Congo.
7 Prince Charles of Belgium (1903-1983) led the Belgian monarchy as regent from 1944 to 1950, and he visited Congo in July 1947.
8 Before the declaration of Congolese independence, King Baudouin (1930-1993) had visited Congo in May 1955 and in December 1959.
9 The famous photographer was Eliot Elisofon who visited Nsheng in January 1947. His photographs are in the Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives at the National Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C.
10 Jan Vansina Archives, RMCA, Tervuren, HA.01.0331.
11 The catastrophic events of 1899-1900 are described in Being Colonized (Vansina 2010: 69-79).
12 In Being Colonized this is attributed to smallpox (Vansina 2010: 75).
13 Photographic archives, RMCA, Tervuren, HP.1960.4.42.
Anaclet Mikwepy was one of Vansina’s main research assistants among the Kuba in 1953. He taught Vansina Bushoong, the language spoken in and around Nsheng, the Kuba capital. On the left is a list of Kuba markets and on the right is the beginning of a version of the Kuba story of origin, mentioning the primordial ancestors Woot and Mweel. Jan Vansina Archives, RMCA, Tervuren, HA.01.0331, notebook 5, pp. 8-9.

References


Closing the Book on Africa’s First Generation Coups

JONATHAN POWELL and MWITA CHACHA

Abstract: The Zimbabwe Defence Forces’ November 2017 removal of Robert Mugabe was the first successful military coup in Africa in over three years. Increasingly rare in contemporary politics, Mugabe’s removal at the barrel of the gun was a common fate for the original generation of political leadership in the region. We contextualize Mugabe’s removal by reviewing the fates of Sub-Saharan Africa’s original post-colonial leadership, of which a majority was directly removed in military coups. The fall of Mugabe can be seen as the final chapter on coups against the original generation of leadership, but is unique in regard to the fate of the ousted leader. Of all prior first generation leaders removed via a coup, each was imprisoned, exiled, or killed in association with the coup.

Introduction

Lumumba. Olympio. Nkrumah. Cabral. Mugabe. Following a week of attempting to coerce a resignation from their president, on 21 November 2017 the Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) finally secured it, placing him as one of scores of heads of state who have been removed via coups in post-colonial Africa.¹ Though Mugabe’s reign had been plagued by a variety of crises, he had previously managed to maintain the loyalty of the armed forces and the ruling ZANU-PF. His efforts to purge high ranking ZANU-PF members, including notable veterans of the liberation war, eventually went too far with the dismissal of Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa. In a highly organized maneuver, armed forces under the leadership of Constantino Chiwenga effectively removed Mugabe on 14 November.

The coup was remarkable in a number of respects. Coups rarely unseat leaders as long-tenured as Mugabe. Further, though once described by Decalo as “the most visible and recurrent characteristic of the African political experience,” coups have become an increasing rarity.² No African state had witnessed a leader removed via a coup in over three years at the time of Mugabe’s removal.³ No regime had even experienced a failed coup attempt since Gilbert Diendéré’s ill-fated effort to seize power in Burkina Faso in September 2014.⁴ Mugabe’s ouster at the hands of the soldiers who had previously supported him is perhaps less surprising, however, when viewed in a broader historical context. Though coups have been more of a rarity in the continent’s contemporary politics, such a fate was quite common for Africa’s original


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generation of post-colonial leaders. Considering the fates of Africa’s initial independent leadership, or what we refer to here as the ‘old guard,’ illustrates the unfortunate frequency of military coups, including against some of the continent’s most prominent leaders. The ouster of Mugabe can then potentially be viewed as the final chapter of an earlier period of African political history, one that saw the original generation of leadership more likely to be removed via a coup than all other methods combined.

In the following discussion, we explore the fate of the original leadership in Africa south of the Sahara, while focusing on countries which gained independence from a European colonizer after World War II. Given the desire to focus on the first generation of independent political leadership, the following assessment necessarily omits cases that were not formally colonized (Ethiopia, Liberia), cases which received independence from another African state (Eritrea, South Sudan, Cape Verde), or technically earned independence prior to this period (South Africa). This results in a sample of thirty-nine countries, of which twenty saw the old guard driven from power by a military coup.5

However, the case also illustrates important differences. Of each of the twenty previous old guards who were removed from power via a military coup, all were either killed, imprisoned, or exiled in the coup’s aftermath. Mugabe’s post-tenure fate, as of this writing, is considerably better. While unique in this regard, Mugabe’s post-tenure fate is indicative of the contemporary era, one that has seen leaders fare considerably better following their ousters. We close the paper with a brief discussion of the reasons for these shifts in leader fates, focusing primarily on the desire of coup leaders and post-coup governments to attempt to legitimize the act.

Conceptualizing Coups

The ZDF’s removal of Mugabe included a number of notable characteristics, including efforts to convince both domestic and international audiences that the maneuver was not a coup. Beyond semantics, the distinction could have real world consequences by triggering a variety of bilateral or international frameworks that are designed to respond to coups. These efforts drew attention from many observers who suggested the event was not actually a coup, or perhaps a highly unusual one, citing both the desire to secure Mugabe’s resignation and the motives indicated in the original statement from the military. That statement, provided by Major General SB Moyo, claimed: “To both our people and the world beyond our borders, we wish to make it abundantly clear that this is not a military takeover of government. What the Zimbabwe Defence Forces is doing is to pacify a degenerating political, social and economic situation in our country which if not addressed may result in violent conflict.”6

Such overtures, however, are far from unique. Even some of Africa’s more infamous coup leaders have offered similar statements. Joseph Mobutu, for example, noted his “neutralization” of Patrice Lumumba was “not a military coup d’état, but merely a peaceful revolution…No soldier will be in power.”7 Even five years later, after removing Joseph Kasavubu, the international press did not take alarm over Mobutu’s actions. Reuters, for example, noted that “The thin, bespectacled young man does not look the role of the strong man.”8 Mobutu did, of course, hold on to power for over three decades. Idi Amin, meanwhile, noted he was “not a politician, but a professional soldier…mine will be purely a caretaker administration, pending
an early return to civilian rule.”9 Within a week Amin backtracked on his promise, establishing himself as president and overseeing a calamitous eight-year reign.

Post-coup statements on the lack of political objectives are also frequently accompanied by concerted efforts to legitimize actions. This can involve a variety of efforts, including securing a resignation, having the parliament endorse the effort after the fact, or—much more common recently—holding an election. Mugabe’s resignation would be but the most recent example of such efforts. Farcau specifically notes that putschists often go to great lengths to legitimize coups through securing resignations.10 Burkina Faso’s Maurice Yaméogo took such signaling a step further, having been quoted as saying he was “rejoiced” at his removal, going on to claim “I am happy that the Chief of Staff of the army, surrounded by this officers, has been able in perfect harmony with me, to act in such a way that the country can go forward.”11

Nor does popularity among the masses disqualify the event as a coup. Though thousands may have celebrated Mugabe’s ouster in the streets of Harare, popular support does not change the manner in which the incumbent was removed. Calls by protesters for military intervention are quite common, as are post-coup celebrations. For example, Christophe Soglo seized power from Hubert Maga following a general strike in Benin during which participants overtly waived signs calling for his removal.12 Just two years later, protesters again called for the military to remove Justin Ahomadegbe.13 Kenneth Kaunda, meanwhile, was put in the awkward situation where civilians celebrated while thinking the long-time ruler had been toppled. Kaunda, of course, survived Mwamba Luchembe’s move against him. These were all, of course, coups.

Scholars, pundits, and even soldiers can debate over the precise definition of a coup, and squabble over whether specific cases fit the definition. Many cases are quite ambiguous and are often coded in different ways by different data projects. There are, however, commonalities. Coups are generally thought of as efforts to unseat the current chief executive, waged via illegal (though not necessarily violent) means, by conspirators who are some part of the formal state apparatus. Unsurprisingly, this is primarily seen with actions from the armed forces. For the purposes of this discussion, we reviewed multiple commonly used data projects and directly evaluated the political fate of each leader. For consistency with prior research, our discussion below—unless noted otherwise—relies on the classification offered in the Archigos Dataset of Political Leaders.14 This project codes the manner of entering and exiting office, including considering whether the executive was specifically removed by the military. We do, however, describe a number of instances of disagreement with the data where necessary.

We present the mode of exit for each leader covered in this discussion in Table 1. The data indicate that nineteen of the thirty-eight “old guards” who had left office prior to Mugabe were removed by their militaries. The next most common manner of exit, natural death, only resulted in eight cases. Also revealing is that these nineteen military coups exclude other cases that narrowly miss the formal definition of a coup, but in which the military played a deciding role. For example, the Republic of the Congo’s Fulbert Youlou faced a crisis when confronted by a wide coalition of protesters during the Trois Glorieuses in 1963. His requests for support from both his own soldiers and a French garrison went unanswered, and he was instead requested by his army to resign.15 The military took an active role in the transition, which saw the constitution suspended, the national assembly dissolved, and the army’s selection of Alphonse Massamba-Débat as Prime Minister. Similarly, the “Malagasy May” saw Philibert Tsiranana
ousted under similar pressure from protesters in 1972. Though the armed forces were not
directly responsible for Tsiranana’s removal, executive power transferred directly to
Madagascar’s Defense Chief, Major General Gabriel Ramanantsoa.

Figure 1: Political Fates of Original Generation Leaders, Africa South of the Sahara

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Exit</th>
<th>Manner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>Al-Azhari</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Electoral Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>Fulbert Youlou</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Popular Protest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>Hubert Maga</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>Sylvanus Olympio</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>Milton Margai</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Natural Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>Léon Mba</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Maurice Yaméogo</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Kwame Nkrumah</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Abubakar Tafawa Balewa</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>Mwambutsa IV</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>Osman Daar</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Electoral Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>Modibo Keita</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Milton Obote</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>Philibert Tsiranana</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Popular Protest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>Grégoire Kayibanda</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>Hamani Diori</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>Francois Tombalbaye</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comoros</td>
<td>Ahmed Abdallah</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Rebels/Mercenary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Jomo Kenyatta</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Natural Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>Ouid Daddah</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>Agostinho Nejo</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Natural Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equatorial Guinea</td>
<td>Francisco Macías Nguema</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>Leopold Senghor</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Resigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>Seretse Khama</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Natural Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea-Bissau</td>
<td>Luís Cabral</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>Ahmadou Ahidjo</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Resigned-III Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaziland</td>
<td>Subhuza II</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Natural Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>Sékou Touré</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Natural Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Julius Nyerere</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Resigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>Samora Machel</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Natural Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>Leabua Jonathan</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>Kenneth Kaurida</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Electoral Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cote d'Ivoire</td>
<td>Houphouet-Boigny</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Natural Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>Hastings Banda</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Electoral Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>Dawda Jawara</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>Hassan Gouled Aptidon</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Resigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Robert Mugabe</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Military Coup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even leaders who managed to avoid being ousted by their militaries often survived
substantial threats. Jomo Kenyatta and Julius Nyerere, for example, infamously faced large scale
army mutinies in Kenya and Tanzania, respectively, in January 1964. Other leaders survived coup attempts, including Mozambique’s Samora Machel (1975), Somalia’s Aden Abdullah Osman Daar (1961), Angola’s Agostinho Neto (1977), Senegal’s Léopold Senghor (1962), and Zambia’s Kaunda (1991). Of the leaders considered in this study, only Botswana’s Seretse Khama, Cameroon’s Ahmadou Ahidjo, and Guinea’s Sékou Touré avoided these events.

The Fates of Leaders

African old guards also saw a much more direct and sinister side of their armed forces. Often “done with the connivance – where not the collaboration – of the west,” many leaders did not survive these threats, either in the political or biological sense. The post-tenure fates of leaders is summarized in Table 2. Specifically, the table reports the leader’s fate in the immediate aftermath of the coup. Notably, Patrice Lumumba was murdered months after his 1960 “neutralization” by Joseph Mobutu. Sylvanus Olympio was gunned down just a stone’s throw from the American embassy during Togo’s 1963 putsch. Soon after Nigeria’s 1966 coup, Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewaz’s body was found unceremoniously dumped on the roadside. Chad’s N’Garta Tombalbayev was later executed by his military during the 1975 coup against him. Equatorial Guinea’s Francisco Macias Nguema, meanwhile, was quickly tried and executed following his 1979 ouster.

Figure 2: Post-Tenure Fates of Original Generation Leaders, Africa South of the Sahara

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dem. Rep of Congo</td>
<td>Patrice Lumumba</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>Hubert Maga</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Imprisonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>Sylvanus Olympio</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>Léon Mba</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Imprisonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Maurice Yaméogo</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Imprisonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Kwame Nkrumah</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Exile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Abubakar Tafewa Balewa</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>David Dacko</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Imprisonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>Mwambutsa IV</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Exile</td>
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<td>Mali</td>
<td>Modibo Keita</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Imprisonment</td>
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<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Milton Obote</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Exile</td>
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<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>Grégoire Kayibanda</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Imprisonment</td>
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<td>Niger</td>
<td>Hamani Diori</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Imprisonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>Francois Tombalbaye</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>Moktar Ould Daddah</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Imprisonment, exile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equatorial Guinea</td>
<td>Francisco Macias Nguema</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Death</td>
</tr>
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<td>Guinea-Bissau</td>
<td>Luís Cabral</td>
<td>1980</td>
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<td>Lesotho</td>
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<td>Dawda Jawara</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Exile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Robert Mugabe</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Primarily benefiting from being abroad when the coup was undertaken, five of those ousted managed to immediately transition to life in exile, such as Gambia’s Dawda Jawara, Burundi’s Mwambutsa IV, Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah, Lesotho’s Leabua Jonathan, and Guinea-Bissau’s Luís Cabral. Beyond these, Uganda’s Milton Obote managed to return to power almost
a decade after being exiled by Idi Amin, though he would be permanently exiled after another coup against him in 1985. Most, leaders, however, were at least initially jailed. Mauritania’s Moktar Ould Daddah was jailed for a year before being exiled to France. David Dacko was imprisoned for over three years following Jean Bedel Bokassa’s New Year’s Day 1966 coup in the Central African Republic. Dacko managed to return to the presidency following the demise of the Bokassa regime, but was again ousted in another coup in 1981. Leon Mba’s detention was at least short lived, thanks to a swift French intervention that restored him to the Gabonese presidency.

Other old guards, however, were less fortunate. Despite initially being involved in the post-coup regime, Benin’s Hubert Maga was quickly accused of plotting against new president Christophe Soglo and promptly jailed. Maga’s supporters took action to secure his release, engaging in high profile attacks that required a military campaign against them. Maga was subsequently allowed to go into exile. Niger’s Hamani Diori, whose wife was killed during the coup against him, was imprisoned for six years, and held under house arrest for another seven before living out his final years in Morocco. Maurice Yaméogo’s public displays of support for the coup against him did little good, as he was quickly jailed and sentenced to hard labor. His four years of imprisonment included multiple suicide attempts. Mali’s Modibo Keita passed away while still a prisoner, nine years following his removal. Rwanda’s Grégoire Kayibanda and his wife disappeared following the coup against him. It is believed they were held prisoner in a secret location and intentionally starved to death.

That Mugabe’s fate would be sealed by his military is not unusual when compared alongside other old guards. He joins a pantheon of post-colonial and pan-Africanist leaders who were removed at the barrel of a gun, particularly when we consider Mugabe’s role as a founding leader. As the military continued the time-honored tradition of legitimization through ex post resignation and other forms of legal window dressing, the comparative safety of the ousted leader represents an important departure from this earlier era. Mugabe’s improved post-coup fate is itself likely a product of efforts to seek external legitimacy for both the coup plotters and subsequent government, a dynamic that appears to be especially strong in the contemporary era, and something that the Zimbabwe case saw the plotters do quite well.

Whereas other “more obvious” military coups, such as the 2009 ouster of Marc Ravalomanana in Madagascar that was followed by external condemnation, sanctions, and mediation attempts from relevant regional organizations including the Southern African Development Community, such international sanctioning did not follow the removal of Mugabe. Indeed, regional power South Africa, along with other key members of the SADC, did not voice any reservations regarding the military’s seizure of power and at one point appeared to be negotiating Mugabe’s resignation following his house arrest. The presence of some of the leaders of these SADC member-states at the inauguration of Mnangagwa seemed to indicate Mugabe’s prior loss of external legitimacy, accompanied by the calculated efforts of the military to legitimize the coup, led to the tacit endorsement of the action. Further, though numerous actors pointed to various flaws in the electoral process, the AU, SADC, and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa all refrained from criticizing the election.19

Aside from Mugabe’s prior loss of legitimacy, actions taken by the coup plotters and Mnangagwa likely played a role in tempering international responses. This is true for both
initial attempts to pitch Mugabe’s resignation as willing, as well as later efforts to improve the (though still flawed) electoral process. Mugabe’s status after the coup is also a likely product of this process. Our review of both the Archigos dataset and an original assessment of post-coup leader fates indicates that important temporal dynamics are at play. Of Africa’s old guards, 25 percent of those removed via a coup were killed during or immediately after the event. Looking more broadly at all African leaders ousted during the Cold War reveals that almost 20 percent of those removed via coups were killed. This is in stark contrast to the region’s contemporary politics, which has seen no leaders killed during or after the fifteen successful coups that have occurred under the AU.

This shift in fates is not coincidental. Though coups do obviously still occur, a growing anti-coup norm has encouraged coup plotters to take various actions to gain legitimacy. While most obvious with the now almost ubiquitous calling of post-coup elections, contemporary international norms have likely served ousted leaders in one important—yet underappreciated—manner: selling legitimacy is better served when the deposed are treated well.

Notes

1 We ultimately use multiple efforts to define and classify coup events. As a default, we define coups as “illegal and overt attempts by the military or other elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting executive.” Unless noted otherwise, we are referring to successful coups. See Powell and Thyne 2011.
4 References to failed coup attempts are taken from Powell and Thyne 2011.
5 This includes considering the removal of Mwambutsa IV of Burundi a military coup. The monarch fled during a 1965 coup effort from Hutu army officers, never to return. Crown Prince Ntare V acted as ruler in his absence prior to formally deposing his father in July 1966. He was himself ousted in a military coup just months later. The Archigos dataset considers the event to be a “removal by other government actors,” which would still qualify as a coup by most standards, though not of the military variety.
7 Frindethie 2016, p. 230.
8 Reuters 1965.
9 Otunnu 2016.
10 Farcau 1994.
16 Mazrui and Rothchild 1967.
17 Powell and Thyne 2011.
18 First 1971, p. 21.
19 The East African 2018.
20 Guinea-Bissau’s Joao Vieira was killed by members of the armed forces in March 2009. Due to the military’s disinterest in seizing power, and the constitutional manner of Vieira’s succession, the event is considered an assassination rather than a military coup.

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The East African. 2018. “Regional observers declare Zimbabwe election free and fair.” 1 August.
REVIEW ESSAY

Borderless Imaginations Under State Imposed Territoriality in the Horn of Africa

MUKERREM MIFTAH


Introduction

The Horn of Africa (HOA) is one of the most unpredictable, volatile, and complex regions in Africa and beyond. Unlike other parts of Africa, it is here where religion and ethnic-based identity politics, hydropolitics, extremely stifled public spheres, terrorism of some sort, and visible foreign hands ceaselessly and collectively function to render it virtually unsuitable for peaceful human existence. As of recently, the exodus of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of citizens from this thorny region have been presenting major foreign policy challenges to many of the European states and the Middle East. Refugees from Eritrea and Somalia, the principal focus of this review essay, remain much higher. Understandably, there are many and intricate factors underpinning this phenomenon. Eritrea, ever since its independence, has never been able to move beyond the unflinching sterile polemics and stubbornness of its first and only president, Isaias Afwerki. Built around the negation of Abyssinian rule under its monarchical administration and the constant, real or imagined, “threat” of the TPLF (Tigray People’s Liberation Front) led EPRDF (Ethiopian People’s Republic Democratic Front) regime in Ethiopia, the Eritrean totalitarian rule, unable to provide for its citizens, made life a living hell for all Eritreans. Under Isaias, Eritrea got its independence but turned into a failed state, with no working constitution, no regular elections, no freedom of the press, forced conscription, and most importantly, no food to eat. Accordingly, the only option available for all Eritreans is either they chose to suffer under this arrogantly state-doctored underdevelopment and political oppression or flee their country hoping for the best. Yet, this unabated fiasco, in Martin Plaut’s latest book, Understanding Eritrea, goes much deeper than that.

An equally problematic condition in the HOA concerns the Somali people. This part of the HOA is like no other. Somalis were essentially forced to live in more than five distinct places and/or states for decades: British Somaliland (Hargeisa based Somalia), Italian Somaliland (Djibouti), Ethiopia ...
(Ogaden), and Kenya (Northern Frontier District). This is, of course, in addition to the thousands or even million(s) of Somalis “settled” in Europe, North America, and the Middle East. Yet, the postcolonial Somalis’ life is not essentially different in many ways either. There are as many loyalties and as much disfranchisement today as before in the different places where Somalis live. The people face, much like Eritreans, constant drought, famine, and food insecurity. However, unlike Eritrea, which has a deeply repressed society with less security challenges and thus relatively stable (or “stuck”), the case with the Somalis is fundamentally different.

The Somali people fight different wars at the same time in different places. For instance, Ethiopian Somalis in the South Eastern part of Ethiopia struggle to find a safety valve from the relatively relentless political oppression in the region. Hundreds and even perhaps thousands of Somalis were detained, raped, tortured, killed, and made to flee their place of residence due to the TPLF-backed Abdi Mahmoud Omar’s (“Abdi Iley”) dictatorship in Ethiopia’s Somali region until recently. In addition, the region is known for its deep-rooted corruption, repression of human and democratic rights, poverty, famine, drought, and food insecurity in Ethiopia. The Somalis based in and around Mogadishu fight against many things on different fronts: terrorism, poverty, direct or indirect foreign interventions and invasions (for instance, Ethiopia, Eritrea, USA), food insecurity, an unreliable and unstable state, intra-and-inter group loyalty driven frictions, and others. The Somalis in Kenya, which Keren Weitzberg dealt with it effectively (and interestingly) in her latest work *We Do Not Have Borders*, struggle with different problems with different causes. One, among others, is the problem of belongingness and identity.

**The Horn of Africa on the Move**

In spite of all these existential crises, the year 2018 brought a convincingly new episode promising an optimistic future in the yet-to-be written political history of the HOA. With the increasingly encouraging reform efforts underway in the last three-to-four months, the EPRDF’s (TPLF led) induced twenty-seven year long crisis in Ethiopia has just recently been clearly appreciated. Not only did the TPLF dominated EPRDF government cause unfathomable chaos in Ethiopia (political, ethnic, economic, and religious), but also to neighboring countries in the HOA (for instance, Somalia, Eritrea). However, with the advent of Dr Abiy under the OPDO (Oromo People’s Democratic Organizations) led EPRDF, many analysts and ordinary Ethiopian citizens alike are clearly realizing how much Ethiopia (and many Ethiopians) have lost under the TPLF rule. Now, unlike the last twenty-seven years, there are signs that religious and ethnic based sensibilities in Ethiopia are receiving appropriate attention.

The face of Ethiopia, which, for the last two and a half decades, has been like the face of a gangster bullying other states in the HOA, is beginning to send out signals of hope and peace in the region. The recent Ethio-Eritrean rapprochement, initiated by the newly appointed Ethiopian Prime minister Abiy Ahmed, is a very relevant instance that would potentially transform the overall political landscape of the HOA. Previously state sanctioned people-to-people socioeconomic and cultural interaction between Eritreans and Ethiopians is now a practical possibility. Within days of this initiative, people of the two states immediately started moving in both directions, many of whom overwhelmed by the idea that they will be meeting with their close relatives and friends: father and son, husband and
wife, mother and daughter, and others. Unsurprisingly, the majority of Eritrea’s ethno-linguistic stocks have their close siblings in Ethiopia and vice versa. State sanctioned artificial territoriality might have hampered the organic interaction of the same people, with the same religion, ethnicity, and culture, living in different and bordered nation states, the trans-territoriality of interaction, although having gone through a period of hibernation, remained well and alive to these days.

Both Martin Plaut and Keren Weitzberg deal with these issues in their own ways. While Plaut essentially wrote his book in more of journalistic (for which he has significant experience working for BBC) rather than the academic manner that Weitzberg employed. Methodologically, unlike Plaut, she effectively utilized a wide array of data sources, including in depth archival and field researches. In addition, it is less likely that one would find such putative statements and generalizations as “Eritreans (and Ethiopians) are culturally disposed to being closed and secretive” or “Ethiopians and Eritreans are reserved by nature.” A close engagement with the book would also reveal that Plaut’s principal data source was limited, measured by the frequency of references and citations, to the various reports of the United Nations. Except for being extremely loaded with information, and therefore, taking significant time to properly comprehend it timely, Weitzberg’s balanced and penetrative engagement with the people of Somalia, especially among those living in Kenya was a complete success.

Understanding Eritrea and Somalis in Kenya

Plaut divides his book into eleven parts. Essentially, however, it deals with three major issues. It begins with the political history and background information up to the point of Eritrean independence in 1991. Here Plaut closely examines the birth and evolution of EPLF (Eritrean People’s Liberation Front), later renamed as PFDJ (People’s Front for Democracy and Justice); Isaias Afeworki’s quick step up in political leadership; the Eritrean civil war between ELF (Eritrean Liberation Front) and EPLF; and others. The second important issue he addressed mainly concerns the relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea both in historical and contemporary perspectives. On the one hand, he explores the nature of the relationship between the Eritrean quest for independence and the response of successive Ethiopian governments since the last monarchical government under Haile Selassie I. On the other hand, he tried to account for the cooperative turned hostile interaction between Isaias Afewerki’s EPLF and Meles Zenawi’s TPLF. Lastly, the other important focus of the book is its appraisal of Eritrea’s regional and international roles. In this regard, three relevant points are worth mentioning: security, informal economy, and migration crisis. Of these, he shows how Eritrea’s only legally licensed and currently ruling PFDJ party played key roles in destabilizing neighboring countries, especially Ethiopia, Somalia, and Yemen. This has been done through the various military groups (such as Al Shabab and Islamic Courts Union) trained and financed by the PFDJ government in the Greater of Horn of African countries.

Another point is the PFDJ’s elite run “hidden” or “covert economy” through its “clandestine networks” of transnational companies and businesses in East Africa (Tanzania, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, and Somalia) and the Middle East (Dubai and Qatar). Although this involvement is not officially recognized (or “registered”) in Eritrea, it assumes “a global financial structure” which enjoys, among other things, “tax havens.” Of these party-controlled companies, the biggest commercial operation remains the “Red Sea Trading Corporation” specializing in import and export. Other commercial fronts included hotels,
publishing houses, insurance companies, contraband, and smuggling. Finally, the last critical point in Eritrea’s international relations is the never-ending outflow of Eritreans. Plaut asks: “Why do as many as 5,000 Eritreans flee across borders every month?” He explains that there are economic and political factors underpinning this growing nightmare effectively making Eritrea depopulated. However, he found out that, unlike any other problem, it was the forced and undefined conditions of conscription that drives this.

Plaut’s *Understanding Eritrea* makes an important contribution to our understanding of the Horn of Africa in general and Eritrea in particular. Through his close diagnosis of Eritrea’s political history, he found out that understanding Eritrea meant understanding its political torch bearers and the historical and political circumstances within which they functioned. He rightly noted without exaggeration that Isaias Afwerki “is the individual who controls the destiny of Eritrea and whose decisions . . . have serious implications for the rest of the Horn of Africa.” This makes sense, partly because we have not seen any strong opposition, armed or not, that can withstand this totalitarian regime either from within or outside except for some fragmented efforts and dispersed voices of protests and activism. Another important contribution of this book was its misplaced prediction but having critical implications for the future of Eritrea. If Plaut knew what we know today in early 2019, he would probably choose to rewrite one third of this book. Given the unprecedented developments currently unfolding in Ethiopia and, by implication, the Horn of Africa, things appear much less gloomy than some three to five years ago. The point here is the OPDO led reforms in Ethiopia and changes in the nature of relation between Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. A very important development in this regard is the resumption of Ethio-Eritrea relations in different spheres. Interestingly, instead of Eritrea, Plaut’s misplaced scenario of prediction applies exactly to Ethiopia. He pointed out that:

A group within the current hierarchy would take the reins of power. They would then be in a position to reach out to the opposition movements. An intense dialogue could take place leading to an interim administration and elections. The way would then be open for a legitimate government to be formed, guaranteeing the rights of all citizens.

Keren Weitzberg’s *We Do Not Have Borders* seeks to cast a critical eye on what it means to be a Somali and citizen in Kenya. She explores various factors conditioning the loyalty and identity of the Somalis in the Horn of Africa in general and Kenya in particular. She examines the relative efficacy of what she called “exclusionary nationalism” and “settler colonialism” on the one hand, and the socioeconomic and cultural organizations of Somalis and the borderless transnational networks on the other hand. The former captures the burdens and limits of modern nation states and postcolonial Africa. The British and the postcolonial Kenya, for a considerable period of time, operated on the assumption that there were “natives” and others (“aliens”) in the land. The British colonialists thought that the Somalis were different both in their physique and cultural practices (including religion) and as such preferred them for certain activities over the “native” Kenyans. However, it should be noted that many Somalis themselves played important role in this (re)negotiation of identity, some of them claiming that their origin was linked in some ways with Arabs. This had its own consequences. On the one hand, it allowed the Somalis in Northern Frontier District (NFD) to navigate the possibilities of ascertaining their presence and legitimate position in the country, and on the other hand, it enabled the Somalis to develop organizational and
in institutional mechanisms to deal with the (changing and) challenging circumstances in which they found themselves. This, in turn, helped in the later advent of the Somali nationalism in the form of unity and greater Somalia project, fuelled by both Somalis’ own experiences in the Horn of Africa and the growing presence of Somalis in the diaspora.

The other important aspect of the book is its appraisal of the borderless and trans-territorial bond among the Somalis living in Kenya, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somaliland, Somalia, and the diaspora, and how it developed through time, both as a response to the never ending us-and-them discursive dialogue wherever they live, and the need for a place where all Somalis will be living with own close kinsmen and culture. The retrospective (re)imagination and construction of what it means to be a Somali, by the politically active, those in diaspora, and elite classes, as one people with common sense of origin and culture played a very important role. Weitzberg clearly observed that there were Somali “political entrepreneurs” who effectively instrumentalized “pastoral life style,” “Islamic ties of brotherhood and Ummah,” “overarching lineage,” and “non-territorial and non-secular affiliation” in the service of Pan-Somali nationalism and the “territorial nationalist project.” However, it did not simply go unchallenged. In fact, as Weitzberg rightly noted, the Ethiopian state, among others, took it as an existential threat that needed to be squashed at any cost. All in all, Weitzberg’s engagement with these issues was very penetrative and multilayered. Apart from being well balanced in terms of the triangulation of data and self-reflexivity, the cases she included throughout the text effectively made her arguments and nuanced positions unique, relatable, and rewarding to readers.

Conclusion

Given the unpredictability of changes causing chains of events, it is yet to be seen what actually goes beneath the surface of the seemingly ceaseless state violence and interethnic conflicts ravaging the Horn of Africa. There are researches and theories which rely heavily on historical, economic, religious, political, cultural, identity and related other internal factors to account for this. There are, on the other hand, those who base their explanations on the role of external actors in the region, both in the past and present. However, some others tried to synthesize these dimensions in a manner that recognizes the challenges and problems of the Horn as another human experience embedded both in the circumstances of the past and present. Weitzberg’s We Do Not Have Borders is one among the few eclectic works in the post 2000 period that brilliantly showcases a commendable measure of sagacity. This is a very important and original contribution to the study of Africa, especially North East Africa. Political Science, African Studies, and Somali Studies students definitely gain more than what a typical 250+ pages long book can offer. Almost a third of the book is packed with directly relevant materials for future and further reading and research. Although less of an academic venture, Plaut’s Understanding Eritrea can be a valuable asset for those who are interested in the political history of Africa’s most repressive state, Eritrea.

Notes

1 Zelalem 2018.
3 For TPLF’s ill-intentioned moves against Ethiopian Muslims, see Miftah 2015.
4 The Guardian.
5 Miftah 2018.
6 Plaut 2016, pp. 4, p. 32.
7 Ibid., pp. 134-48.
8 Plaut 2017, p. 2.
9 Ibid., p. 130.
11 Weitzberg 2017, p. 92.

References


BOOK REVIEWS


This book portrays the titular global regions of Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean as potential resources for, and collaborators with one another, due to similarities in their history and present-day status in the world of development research and practice. The book overall is fashioned from a series of essays contributed by scholars on various topics, which have been organized into three parts.

The first part compares and contrasts the three regions, focusing on the similarities and differences between Latin America, and Africa in several arms with some discussion of the Caribbean; namely, geographically (and consequently, in natural resources and economy) colonialism and its aftermath, and the social and cultural contexts both before and after colonialism. Subsequently, it discusses the need for leaders to engage the African diaspora. The fourth chapter attempts to draw parallels between Asian countries with regards to foreign policy and relations with former colonial rulers and engagement in the African diaspora.

The second part carries forth the discussion from the first, emphasizing more recent results of collaboration and intercultural engagement within and amongst the global South—or lack thereof, in the case of North-South relations and certain components of the global South as well. The case of Fidel Castro’s engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa (specifically Angola and the Congo) is examined in the context of the history of the two regions as an example of collaborative and cooperative efforts between the two regions of concern. Thereafter, the economic impact of the Cold War on sub-Saharan Africa is detailed using both economic theory and quantitative data to back up the assertions stated, particularly in Ethiopia and Somalia.

The third and final portion discusses future possibilities for collaboration. Primarily, this part focuses on highlighting the opportunities that lie in education, tourism, and socioeconomic or healthcare avenues. These opportunities do have some chance for collaboration and reconciliation with these regions’ former colonial masters. Healthcare, specifically, is discussed as a strong potential avenue for furthering intercultural engagement, collaboration, and results geared towards systems strengthening, with Malawi receiving significant attention in the last essay.

The historical context at the beginning and the continual discussion of social and ecological systems present throughout the course of time in all three regions are strong and substantiated. The explanation of economic frames in Chapter 10 with formulae and backing up assertions with quantitative information in this chapter and throughout the book are highly appreciated, as is the nod to health sciences, specifically HIV/AIDS prevention efforts; so is the obtaining of information from reputable sources, listed throughout the text.

There are concerns throughout the text, however, specifically with assertions on Asia being successful at beating “brain drain” compared to their Latin American and African counterparts.
Skilled workers do routinely leave those countries for study and do not return upon degree completion. This is because the value placed on a US or Europe degree for an out-of-country return in either India or China is not always as high as is intimated in the third portion of the book. There are several sources that cover this and transnational mobility more thoroughly (e.g., numerous publications by Fazal Rizvi). There are also concerns with the organization of the book in the middle; notably, the order of part II. For the sake of flow and consistency North-South and South-South collaboration should have been the first two chapters in this portion respectively, instead of having it broken up by a section on regional integration in SADC. Also, throughout each essay, the actual definition of what constitutes Latin American countries varies slightly; a consistent definition would likely be of great assistance.

In summary, the book starts off strong with history and a concise argument; and ends strong with perfectly reasonable suggestions for future work across disciplines and boundaries. The middle portion does substantiate the central argument that bi- and multi-lateral cooperation is needed, but not in a particularly cohesive fashion. This reviewer applauds the majority of the content present in this book, though cautions against drawing in Asian countries in the discussion of African and LAC nations. Further discussion and research is certainly warranted in this area.

Sonal Sathe  
University of Florida


Professor Bangura’s book strengthens my conviction that Sierra Leone history is now only studied in ethnic compartments. Arthur Porter and Akintola Wyse put the Krio at the centre of Sierra Leone history; Arthur Abraham studied the Mende, Gibril Cole wrote on the Muslim Krio and Alusine Jalloh studied the Fula. Bangura seeks to valorize the role of the Temne in Sierra Leone history. His does so using brilliant counter arguments, and sometimes merciless critique, of the works stated above. In chapter one, Bangura fires his first salvo and makes it clear that his thesis is a revisionist: “the dominant literature [which puts Krio as the heroes of Sierra Leone history] constrains our understanding of the contributions of various groups in the social formation of [Sierra Leone]” (p. 7). He stresses the role of the Temne in shaping the history of Sierra Leone since 1787, when the first cohort of “ex-slaves” who were to become a new ethnic group called Krio, were re-settled in land owned by Temne King Niambana (p. 6). These settlers and their story began to dominate the narrative of the territory now called Sierra Leone. The Krio “history dominates Sierra Leone historiography” (p. 7) as a result of the Krio rise to elite status thanks to their early access to Western education. By highlighting the role of the Temne in making modern Sierra Leone, Bangura seeks to underscore the role of the un-elite, the “non-Western educated elites, marketers and local intellectuals in the success of the British colony” (p. 7).

Chapter two explores the fluidity of the Krio identity. While earlier scholars claimed the Krio had “fixed identity,” the author argues to the contrary that in fact the people who identify themselves as Krio today “shifted their identities...for political and economic reasons” (p. 22).
Krio identity was “instrumental,” a tool to reach higher heights. Bangura’s chutzpah does not stop in merely seeking to un-identify the Krio; near the end of the chapter, he wants them to be called “Freetonians” (p. 23) which he believes has regional rather than cultural underpinnings.

In chapter three, the author explains Temne identity by invoking their primordial institutions like the Temne Tribal Authority which won the trust of the British rulers. But in this chapter, Bangura seems to conclude that as far as identity was concerned, the Temne and the Krio shared a lot in commonality: fluidity, malleability, and instrumentality (pp. 64-65). The collaboration between the Temne and the British in the Indirect Rule system is probed in chapter four. Bangura celebrates the role of the Temne traditional authorities in ensuring the success of the British colonial project. Thus, while the Krio ran the municipal council of Freetown, it was the Temne “tribal administration which enhanced the activities of local and municipal governance of the colony” (p. 101). Unwittingly, Bangura shows that the Krio were not the only collaborators of the British!

In chapters five and six, the author explores how Temne cultural iconography and associations became potent tools for mass mobilization and acculturation. Through the associations like Alimania (p. 195), Temne not only solidified their identity, but also “encultured” their neighbors. Temneness became a valuable commodity, “an asset” which only those who imbibe Temne culture and speak Themine, the language, could afford. This strand of Temne glorification continues into Chapter six. Here the author puts the Temne at the very centre of the spread of Islam in Sierra Leone. Bangura here credits the “triumph” of Islam in Sierra Leone to the missionary work of Temne Muslim scholars like Alhaji Sheikh Gibril Sesay, and Islamic spaces like the Quranic schools called immaniyya (p. 131). Bangura calls the Temne work in spreading Islam a “triumph” because the colony was founded “with Christianity at its core” (p. 165). At Independence in 1961, it had become a “multireligious” entity where Muslims form the vast majority of the population and have very visible presence including a two term Muslim president (1996-2007) and a vice president, as we write this review.

In Chapter eight Bangura highlights the prominent role of Temne market women in shaping modern Sierra Leone. While the earlier literature focuses on Krio women like Mrs. Agatha Cummings John, who served as Mayor of Freetown in the 1960s, Bangura highlights the role of little known but equally industrious and influential women like Sukainatu Bangura and Mammy Fatu, who made their fortune, and name as market mammies.

This book is a resounding revision of modern Sierra Leone history. The compartments will one day go full circle; then we will have the definitive Complete History of Sierra Leone!

Hassoum Ceesay
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Community tourism represents a recent phenomenon in international tourism, promising ethical consumption for those willing to embark on a different type of holiday, and poverty alleviation for the hosts in places where tourists visit. But exactly what type of holiday affords such a moral pursuit? In The Good Holiday, anthropologist João Afonso Baptista explains the
entangled world of development and tourism through fourteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in southwestern Mozambique (with a short excursion to Niassa Province in the north). Community tourism combines travel and leisure with ethical consumption through commodification aimed at fostering local socioeconomic development. Baptista terms this assemblage “developmentourism” because it constitutes a “hybrid industry, in which the strategies, activities, and goals of development and tourism are the same” (p. 12). The merging of development and tourism is both descriptive and analytic. Visitors from the Global North engage in more virtuous forms of tourism through consumptive practices that purportedly benefit specific communities, and in doing so, allows the visitor to recalibrate the self through these supposedly benevolent acts. Thus, benevolence takes on a new form of value as it is enacted in the service others.

In exploring the links between development, community tourism, and moral self-fashioning, *The Good Holiday* focuses less on the tourists, and more on the people with whom tourists interact. Baptista’s ethnography centers on the community of Canhane in Gaza Province, Mozambique. For professionals in the development and tourism industries, Canhane symbolizes the success of community tourism since its inception in 2004. Canhane’s foray into community tourism emerged in the wake of the creation of Limpopo National Park (LNP) in 2001, which is part of a larger transfrontier conservation area shared between Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Following the establishment of LNP, the Swiss nongovernmental organization (NGO), Helvetas helped launch the Covhane Community Lodge in the park’s buffer zone, hoping to attract tourists because of its proximity to the park. Under this model, revenue generated by the lodge would be used for Canhane’s socio-economic development. Thus, tourist infrastructure held the promise of future development.

Through an introduction and seven substantive chapters, Baptista examines the tensions and paradoxes of community tourism in Canhane, including a social history of the village (in Chapter One) and chronicles how development professionals use community as a political technology to make residents more legible to visitors while subjecting locals to more nonstate forms of governance (Chapters Two, Three, and Seven). Ironically, and not surprising, the growth of developmentourism has done more to empower the consultants and facilitators of this enterprise than local residents. However, despite persistent inequalities between tourists, development professionals, and community members, residents were not passive recipients of outside interventions, but rather used novel discourses and social relations to pursue their own interests within this new form of governance. For example, in the brief material from Niassa, residents conceptualized tourists as donors, requesting and expecting them to contribute money to the area’s school.

Chapters Four and Five provide some of the most insightful ethnographic events as Baptista documents the social logics behind the improved and functioning, but unused, water infrastructure, taking the reader into the world of gendered power relations, the production of space, social status, and local idioms of authority. Because the new water tank was positioned away from the local leader’s homestead and the public space his homestead symbolized, many residents perceived the new infrastructure as private, and were unlikely to use it. Exemplifying how space is produced, used, and embodied, Baptista takes us through a typical village walk, introducing us to the sites and people whom tourists encounter on this contrived stroll through...
Canhane. Interestingly, the water tank is the site most visited by tourists because it materializes the virtues of development through community tourism. It provides a stark material and symbolic contrast to the shallow well where many women continue to collect water. Finally, Baptista reflects on his positionality and the embodied forms of knowledge that fieldwork produces. However, his positionality as a Portuguese anthropologist working in postcolonial Mozambique disappears after a brief anecdote in the introduction and left me wanting to know more about how he negotiated his identity throughout the duration of his research. Ultimately, this book will be valuable to scholars and practitioners interested in the ever-diversifying landscape of international development that includes community tourism, voluntourism, and do-it-yourself approaches to socio-economic change.

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The Central African Federation, which comprised Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (now Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi) and lasted only ten years (1953-1963), has continued to be the subject of numerous scholarly studies. Andrew Cohen’s book is a significant addition to the scholarship on the reasons for the collapse of this Federation. Rejecting the mono-causal perspective of many of the earlier studies on British decolonization in Africa, Cohen presents a detailed multi-causal explanation of the failure of the Central African Federation. His central argument is that the collapse of the Federation was brought about by “a complex interaction of African dynamics, metropolitan concerns and international pressures” with the “increasing economic weakness” of the Federation and “international pressures” being the “most decisive.” (pp. xxx 203).

Cohen’s book has four chapters (excluding the introduction and conclusion). The introduction lays out the author’s core arguments on the collapse of the Federation and the dynamics of British decolonization policy in Central Africa. It also gives a clear and concise critique of earlier and recent historiographical approaches to the rise and fall of the Federation. Chapter one focuses on the origins and early years of the Federation highlighting the contested ideas and processes that led to the creation of the Federation against the wishes of the majority of Africans in the federal territories. It also shows that though characterised by economic prosperity, the first three years of the Federation fostered continued African opposition to it as the majority of them did not benefit economically and politically from this prosperity.

Chapter two gives a detailed analysis of the failure by the Federal and territorial governments to fully implement the policy of multi-racial partnership that the Federal experiment claimed to be founded on. Cohen shows how this failure of multiracial partnership together with a slump in the Federal economy (caused by a fall in the price of copper, its main export), generated serious local and international pressures that contributed to the eventual collapse of the Federation. It served to galvanize African nationalist opposition to the Federation and lead to violent anti-Federation protests by Africans. The Federal and territorial
governments’ heavy-handed suppression of these protests attracted growing international criticism of the Federation and calls for its dissolution.

In Chapter three Cohen examines how shifts in British party politics as well other international developments such as the growing pressure to decolonize exerted on the British government by the United Nations and in a more gentle way by the United States of America resulted in British public opinion and government policy turning against the Federation. He also considers and accounts for the different attitudes of the big mining companies in the Federation towards growing African demands for self-government and the dissolution of the Federation. The final chapter illustrates how economic and political pressures at the African, metropolitan and international levels finally defeated the Federal government’s efforts to keep the Federation intact.

Among the main strengths of Cohen’s book are that it gives a nuanced explanation of the collapse of the Federation that is situated within the broader context of the African, metropolitan and international dynamics that shaped British decolonization policy towards Central Africa. It also revises some of the previous viewpoints on the roles played Sir Roy Welensky, the Federal Prime Minister (1956-1963) and by big business in the economics and politics of the Federation during the decolonization era. In addition, it is based on extensive archival research and is written in clear English.

However, the book does have some shortcomings. Cohen’s analysis of the dynamics that shaped Britain’s decolonization policy in Central Africa largely ignores how Britain’s experience of decolonization in Asia in the 1940s, particularly the lessons that it learnt from dealing with Asian nationalism in its Asian colonies, influenced the direction and nature of British decolonisation policy in Africa. His main arguments, which are so clearly expressed in the introduction and conclusion to the book do not come out very strongly in the second, third and fourth chapters of the book as his own voice tends to be overshadowed by the voices from the numerous sources he extensively quotes.

Despite these limitations, the book is undoubtedly a major work of scholarly research and will be very useful to students and scholars interested in the Central African Federation and in British decolonization in Africa.

Tapiwa B. Zimudzi
University of Zimbabwe


Virginia Comolli offers a concise history of the rise of the Boko Haram social movement in Nigeria including the multiple trajectories it has taken to date. It traces the group’s overarching goal towards transiting Nigeria into an Islamic state. The book delves into the historical background of Islam in Nigeria in particular tracing the rise of Islamic fundamentalism that morphed into Boko Haram and post-2015, the Islamic State of West Africa. It examines the emergence of religious uprisings such as the 19th century Usman Dan Fodio’s movement with implications for the emergence of the present insurgency (pp. 11-16). The book further debates the contested influences of religious identities and the rise of insurgent violence in Nigeria (pp.
The book weaves an excellent analysis of how radical groups in Northern Nigeria emerge and consolidate. These processes of splintering, transformation and modernization are explored. This kind of process analysis speaks to other contemporary insurgent groups beyond the current case study (pp. 25-42).

*Boko Haram* offers an apt description of the internationalization of the movement. It provides multiple internationalized connections in Nigeria’s borderlands. In the book’s epilogue the author points to the complexity and the spill over of the movement. Key explanations for its reach across Niger, Cameroon, and even Chad include weak governance across the region (pp. 85-95). There is a reference to cultural and ethnic ties that cut across several of Nigeria neighbors in what Comolli characterizes as an “arc” of insurgency. The book traces the cross-border human security implications brought about by the insurgency, most pronounced since adopting more radical stances post 2009. These among others have included refugeeism (pp. 92-93). The author further delves into claimed and contested connections between Boko Haram to external Islamist movements such as Al-Qaeda in the Magreb (AQIM) (pp. 98-101), and since July 2014, its support and consequent allegiance to the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS) (p. 97), including the Al-Shabaab in Somalia.

The book further interrogates the ever-evolving modus operandi of the group. There is rich description of tactics used by the movement to achieve its intended goal. There is among others the use of kidnapping as a bargaining chip for release of their militants and or family members in government hands (p. 88). Other tactics common with similar insurgent movements such as the Al-Shabaab and the ISIS are described. These include the use of suicide attacks, launch of martyrdom videos, use of improvised explosive devices, rocket propelled grenades (p. 105), and use of human shields.

A section of the book is also devoted to the counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations both by the Nigerian government and international partners. It details both the hard and soft power responses to the Boko Haram menace. These have included militarized responses, anti-terror legislations, to the problematic aspects of amnesty for former militants. The book critiques hard power responses such as militarized responses for their human rights violations. Additionally, hard power approaches further weaken trust levels between security agencies and communities in counter-insurgency operations. The book also provides a significant shift of the Nigerian state counter-insurgency from hard power to soft power approaches. Soft power interventions such as counter-radicalization programs are seen in more preventative lenses as opposed to reactive measures (p. 137). Reference too is made to the rise of non-state actors in counter insurgency work through the Civilian Joint Task Force on Terrorism (pp. 123-124). Other measures discussed include cross border cooperation (states in Nigeria border lands) and international cooperation principally through hard and soft power skills from the US, UK, and France. The international partnerships are further linked to security and commercial interests in the region.

Several future predictions are made in the book’s epilogue. One notable view relates to the possibilities of Boko Haram’s rebranding and adaptability as times moves on. Reference in particular is made to its 2015 rebranding to the Islamic State in West Africa (p. 165). The book ends with a prognosis of the future—that to pre-empt the rise of future movements, addressing poverty and opening up economic opportunities ought to be part of the counter-response.
key strength and overall contribution of the book is its rich comprehensive account of the rise of the Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria and its constant evolution. It is distinct in that it weaves a complex historical background to help contextualize the social movement. This book is a welcome read to students and practitioners in the fields of peace and security studies including the sub-field of terrorism studies.

John Mwangi Githigaro  
St. Paul’s University, Limuru, Kenya


*A Poisonous Thorn in Our Hearts*, is divided into seven chapters covering the Sudanese people and their identities, politics, economy, development, insecurity, and interdependence between the two Sudans and the world. Each chapter captures the events and personalities that shaped and continue to shape the destinies of the two Sudans. The author had conversations from major players to politicians, rebels, diplomats, NGOs, civil-societies and ordinary citizens in both Sudans. The introductory part establishes the basic history of the two Sudans. It traces the contact of Sudan with Egypt and later Britain and how the faulty foundation for Sudan was laid. The British preference of the Arabs over the Africans planted the first seed of conflicts. Chapter one focuses on different identities in united Sudan and later South Sudan as an independent country. The racial discrimination and Arabs domination over Africans contributed to the lingering crises first in united Sudan and later Dinka suppression of other ethnic groups in the Republic of South Sudan. The Sudans are examples of the failure of nation building in most colonized states.

Chapter two explores the politics of the National Congress Party (NCP) and President Bashir under which South Sudan seceded in 2011. Bashir came to power when he overthrew the democratically-elected prime minister, Sadiq al Mahdi in 1989. The politics of domination and suppression by Khartoum and introduction of an Islamist brand or Sharia fueled opposition especially among non-Arabs and non-Muslims in both the north and south. To agitate for political inclusiveness and economic development of marginalized groups, ethnic rebels sprang up to fight the central government. The involvement of high-ranking military officers in Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in politics prolonged the crisis. After independence from Sudan, South Sudan has been governed by the SPLA, most of whose members are former rebel generals.

Chapter three examines the economy of the two Sudans. Oil was the major source of revenue and sustenance of the Sudanese economy before separation, but most oil fields are found in the South. The shutdown of oil production by South Sudan over disagreement on pipeline payments devastated both economies. Debts and poverty were rising in both, signaling the interdependence of the two states on each other. After South Sudan independence, the Bashir led government diversified the economy into agriculture and mining, though recording little success. For South Sudan, the period of the shutdown shows that to get the economy of the new state running it must maximize its oil revenues.
Chapter four explains corruption in the two Sudans. Since Sudan is confronted with ethnic clashes and wars, military and security services spending accounts for more than 70 percent of the budget, thereby limiting money for developmental projects. Corruption is widespread in Sudan which threatens the country’s progress and prosperity. Prebendalism is also a major concern. South Sudan is now making the same mistakes as Sudan.

One thing that is sure of Sudan is insecurity. The two civil wars, the Darfur conflict, and the South Kordafan and Blue Nile conflicts have militarized the country. The South Sudan is not safe either, for even after gaining independence rebels groups took up arms against the new state. Ethnic cleansing and inter-ethnic rivalries resulted in a civil war just two years after independence. The support for local rebels by the two Sudans aggravated tension between and within the two states. For both countries to have peace, they must stop supporting rebels to destabilize each other.

Chapter six explores the relationship between Sudan and the outside world. Sudan and the U.S. are enemies for obvious reasons. First, the Sudanese believe U.S. was pushed for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement which guaranteed South Sudan regional autonomy before secession. Second, the U.S. backs the International Criminal Court attempt to get Bashir arrested for crimes committed during the two civil wars and the Darfur crises. Third, the U.S. was also in the forefront of other western countries placing an embargo on Sudan.

As expected, South Sudan sees the U.S., Israel, and other western countries as its benefactors that made independence possible and as dependable allies for the new country. To counterbalance the U.S, Sudan turned to China, the Arab League, particularly Qatar to some extent Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Bashir’s support for rebel groups in neighboring countries like Chad, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Uganda means Sudan has more regional enemies than friends.

Finally, the unresolved issues like the Abyei border, citizenship, oil pipeline and debt servicing continue to raise tension between the two countries. The citizens of both countries continue to pay for the action and inaction of politicians in both Sudans, who are in most cases fighting for personal aggrandizement. For peace and development to reign, the two countries must know that their destinies are tied at least for some decades to come.

Isa Ishaq Ojibara
University of Ilorin


This detailed account is a dual biography of West Africa magazine and its first editor, Albert Cartwright. Its author, Jonathan Derrick, worked for the newspaper for years and related its earlier history from 1917 to 1947, when Cartwright founded the paper and built up its reputation as a respectable London-based weekly source of news about Africa. Using Cartwright’s family papers and memoirs, Derrick unveils the perplexing nature of Cartwright, a Lancashire editor, who for thirty years ran a colonial magazine at the height of British colonialism in West Africa from Fleet Street, London. Yet, he was sensitive to Africans and open to African problems, and for that reason was highly appreciated by Africans. Over time, West
Africa and its editor grew critical of the British colonial office and its policies in the region and of British firms and their treatment of Africans and defended the cause of African nationalists. 

West Africa started as a mouthpiece for British traders in the British colonial territories of Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, and Gambia. It was mostly funded by Liverpool and Manchester trading firms present in West Africa. Though some influential people were largely involved in the establishment of the magazine, West Africa was politically an independent paper. This does not at all suggest that the journal’s overall policy was anti-colonial. Just like the many British journals concerned with Africa, which first appeared in the 18th century and followed British colonial expansion and settlement everywhere, West Africa fully accepted British colonial rule and the established trade-based West African economic system as part of the colonial scheme and considered it as beneficial. The journal’s policy did reflect the standard view of the empire during the early decades of the twentieth century and before. The general assumption then was that British rule in Africa was there to remain and that it should remain. 

How did West Africa then differ from mainstream colonial papers concerned with Africa, and West Africa more particularly? Educated Africans or “educated natives” as they were referred to, were present in the pages of the magazine since its inception, and especially during Cartwright’s editorship. This is because the journal’s editor was receptive to African grievances and did not share the widespread aversion to them. Contrary to all those who believed that western-educated Africans should be denied any political role, Cartwright thought that they were best placed to take leading political positions in ruling their countries once these obtained independence, though he believed that would take a long time. Cartwright was far from comfortable with this British stubborn prejudice often expressed in violent and obsessive manners and clearly reflected in the system of ‘indirect rule’ which was primarily set up to deprive the natives from political rule. Though Cartwright edited West Africa during a period of relative peace and continuity for British colonial rule, and though its pages detailed normal events such as the appointments of governors and other officials and their speeches, special occasions like the empire exhibition, the passing of some prominent personalities, the activities of Christian missions, colonial budget statements and so on, and though much of the paper was meant for the British “coaster,” West Africa did not show the usual widespread antipathy and contempt towards Africans. Ironically, the change was to come and soon, in 1947, when Cartwright left the paper and the colonial landscape was altered. West Africa soon became a journal for Africans and concerned with African affairs and African gradual progress after independence. 

This book about West Africa and its first editor Albert Cartwright is a significant addition to the much-neglected history of the African-oriented British colonial press in the first half of the twentieth century and the overlooked personality of one of the most respected yet controversial editors of a British colonial newspaper. The book is a good read on British colonial rule in West Africa, the colonial press and Africa, colonial trade and business, and colonial prejudice.

Adel Manai
Qatar University

The Yoruba are a distinct cultural and language group with dominant presence in the western part and the central belt of Nigeria. There are of course Yoruba people in other parts of the world such as Benin Republic, Togo, Sierra Leone, Cuba, Brazil, Haiti and South Carolina. As a categoric group, the Yoruba speaking people across the world would be up to one hundred million and the second most populous ethnicity in Africa. It is therefore significant that a book of this magnitude is devoted to the culture and customs of the Yoruba to make the world appreciate the vital aspects of a people who have contributed and are still contributing to the development of the human race in several spheres. What cultural import do the Yoruba hold for the world? Are there customs, values, and natural or scientific discoveries of the Yoruba that have been or could be globalized? What values are encapsulated in the belief systems of the Yoruba? What civilizing and developmental efforts were undertaken by the ancestral Yoruba before encountering the internationalizing enterprise of the Christian missionaries in the early 15th century and the colonial powers of the late 17th century? These and many other questions agitated the minds of the authors of this book.

Toyin Falola and Akintunde Akinyemi have written a comprehensive and authoritative book which utilized an interdisciplinary approach with multi-faceted perspectives drawing insights from anthropology, arts, language and linguistics, literature, history, religion, sociology, philosophy, psychology, criminology, laws, technology, medicine, pharmacy, engineering, economics, education, political science, music, theatre, popular culture, cultural studies, migration, and diaspora studies, gender, etc. to elucidate all the important aspects of Yoruba culture and customs. The book comprises 75 chapters organized into eight parts: Language, orature, and language use-part I; Arts and Aesthetics- Part II; Religion, Festivals, and Belief system-Part III; Economy and Economic System- Part IV; History, Politics and Governance- Part V; Family, Health, and Education –Part VI; Ethics and Social Control- Part VII, and Social and Cultural Change- Part VIII. The scholars who contributed chapters to this huge volume were drawn from Africa, Europe, and North America, and in their different renditions they demonstrated incredible understanding of their subjects of concern.

The primary objective of the book is to equip teachers and students of Yoruba language overseas with a textbook that would complement courses on African humanities, African Studies, and African diaspora studies which often encompass Yoruba culture, customs, and historical experiences. A careful examination of this book would reveal its richness in terms of the diverse aspects of its focus covering essentially all the facets of Yoruba civilization which could be globalized through this kind of efforts made by these very insightful scholars. The question of whether this publication can actualize the expressed objectives of the authors does not require any assumption but a bold affirmation that any curious student of Yoruba studies would find it as a treasure trove of valid and indeed verifiable facts about the culture and customs of this great ethnicity in Africa which is impacting the world through its incipient influences across the globe.

There are two valid critical comments that one can make about the book. The first is its organization. The introduction of the culture and customs of the Yoruba ought to begin with the history of the origins of this unique ethnic identity. Who are the Yoruba? How did the Yoruba
come to be and where did they come from in the world? The chapter by Bukola Oyeniyi on History and Historiography which is placed as chapter 43 could have been part of the introductory chapter or converted into chapter one. However, Oyeniyi’s account is based purely on written histories of the Yoruba which unfortunately is inadequate because the Yoruba and their civilization predated modern written histories. There are impeccable oral tradition sources of Yoruba history which could have been elaborated upon in the chapter. It is anti-intellectual for scholars to discredit or discountenance oral traditions on grounds that they cannot be empirically validated as if all that we hold today as historical facts can all be verified in contemporary times. The second shortcoming of this important book is that it does not even make scant reference to the effects of the globalization of western values on Yoruba culture and customs while amplifying the global import of the Yoruba culture and religion. How much of these customs and cultural practices enunciated in this book are still popularly observed by the Yoruba? The truth is that the Yoruba ethnicity and other ethnicities with their cultures and values are being assailed and traduced by the forces of globalization which have almost succeeded in superimposing western values on the psyche of humanity.

A book as rich as this, however, could elicit interest in Yoruba studies and inspire further enquiry into the subject by curious students with interest in unravelling the unwritten historical facts of the Yoruba ethnicity. To organize a book of this size is not an easy task. The editors have shown remarkable courage in presenting Yoruba civilization to the world. By stringing together in a huge volume, the diverse aspects of the culture and customs of this unique and progressive ethnicity in Africa, Professors Falola and Akinyemi have documented for posterity what generations after them would never have found out about the pristine values, aesthetics, belief systems, dialects and linguistics, Ifa divinity and divination, and other characteristics of the Yoruba life world. This book should be read by historians, culture enthusiasts, and specialists in African Studies, sociologists and anthropologists, and scholars with interest in state formation in developing societies of Africa.

John Olushola Magbadelo
Centre for African & Asian Studies, Abuja


The media has become a new means of communicating with God in Africa. The authors in this book demonstrate the importance of media and its transformation of religion. Today, Africans use radio, television, mobile phones, internet, and social media to communicate with God. James Brennan examines one of the early radio stations, Sauti ya Mvita in Mombasa Kenya. The Muslim domination of the station created discomfort among Christians. Sauti ya Mvita gave way to new radio stations like the Voice of Kenya (VOK), a very uncomforting development for Muslims (p. 32). Francesco Zappa investigate the role Islamic print media play in Mali, where orality remain an important channel for transmission of “traditional” and modern culture. Reading habit is low, but enrollment in modern Arabic schools is higher than imagine (p. 40). The sale of locally produce and imported Arabic books is widespread in bookshops in Bamako, which become a platform for interaction among customers, writers, booksellers, and the society
(p. 45). Muslims in Mali perceive their engagement with Arabic as engagement with Islamic (p. 52).

Brian Larkin discusses the importance of media in the reform ideology of Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, the first Islamic scholar in Nigeria to use modern media techniques to communicate his ideas about Islam. He translated the Qur’an and hadith books to Hausa, enabling ordinary Muslims access while illiterate ones could access his preaching on audio and video cassettes (p. 64). Since then, media technology has shaped the activities of many Islamic groups in Nigeria and has challenged the Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya (p. 74). Muhammed Haron examines the rise of two common but diverse Muslim radio stations in South Africa, Radio Islam and Voice of the Cape (VOC). Haron argued that these Muslim stations have created a platform for debating and discussing Islam and Muslim identity. VOC focused on Islam and the significant of cultural, political, social and economic issues in regard to Muslim private/public religious life (p. 84). While radio Islam promotes what is called “pure” Islam, but its approach makes it unpopular in Johannesburg (p. 89).

Johannes Merz examines the African movies, where the devil is in a constant fight against Christians and God. This gave a diabolical portrayal of traditional African religion and modeled Christianity in a positive way (p. 107). Merz emphasize that “popular video films keep their audiences aware of the imminence and transcendence of the spiritual realm and of potential danger and problems caused by it,” while Katrien Pype analyzes the Pentecostal Churches’ engagement with the media as a form of spiritual warfare with the devil, a central belief in Pentecostal movement in Africa (p. 118). Mobutu’s regime restricted the media, which had suppressed religion and when freedom of media is achieved, wealthy families, politicians, and churches obtained their own television and radio stations, which flourishes Pentecostalism in Kinshasa (p. 121).

Hamadou Adama describes media awareness among Cameroonian Muslim clerics in the public sphere. The political monolithism of Ahmadou Ahidjo restricts radio and television and local traditional Islamic scholars (marabout) were allocated airtime to disseminate religion (p. 139). The scholars lack the official languages (English or French) to provide effective communication, they were only fluent in local languages (Hausa and Fulfulde). The 1990s brought the establishment of many FM radio stations and the rise of charismatic young Muslim scholars fluent in French and English (p. 144). The young scholars attract the public challenging the government radio and TV stations to transform their religious programs. Kwabena Asamoah focuses on the African Pentecostals’ internet usage. The use of cyberspace give Pentecostals status and visibility among other churches in Africa. The Pentecostals perceived the presence of the media as God’s gift for the purpose of evangelization (p. 158). Pastor Christ Oyakhilome (Christ Embassy Ministries) emphasized that Christ instructed him to “get on the internet” and to make impact in the ministry (p. 165).

Ehab Galal examines the Arab satellite channels and their impact on the Arab media landscape in North Africa. Before the event of 9/11, Islamic preachers on these channels stressed the need for a Muslim relationship with God but after 9/11, the approach of the scholars was redirected to the defense of Islam and Muslims and rejecting any connection between Islam and terrorism (p. 184). Rotimi Taiwo investigates the influences of text messaging on religious communication in Nigeria. The Pentecostal churches in Nigeria have discovered the
conveniences of text messaging in communicating with their members. Text messages containing prayers and wishes are sent on daily basis; at the beginning of a day, month, and year or during festivals (p. 197).

Marleen de Witte studies the Africania Mission, which reaffirm an “African” religious culture and a new “African” self-consciousness. A major conflict is the secrecy of traditional practices of religion and openness of the media (p. 208). The media and the Pentecostal pastors have created a negative image of African religion and therefore, Africania use the media and public arena to discuss the African belief, ancestors, spirits, etc. and to call for converts (p. 213). The contributions of Vicki Brennan look at the Lagos public space where sound, people, and items give choice to individuals. Although public space belongs to everyone, religion has increasingly dominated it. Many religions were visible in the public space; religious music and video films, loudspeakers, radio and inspirational literatures (p. 228). The Muslims as well as traditional African musicians were also challenged to become relevant in the public space (p. 229).

Asonzeh Ukah explores the activities of the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission in its effort to sanitize the Nigerian airwaves from “unverified miracles” of Pentecostal pastors. But who provide the guidelines on the qualities of a genuine miracle, how can it be verified, and by who? Government may regulate content on its media to ensure quality programs and to reduce the marketing of miracles; however that will reduce the huge revenues that comes from the Pentecostal churches over the use of national media (p. 253). According to Samson Bezabeh, the widespread use of electronic and print media among the Muslims in Ethiopia raises Christian concerns. This include the translation and circulation of sermons of foreign Islamic scholars among Ethiopians and local publications, VCDs, and DVDs on Islam (p. 267). The Ethiopian Christians also produce printed materials to counter the Muslims. David Chidester contributed an insight into Zulu Shamanism to illustrate the transnational media flows emanating from Africa. Zulu dreams, visions, and mysteries have become widespread on the internet including local films, videos, musical CDs, and DVDs. The use of the internet enables connectivity between practitioners in Africa and others around the globe (p. 286).

Dauda Abubakar
University of Jos


Dr. Paul Hopper, a leading expert on the politics and cultures of globalization at the University of Brighton, offers an exemplary exploration of the many dimensions and constantly expanding frontiers of international development. Revised and updated, few accounts of this kind provide readers with a more comprehensive look at the field, from theory to practice. Suffused with contemporary events and cases, Understanding Development is a pristine piece of scholarship and is ideal for anyone new to development studies as well as seasoned scholars and practitioners across a broad range of disciplines.

Hopper’s book encompasses numerous key issues and challenges, beginning with a brief history of development that considers various strands and conceptualizations. Uprooting the complexities of development, Hopper exposes a host of questions that have become seemingly
sidelined. Deeper thinking and probing, contends Hopper, is constantly required to achieve what development actually intends to and sets out to do. Tracing the growth and maturation of development studies, from the immediate aftermath of the Second World War through to modern period, Hopper addresses some of the most ambitious development initiatives projected well into the future. Chapter 2 deals with the theory side development, challenging well-established frameworks and suppositions that are arguably too broad to provide adequate treatment of the issues within development.

Parallel to the conceptualization platform, Hopper provides a normative interrogation of past development writers, stating, for example, that previous writers can be called into question for “portraying the relationship between the West and the Third World as simply one of domination and subordination, and thereby underplaying the complex nature of this interaction” (p. 50). Hopper, in turn, calls for a deeper critique of the tools at our disposal for further study and practice of development. Chapters 3-11 navigate the different categories of development from health, education, and population, gender and development, to migration, displacement, and humanitarianism, with each chapter offering approximately twenty-five pages of overview and analysis. Accompanying nearly every chapter in this thirteen-chapter book are numerous examples and case studies, ideally situated to enhance the clarity and learning outcomes of the book overall.

Chapters 12 and 13 highlight the roles and thus basis for contentious debate of supranational entities like the United Nations (UN) and its often-celebrated Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Together, both chapters deliver a fine treatment of the growth and consequences of such initiatives and carry with them questions regarding their effectiveness. “For some critics,” according to Hopper, “the problem with the SDGs is not just that there are too many goals, but more significantly a number of them are broadly expressed. Arguably, they constitute statements of intent rather than coherent policy goals” (p. 290). Treatment of MDGs and SDGs is thorough, touching on different aspects of each with in-depth looks at their political, social/cultural, and economic elements. The conclusion provides a stimulating round-up of the field, its achievements and where its trajectories might lead researchers on the road.

Hopper deserves much praise for having infused the work with a palpable interdisciplinary spirit, bridging economics, political science, anthropology, sociology, and history. The book’s academic value is amplified by a flood of pedagogical instruments that include chapter objectives bullet points, chapter summaries, recommended readings, figures/graphs, boxes presenting case studies, and useful websites for quick reverence of key facts, figures, and reports. Not only is Hopper’s book comprehensive in scope, it succeeds in touching on nearly every facet of development, making it an ideal introduction to the field. Much of what can be found inside Understanding Development is firmly entrenched in the context of globalization, a laudable verity of a book on this topic which cannot be said of its counterparts. The contents simultaneously respond to the call for greater attention to public policy and its relationship with development. Accordingly, the author deserves acclaim for having fulfilled the objectives set-out in the book and for opening the learning gates to those residing beyond the development discipline.
Hopper’s revised and expanded edition of his original work stands as a partial remedy to others that fail to account for the importance of interdisciplinary and multifaceted scholarship in development. This is particularly the case for introductory-level students with little-to-no prior exposure to development studies and who may not have first-hand experience about the importance of crossing-traditional boundaries of scholarship in a field that increasingly addresses issues inter-disciplinary and non-traditional in nature.

Scott N. Romaniuk
University of Trento


This study is a critical assessment of the decade and a half old organization, the African Union (AU). In the introductory section Karbo and Murithi flag the latest Kagame Panel Report, which opines that the AU must be made “fit for purpose” if Africans have to solve their problems (p. 2). Various contributors for this book, mostly academicians, then scrutinize the journey of the AU, where it has reached and how it can be reformed further.

The book is organized into three parts each looking at the AU from different angles. The first part takes the vantage point of Pan-Africanism. Chapter one argues that the establishment of the AU has led to a resurgence of the idea of pan-Africanism as is evident through institutions like Pan-Africa parliament. Consequently, AU must be made into a supra-national body to fructify Nkrumah’s notion of a federation of African states. Chapter two, in contrast, sees the AU as an inter-state organization that does not represent the union of peoples but only states. It then goes on to discuss Afrocentric Pan-Africanism that would help to unite the African diaspora as well. Chapter three examines the potential of the Africa Group at the United Nations to help the AU forge common African positions at the global level.

The second part of the book dissects the alphabet soup of AU institutions. It analyses their strengths and weaknesses; the challenges they continue to face and recommends suitable solutions. Most authors here agree that though the AU has been an improvement over the Organization of African Unity (OAU), especially in terms of promoting human security, there is scope for improvement. Chapter four asserts that various architectures of the AU — the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the African Governance Architecture (AGA) and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), must be synergized if the Agenda 2063 of creating “a peaceful and secure Africa” built on “good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and rule of law” (p. 78), is to be realized. Chapter five focuses on improving the continent’s apex body, the AU Commission, and makes an interesting observation about it being charged with too many and contradictory functions such as respect to resource mobilization. Chapter six deals with the APRM and sees a need to revitalize this indigenous “bold new approach” of good governance (p. 147) by making its recommendations mandatory and speeding up its review cycle. Chapter seven on APSA makes the African Standby Force (ASF), as its focal point. Although operationalized recently, it is discussed how the ASF, the continent’s collective security tool, still faces the challenges of logistics, funding and the lack of political will to form a force for the northern region. Chapter
eight examines the evolution, contradictions and limitations amongst various Africa’s Socio-
Economic strategies: the Lagos Plan of Action, the African Economic Community, and the latest
Agenda 2063. Chapter nine provides a comprehensive overview of the relationship between the
AU and Sub-Regional Economic Communities. It shows the unevenness in their relationship
within the two dimensions of trade and peace and security.

The third part reviews the relations of the AU with external actors. Chapter ten considers
South Africa’s engagement with the organization and interrogates as to how South Africa has
pursued policies to make itself the “hegemon and gateway to Africa” (p. 258). Chapter eleven
optimistically views the partnership between the African Union and the UN as “strategic inter-
regionalism” that will help Africa in addressing its peace and security challenges. However, it
also notes the tensions in the relationship in the cases of Libya (2011) and Mali (2013) and flags
other problems especially the issue of external funding in AU led peace operations. Chapter
twelve offers a fresh approach to look at the rising engagement of China with the continent
from the Bandung Conference to Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) to the strategic
partnership in 2006. It dismisses the Western-driven narrative of China colonizing Africa and
gives reasons for the same. Finally, in the last chapter Murithi expresses that “the continental
integration is not yet a concrete reality” (p. 307) and there is a need to reform the AU.

Written lucidly, this book is an extensive appraisal of the AU. However, it suffers from the
drawback of being loaded with factual information making some portions less captivating.
Nevertheless, discussing the future action pathways that the AU should take, the book comes at
an appropriate time. With recent developments like the adoption of the Agenda 2063, one needs
to imagine a revised version of the AU that will truly be a solution to Africa’s problems. In this
respect, this book recommends itself to scholars, policymakers, teachers and students having an
interest in the African Union.

Tejal Khanna
Jawaharlal Nehru University


McCauley’s book offers inimitable insights that satisfactorily explain why conflicts in Africa are
sometimes ethnic and sometimes religious even when players do not change. While the
trajectories of ethnic and religious conflict on the continent are subjected to diverse theoretical
explanations, McCauley’s volume raises innovative arguments pertaining to when and how
conflict frames are politicised by political entrepreneurs to achieve their optimal political goals.
The idiosyncratic quality of McCauley’s book is illustrated by the evidential base of case studies
drawn from personal, community, and national experiences of ethnic and religious conflict in
Africa. The volume is organised into two parts that are sub-divided into nine chapters.

Chapter one introduces the book’s central argument that the frame a conflict takes is the
function of political mobilisation by political entrepreneurs. It goes on to set the boundaries of
the argument which transcend why conflict emerges and define central concepts in the book.
The chapter also makes the interesting assumption that the manipulation by political
entrepreneurs of individual identity preferences to advance their political agendas illustrates the existence of multiple social identities with varying salience.

In chapter two, McCauley develops a comprehensive theoretical framework to account for mobilizational disparities across ethnic and religious groups in Africa. The chapter aptly historicizes how ethnic identities and Christianity-Islam religious differences developed at various stages of political organisation and state formation on the continent. It is demonstrated that unlike in other parts of the world, land-based conflicts in Africa assume an ethnic frame whilst morality-oriented conflicts assume the religious frame, albeit from different baselines from which political entrepreneurs mobilize support for their optimal goals.

Building on the hypotheses in chapter two, chapter three aptly presents the empirical evidence from Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana regarding points of departure from which political entrepreneurs politicize ethnicity and religion to induce preferred behavioural outcomes. The chapter illustrates the extent to which and how political entrepreneurs might mobilize the support of identity coalitions or generate the enthusiasm of an identity group around optimal political goals.

Chapter four examines the observable implications of the evidence presented in chapter three. The chapter reflects on how religion and ethnicity induce distinct individual preferences regarding geopolitical material goods vis-a-vis geographical moral goods. Chapter five explores the political logic accounting for the preference by political entrepreneurs of either ethnicity or religion in mobilizing for distinct political ends. The chapter demonstrates that the framing of conflicts in Africa is determined by the relationship between different identity groups, associated individual preferences and how these are strategically manipulated by the political elite to their advantage.

In chapter six, McCauley explores the dynamics of the Cote d'Ivoire conflict. The chapter illuminates on how the Cote d'Ivoire conflict which had its roots in political and economic disenfranchisement assumed identity dimensions. Furthermore, the chapter explains the dynamics that characterised the culmination of the conflict in question from ethnic to religious when the players remained fixed. Using the protracted Sudan civil wars, chapter seven was devoted to explain the nexus between mobilizational differences and the framing of a conflict along ethnic or religious lines. The chapter explains the totality of the trajectory of the political manipulation of one identity type over the other in mobilizing support for political goals. Hence, the first war took an African-Arab ethnic frame while the second one assumed a Christianity-Islam religious frame when the roots were political and economic.

Chapter eight satisfactorily explains how regional struggles for power between historically hostile political players modelled along Hausa-Fulani and Igbo ethno-linguistic differences assumed a Christian-Islam frame when the conflicting parties did not change. In a nutshell, the chapter successfully accounts for the alteration by political leaders of the frames of the Biafran war in Nigeria to match the conflict context. Chapter nine concludes the volume by explaining how conflicts usually rooted in political and economic factors are politicised to assume identity-based frames. Indeed, as illustrated in the case studies, this assumption of a conflict frame from ethnic to religious to alter the outcome emanates from the strategic choices of political entrepreneurs who model the frames of conflict to match their political goals and the complex political contexts.
I find McCauley’s volume quite informative on issues regarding the dynamics of ethnic and religious conflict in Africa. The text is highly recommended for academics, students and practitioners in the field of conflict studies.

Torque Mude

*Midlands State University, Zimbabwe*


McKay opens this book with the introduction of the history of care in Africa to set the scene for health care and the impact that various agencies, global health care projects and governments have had in the access to health care for men, women and, children in Mozambique Africa. Throughout the book, the author presents the stories of citizens in Maputo and Morrumbala who require basic health care for diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. Doctors without Borders, World Vision, Red Cross, Global Children’s Fund, Samaritan’s Purse, and Save the Children are just some of the agencies that McKay discusses to indicate that access to health care is unequal. McKay presents the idea of multiplicity to examine the existence of the roots of “unequal, inextricable and frequently obscured relations between public and nongovernmental institutions” to demonstrate the inequality of health care for many people in Africa (p. 31). The reader is presented early on with the paradox at the core of this book which is cited as, “the unequal and uneven material and social ramifications of ‘global health’” (p. 2).

The purpose of this book then is to contextualize medicine and health care in Mozambique and to inform the reader that the funds and physical resources that come from non-government Organizations (NGO’s), United Nations (UN), American agencies, and the African government are not getting to those who need it. The author accomplishes this by (a) examining the stories of global health that are focused on epidemiological experiences; (b) examining the therapeutic materials (meds) that enable physical well-being that can extend life expectancies; and (c) examining the relations that are fostered by studying a clinic’s public employment practices and relations between family and friends (p. 15). Specific examples given by informants in the book are used by the author to discuss the lack of access to care for those who need it based on infrastructure, rehabilitation, environmental risks, management, hygiene, food sources, and sanitation.

Each chapter in this book has been put together to provide representations of the reality of health care in Africa and to disentangle those who are assumed to provide care (global experts such as NGO’s) from those who receive it (patients and public systems). Chapter One is an introduction to Global Children’s Fund (GCF) community health projects as a means of exploring the entanglements of public, para-public and nongovernmental health entities in Mozambique. This chapter outlines the fact that the role of the state (government) was not only to provide health services but to ensure the distribution of access to health care. Chapter Two gives attention to community health projects that focus on how “community” is central to this focus. Chapter Three is an extension of the second chapter and how NGOs are expected to provide a humanitarian effort to be able to provide health care for those in Africa. Chapters Four through Six use ethnographic stories of the informants to provide a critical and reflective
approach to the reality of health care in both Maputo and Morrumbala. These chapters contain first-hand experiences from health care workers, volunteers, patients and even community members on the practices of humanitarian health care practices. The reader can see in Chapters Four through Six that the author used his own reflexivity to be able to dig deep and provide a story about health care in Mozambique that is representative of the people and not about organizations and capitalism.

McKay achieves the purpose of the book by providing information about Clinica 2 where a significant portion of ethnographic research was conducted since 2007. First-hand accounts in the form of ethnographic interviews and observations were conducted by McKay to present the reader with a visual picture of the reality of health care in Mozambique. In essence, this is an ethnographic health care study that provides a representation of global health in Africa. The author conducted interviews and observations with doctors, nurses, psychologists and patients over time to be able to present the practices of health care. Throughout this ethnography, the reader can determine that the author became very close to those in Clinica 2 to obtain an intimate profile and perspective about the changes and development of health care in Mozambique. This is evident by the specific examples that the author uses in the book to demonstrate the cases that NGOs like (GCF) have not been able to provide medicine, good, care and support to those who need it. Informants such as Joe, Tomas, Paula, Chico, Carlotta, Francisco, and Violeta provided information about the clinic, its policies, and patients to demonstrate how proper health care is not provided. Through the life experiences of informants, the author does a good job at describing the atmosphere and attitudes of those who receive and/or provide the health care and/or those who do not get proper health care. From the examples the author uses pages 61-85 the reader can see the importance of ethnography and the emphasis on volunteer work and donor resources to create a discussion about medical care and treatment for women and children who suffer from AIDS. For example, “as the AIDS epidemic began in Africa, there emerged problems with a lack of food, medicine and problems with accessing care from actual doctors and nurses in the organizations. Most often volunteers who got little compensation were providing the care” (p. 67).

The intersectional used by the author allows the reader to focus about who is receiving the care and the connections to class, race, gender, and identity. Using examples from Chico, Carlotta, and Francisco the author provided detailed accounts of the disparities of those who do/do not receive health care based on structural, geographical and/or gender-based inequalities. Those who lived in impoverished conditions were most likely unable to gain access to proper health care based on geographic location which is exemplified by people like Francisco. For example, Francisco felt that his future was grim because he lived too far away from the resources. Despite receiving food support from the United Nation’s World Food Programme to deal with his HIV diagnosis. “It is hardly enough to live on and I am stuck living so far away” (p. 113).

In conclusion, the author has examined whether NGOs and government practices have been involved in access for proper health care for those in Africa. Although, governments and NGOs such as Free the Children and Global Children’s Fund are expected to be at the center of administering health care there are still problems and roadblocks for those who need access to proper care. Ethnography, which is at the core of this research, allowed McKay to locate forms
of knowledge in relation to the distribution of global health in Africa. McKay ends with the following to contextualize the book for the reader: “the work that happens in the meantime points to the futures of care and justice that enduring if troubled relations might enable” (P. 198).

Emma Posca
York University


This work builds on Professor Newitt’s previous studies on Portuguese colonial history and the subsequent post-colonial connections. He adopted a *longue durée* historical approach in the study of Mozambique (formerly Portuguese East Africa). He selected a wide range of themes, ranging from a description of the country’s environment and ethnography; the pre-colonial centuries; the creation of a Portuguese colony; colonized experiences; and the post-colonial political and socio-economic developments, including the harrowing civil war between FRELIMO and RENAMO between 1977 and 1992.

The country has various natural resources, including its rivers, lakes, mountains, and the coastal waters of the Indian Ocean. The rivers were valuable for Portuguese navigators as they established themselves in the African interior (pp.1-3). There were also other environment-related historical challenges, especially the regular occurrence of drought and famine since the 16th century. The country’s lowland areas are also infested with tsetse flies that attack cattle and other livestock. Other historical dents include the slave trade, where inter-ethnic warfare emerged aimed at capturing slaves for sale to Afro-Portuguese and Indo-Portuguese warlords, who in turn sent the slaves to the New World (pp. 5-6 and p. 54).

Newitt traces the links between Mozambique and Portugal to the late 15th century. The Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama in 1498 laid the ground work for Portugal’s commercial interests, when he spent time at Mozambique Island on his journey to India (p. 7). That initiated Mozambique’s participation in the trade, in both human and natural resources, with the Indian Ocean World (p. 9). The period between the 16th and 18th centuries was characterized by laying down foundations of latter-day Portuguese rule, which included the establishment of various ports and commercial centers along the Indian Ocean coast, including parts of Mozambique, creating the so-called Portuguese Trading Post Empire. It allowed Portugal to control the trade route to India, and to gain access to the resources of the African interior. African resources, such as gold and ivory, would in turn be used to purchase spices in India (pp. 23-25). The relationship between the Portuguese and the Africans was characterized by elements of resistance and collaboration. The former occurred when the Portuguese imposed themselves, as they sought to monopolize trade. Collaboration occurred from local rulers and societies that benefitted from trade opportunities and security (pp. 25-29).

The Portuguese trading posts were manned by “captains” who collected natural resources, taxes, and excise duties, a portion of which was transferred to the Portuguese Crown. Chartered Companies, such as the India-based Diu Company, were empowered by the Crown to conduct business, rule the local people, and pay dues to the Crown (pp. 29-31). The Prazo System also
allowed businessmen to take charge of huge chunks of land, and the Prazo owners, like feudal lords, provided security to the local population and collected tributes for the Crown (pp. 36-40).

Portugal established formal control of Mozambique, driven by both commercial and humanitarian motives. Chartered companies such as the Mozambique Company fulfilled the economic motives, while humanitarianism, widely described as the “civilizing mission,” was associated with the spread of Christianity and the suppression of the slave trade (pp. 73-77, 88-89). It would be after the First World War, that a colonial policy framework was instituted, when President Antonio Salazar introduced the Colonial Act, 1930. Under the Act, Portugal and its African colonies operated as a single state, with Lisbon as the capital. Colonial subjects were to undergo assimilation in the process of becoming Portuguese citizens (p. 124). Despite some late colonial development initiatives, the colony remained largely underdeveloped, the people were very poor, and the assimilation policy proved to be a failure (pp. 136-37).

The lack of opportunities for Africans became the breeding ground for the rise of nationalism, with some educated Mozambicans forming political parties such as FRELIMO and COREMO. They later took advantage of a succession dispute in Portugal, to call for independence, which came in 1975, with FRELIMO as the party in power (p. 138-45). Unfortunately for Mozambique, a civil war soon ensued, with both colonial and post-colonial causes (pp. 148-50).

Post-colonial Mozambique has thus not fared any better. In large measure due to the destruction and disturbances of the civil war. Other factors include the unsuccessful socialist policies; lack of national unity; lack of democratization to legitimize FRELIMO’s rule. Elections are often rigged by the ruling party (pp. 152-53, 178-80, 185-86). The patronimial system has allowed corruption to creep into the state system, mostly to the disadvantage of the rural poor (pp. 193-95). The country is among the poorest in the world, ranking 180 out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI) list in 2014. Life expectancy is only an average of 55.1 years, and unemployment as high as 22.5 percent (pp. 201-02).

This is a must-read book for those who study the history of the state and society in Africa. It would serve as a textbook for teaching a survey course on pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial Mozambique. However, it should be clarified that most of the thematic areas highlighted lack an in-depth analysis, which is common for most surveys. This shortfall aside, I would recommend this book to those interested in such fields as African History, the Portuguese Empire, and the influence of the international community on African affairs.

Paul Chiudza Banda
West Virginia University


In the summer of 2016, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was in Africa visiting Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, and Ethiopia, four countries seen as friendliest to Israel. In the summer of 2017, Netanyahu was once again in Africa, as a special guest and speaker at the 51st summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In 2017, Netanyahu was to grace the inaugural Africa-Israeli summit in Togo which failed, but the brazen Prime
Minister still procured a joint meeting with ten African heads of governments in Nairobi on the sidelines of Kenya’s Uhuru Kenyatta’s swearing ceremony in November. Why is Israel so keen on Africa? Arye Oded’s very readable book is an attempt to answer this question and others by tracing the crests and troughs of Israeli-Africa relations starting from the late 1950s to the present (2016) flurry of the Israel’s “return to.”

As with his foundational 2010 article on the same subject, the book takes a historical approach dividing the seventy or so years into three epochs; the honeymoon years (1950s-1973), the disengagement years (1973-1983), and the return to Africa years (1983-the present). As clearly brought out in *Africa and Israel*, the principal objectives of Israeli diplomacy in Africa has been to win African leaders’ hearts on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly at the African Union as well as to counter anti-Israeli bias in national outlook and multilateral institutions. In the honeymoon era, Prime Minister Golda Meir is the star of Israeli diplomacy making five trips to Africa between 1958 and 1964. She propounds a veritable diplomatic rationale for close relations as follows: Africa and Israel shared the bonds of historical victimhood. If Africa was sympathetic to Israel’s vulnerable position with regard to the Israeli-Arab conflict, then Israel would provide African states with the technical aid needed to build their new states. Through scholarships, agricultural training and military assistance, PM Meir sets up the modus operandi of Israel-Africa development cooperation and by 1972 Israel had thirty-two embassies in Africa.

The book is remarkably because in documenting the history of Israeli-Africa relations, it brilliantly captures Africa’s own internal struggles and disillusions with the Arab-Israeli conflict and gives fascinating flickers of African agency in attempting to resolve the Israeli-Arab conflicts such as the pioneering but now forgotten 1967 “Ten Sages” Organization of African Unity (OAU) attempt to resolve the Israeli-Egypt conflict. *Africa and Israel*, however, remains disappointingly silent and unreflective on several facets of Israeli’s diplomatic forays in Africa. For instance, during the golden years, whether in Zaire primarily, but also to a lesser degree in Uganda, Congo Brazzaville, Togo, and even Kenya, Israel played a hand in strengthening and protecting the fledgling authoritarian tendencies of founding leaders, an authoritarianism which blooms with catastrophic effect in the following decades. What has been the Israeli reflection on this particularly in the return years? Similarly, according to the Israeli International Defence Cooperation Directorate (SIBAT) Israeli arms sales to African states rose a massive 70 percent in the 2015-2016 period. Is this a fortuitous windfall driven purely by private military firms? Arms sales are now core in Israel’s foreign economic policy and Africa is emerging as a rich client. But what are Israeli reflections on arms sales and its relation to human rights violations and civil wars in some client African states? Oded’s comment that “the Foreign Ministry tries to ensure that Israeli ambassadors are not identified too closely with the security business” (p.324) sounds curiously evasive.

Finally, Oded’s book is one with an interesting subject but without a precise thesis and hence a book too narrowly historical for the student of International Relations? Is Israel winning over African states in the Arab-Israeli conflict? If Israel had thirty-two embassies in Africa in 1972, how many does it have now? Are African states any more favourable to Israel at the UNSC, UNGA and the African Union today? What has been the impact of domestic politics and individuals (Israeli Prime Ministers) on Israeli-Africa relations? Arye Oded, who worked for the Israeli Foreign Ministry for many years, writes a book that reflects the faulty hallmarks...
of an insider—a feast of history but a dearth of analysis. An inclusion of some primary interviews on perceptions of African and Israeli experts on the subject would have been a welcome boon. Yet it is an invaluable book in starting to understand Israeli-African relations and one whose shortcomings will be instrumental in stoking further research on the subject.

Elijah N. Munyi
United States International University-Africa, Nairobi


This book is a welcome addition to the wide-ranging discourse on globalization in general, particularly on its effects, both positive and negative, on the African continent and Africans in the diaspora. Although much has been said about this topic from various viewpoints and angles, what sets the current volume apart is its focus on its impacts on African people and societies. The papers that make up the book were delivered during a three-day conference organized by the University of Georgia in 2013. The meeting was motivated by the conveners’ desire to bring together Africanist scholars to reflect on globalization from a multidisciplinary perspective. Five specific areas are covered: language and culture; literature; performing arts; education, pedagogy and technology; and agriculture, nutrition and housing—with each one garnering about three chapters apiece.

Part I addresses issues relating to language and culture. The authors discuss topics such as the close relationship between language and culture, language as a veritable vehicle for disseminating feelings, thoughts and ideas; and cultural harmony. The first chapter examines the relationship between language and culture and discusses how Tiv ethical values can be harnessed as a tool for cultural harmony. In chapter two, the author questions the ability of English language idioms to transmit culturally relevant information. The last chapter in this section examines sexual discourse among young people amidst the proliferation of Western-styled music and the ubiquity of social media. Like most of the papers in the collection, the first three papers are anchored in Nigeria.

In the first paper of Part II the author encourages the use of digital technologies to advance and enhance the teaching of African literature. Modern technology not only puts a whole world of material at our fingertips, it can also enhance our creativity in the classroom and help make our profession more exciting and relevant to the times, he argues. The author reminds African literature teachers that our students are digital natives, and the best way to reach them and help them learn better is technology. The second and third papers in this section examine the impacts of globalization on African societies through the lenses of two African texts—Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road* trilogy and Ayaan Hirsi Ali’s *Infidel*. Ali’s autobiographical narrative highlights the influences of Islamic and Western ideologies and aesthetics on a female writer’s personal journey. Both papers explore social and cultural globalization and their possible impacts, for good or for worse.

The four papers in Part III, examine the impact of globalization on the performing arts. The first one uses an analysis of Wole Soyinka’s *Death and the King’s Horseman* to question the
privileging of the two major Western conventions that group plays into a binary of tragedy and comedy and proposes a reexamination of this artificial dichotomy. The second paper examines the contents and discontents of globalization vis-a-vis Nigerian youth. It highlights the negative impact of Western education through the vehicles of the English language, the media, movies and the arts, but proposes ways to mitigate it. The next chapter addresses the impact of hip-hop music on Nigerian society. The author laments how hip-hop has negatively impacted morals among Nigerian youth and proffers solutions at both governmental and societal levels. The last paper in the section uses a popular Nigerian television drama to celebrate the positive impact of storytelling, the folktale specifically, on society.

Part IV focuses on education, pedagogy, and technology. In the first paper, the author examines how technology can be harnessed for cultural engagement and pedagogy and thus serve as an antidote to estrangement among diasporic Africans. A case in point: Africans in diaspora in the Caribbean and Latin America. The second article identifies the extent of information and communicative technologies (ICT) use in Nigerian secondary schools, the rate of accessibility and frequency of usage, and the factors that influence or hinder their use by teachers. The author observes that the government has been involved in the e-school initiative at various levels, through the Information Technology Policy, in collaboration with the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). Teachers have also jumped on the bandwagon, using these new tools made available through the globalization of education for both personal and professional development.

Part V takes a close look at housing, agriculture and nutrition—areas that have been most impacted by the ravages of globalization on the African continent—and examines their effects. The first paper in the series of three articles uses the case of Kebbi State, northern Nigeria as an example of how agriculture can be harnessed to empower the rural populace. It discusses the government’s role in encouraging and empowering farmers to improve their social and economic well-being through agricultural production and productivity. The second article addresses nutrition and the empowerment of women for human capital development in Mali. The authors argue that when women, and men, are empowered everyone in society benefits, particularly the younger generation who are the future of capital development in any society. The paper focuses on poultry production and its role in nutritional improvement. The authors contend that when women do well economically it leads to higher household incomes, higher educational attainment, social mobility and better health outcomes for all. The final paper of the volume examines the importance of housing in national development and examines the psychological, political, cultural and environment factors affecting housing in Africa’s largest nation, Nigeria, using Lagos state as a case study. The author discusses the importance of housing in national development and argues that government, both at the national and state levels should encourage and support this important wealth-building venture that also contributes to the social and overall wellbeing of the people.

In conclusion, although some of the chapters in the volume are more accessible and reader-friendly than others, overall this is a welcome volume to the continuous dialogue on the topic of globalization in general and its effects on Africans on the continent, as well as those scattered abroad in the diaspora. One big down side to the book though, one must mention, is that it lacks diversity and breath, as an overwhelming majority of the papers are Nigerian in content.
Contributions from more African nations would have given the book a more continental flare. This flaw does not, however, make the book less valuable as a handy resource on the ever-evolving discourse on globalization from an African perspective notwithstanding.

Timothy T. Ajani  
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Olaniyan and Ifidon gave an in-depth insight into the huge challenges confronting Africa’s development. The impact of globalization, colonial and neocolonial exploitation, and bad governance encouraged heavy indebtedness, poverty, infrastructure deficit, protracted conflicts, disease epidemic, weak educational system, environmental disaster, and an unprecedented population growth. The book is broadly organised into four parts comprising eighteen chapters.

Part one provided the overview of Africa’s development challenges in the 21st century. It conceptualizes that growth and development are very controversial concepts among academic and policymakers. It, however, debunked the malignant use of the concept “development” for the mere ranking of countries, rather than underscoring the root causes of “underdevelopment” and “development.” It advances a new trajectory that calls for an inward looking that will consolidate the impetus on African development renaissance.

Secondly, the book delves into the challenges of university education in Africa, as well as malaria and poverty, human trafficking, and food security challenges. It also highlighted the environmental problems and energy insecurity in Africa. It stated that the failure of malaria control strategy can be attributed to the disconnection between the approaches and the African sociocultural context. More so, it decried the menace of human trafficking, women underrepresentation, and gender-based violence across the continent.

Additionally, the authors opined that food crisis has continued to ravage many regions of Africa thereby escalating vulnerability of its people. Optimistically, it stated that Africa has the resources and potentials to curb its food insecurity through a comprehensively designed programme to deal with environmental challenges and investment. Thus, Africa need to devote policies and resources to repair and preserve the environment for the future generation. Also, it contended that with the enormous energy endowment vested in the continent, Africa’s huge energy crisis is uncalled for.

Thirdly, the book rises critical issues on the political dimension of Africa’s development impasse. It argued that, there is a strong connection between strong civil society, democratization and development in Africa. It avers that civil society alters the balance of power by entrenches accountability and stands as an intermediary between the people and government. Conversely, it linked some of the political problem of post-independence African states to the occurrence of sit-tight leaders who pursue tenure elongation at the detriment of the state development agenda. Pointed also, is the political dictatorship in Francophone Africa where France manipulates and subverts the state sovereignty through subtle neocolonial strings. Intrinsically, social incoherence and heterogeneity have been exploited to sustain division among the polity and perpetuate human rights abuses and violent conflicts.
On the international dimension, it objected to the use of the modernisation framework to benchmark Africa’s development, for it is a tool for the Europeanisation of African development discourse they argued. No doubt, it claimed, Africa has recorded both fundamental and quality transformation in conflict resolution, economic integration, and poverty alleviation as seen in the emerging role of the African Union. While the fight against HIV/AIDS has recorded some successes, the response is often undermined by the dynamics of international politics, failure of public policy, and corruption.

The book added that China-Africa relations cannot be ignored in the face of Africa’s quest for infrastructure investment. It however, called for a restraint and an assertive framework for how Africa can relate to China. It cautioned that Africa can avert the repeat of the colonial and neocolonial exploitation of the continent. The authors lamented that Africa is the most heavily indebted continent, yet the least serviceable of its debts which paints a gloomy economic outlook.

By and large the book is constructed in such a simple, lucid, and vivid language, and yet it remained frantic and critical on the reality of Africa’s development impasse. The use of a cross-disciplinary method to present Africa’s development discourses stands out in the book. The systematic analysis of the dynamics of the economic, social, and political dimensions of African development is commendable. The organisation of the sections and chapters shows sequence and coherency of the themes. The interplay between causality and the use of descriptive tools to critically evaluate development issues in Africa sustains the reader’s attention. The book does not only pinpoint the key questions Africa’s development but offers practical and strategic suggestion on how to deal with them. Contemporary Issues in Africa’s Development is a one-stop shop and a hands-on reading for scholarship in African development studies.

Emmanuel Zwanbin
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Moses Tesi employs a dynamic transnational perspective to understand the bilateral relations between France and its former colony of Cameroon, which for the most part of the 1960s and ‘70s remained economically dependent on France. And yet, despite that dependence in the areas of aid, foreign investment, and import and export markets, Cameroon often took foreign policy decisions that fundamentally contradicted those of France. Tesi resolves this puzzle through a study that features more than five case studies in which both economic and political motives drove the Cameroonian and French course of action. Noteworthy among these are Cameroon’s decision to withdraw its membership from Air Afrique, a pan-African airline jointly owned by mostly Francophone countries under the Organization Commune Africain et Malgache (OCAM) and French investors; its decision to support the unity of Nigeria against French preference for a separatist Biafran state during the 1967-70 Nigeria Civil War; Cameroon’s support of Djibouti’s independence against the will of France; not to mention Cameroon’s
recognition of the communist MPLA of Angola and its support for Southern Africa Liberation Movement, both of which contradicted the French position.

Sensing high levels of economic dependence on France, itself an outcome of colonial economic heritage, post-colonial states’ institutional arrangements such as continued membership in the French monetary zone, and an absence of genuine external aid alternatives, among others, President Ahmadou Ahidjo (1960-82), sought to curtail that dependence because it contradicted the principle of national sovereignty and autonomy. Moreover, Ahidjo was a staunch pan-Africanist who believed in the complete liberation of Africa from external influence.

On the economic front, Ahidjo sought to pursue a policy of diversification and Cameroonization as one way of breaking loose from France. Diversification involved bringing in more investors and donors from across the world. Cameroonization was a policy of expanding business ownership to Cameroonians and replacing French business players with local employees. Tesi uses the cases cited above and others to test the attainability of these objectives.

The Air Afrique crisis is perhaps the most interesting among the cases discussed. It came in the wake of OCAM’s failure to resolve Cameroonian concerns over the airline. Among others, Ahidjo accused the airline for failing to Africanize the top positions of the company. He also blamed it for granting 30 percent of its shares to SODETRAF, a French firm, while each of the member states only had 6 percent shares in it. For a nation committed to the principle of sovereignty, this lack of real ownership over the company was unacceptable. Resistance to reforms forced Ahidjo out of the airline in 1970. The French and OCAM’s attempts to force Cameroon back proved futile.

Ironically, two months after withdrawing from Air Afrique, Cameroon established her own national airline, Cam Air, with 30 percent of its shares owned by a French company, Air France. The decision to partner with France was not made from lack of other possible investors. Lufthansa, for one, had expressed strong interest and would well have fitted Ahidjo’s policy of diversification. Tesi argues that this level of compromise symbolized a degree of reciprocity or interdependence between the two old friends. It also displayed Ahidjo as one who would sometimes “let reality to be his guide rather than someone who was glued to the rigidity of abstract and unbending ideology” (p. 176). Cameroon made similar calculations when it succumbed to French pressure and granted majority company shares in the Industrial Cotton Industry of Cameroon (CICAM) to a French investor, Dollfus-Meig Corporation. In exchange, Cameroon was guaranteed French financial support towards some selected infrastructural development projects. Tesi notes that Cameroon made these calculations following an effective cost and benefit analysis. Ironically, in those areas that the two took divergent decisions, chances of ruining relations were minimal.

Tesi’s use of a more dynamic transactional bargaining model is novel not least because it affords us an opportunity to question the notion that economic dependence always gives rise to compliant foreign policy behavior. Instead, his analysis helps us to see the fluidity and complexity of foreign policy outcomes even under conditions of dependence. It is unfortunate however, that a study on development is silent on the interaction between Cameroon and organizations such as the World Bank. The latter was a key development player in Africa during the period in question. One other aspect that should raise some concerns to an otherwise
good analysis is the way in which Tesi implicates French President, François Mitterrand, in Ahidjo’s abrupt resignation from power in 1982 (p. 200). The evidence presented is anecdotal and far less convincing.

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The book compiles a series of discussions by Paul Ugor on the youth as representatives of the social formation through using early Nollywood films. Chapter One explains how Nigerian youth in recent times stand at the center of an emerging cultural geography of counter-institutional social responses that do not necessarily intersect with official limits, norms, or language of the state. He uses *Issakaba*, a four-part video film that shows the activities of youth vigilantism in South-eastern Nigeria between 1998 and 2003, to interpret the film’s representation of vigilantism as typical of youth response to the recurrent postcolonial crises of state failure. It is an in-depth study of the peculiar contours of new politics of citizenship by youth, especially as represented in popular video films in Nigeria.

Chapter Two articulates how the Nollywood videos communicate the unevenness of postcolonial urban spatiality in sub-Saharan African cities like Lagos, especially the distinctive way in which postcolonial urban housing crises have become a catalyst in the transformation of poor and homeless urban youth into significant spatial actors though in very negative and subversive way as shown in Femi Odugbemi’s 2006 video film entitled *Maroko*. Ugor points to the fact that Nollywood serves as the link between state-led development initiatives, urban space, and the ways in which these processes impact young people and their families and how they develop existential strategies to cope with spatial inequalities associated with postcolonial urban life. Chapter Three draws a line from a three-part Nigeria video film entitled *Face of Africa* combined with recent critical reflections on the politics of culture in contemporary late-modern society that shows how Nollywood narratives function as prismatic lenses into new phases of global connections in cultures where new social spaces have emerged in the local-global nexus, and in particular, young people’s response to global change. The author demonstrates how the African video movies enable its local audience to imaginatively experience the fantasy of a glamorous lifestyle far from their everyday experiences by identifying with struggles of those who seek to escape poverty and at the same time dis-identifying with the strategies they use to attain those goals.

Chapter Four focuses on the hinge between the occult and global modernity as dramatized in Kenneth Nnebue’s *Living in Bondage*, a film which shows cultural resonance of the Africa’s teeming youth against the backdrop of simplistic reading of occult videos which claims that Nollywood popularized the belief and perhaps fuels the urge to practice such rituals as a quick and easy means to affluence. He located the pervasiveness of the occult in Nollywood films within a particular kind of global modernity that portrays an opaque, magical almost ephemeral late-capitalist economy that has remained closed to young people in the post-colonial margins. He draws the link between Nollywood occult narratives, the international
capitalist economy, and marginalized African youth. Chapter Five explores how *Glamour Girls II: Italian Connection*, gave privileged insights into the gruesome world of thriving but underground romance industrial complex currently estimated to be worth well over US $32 billion. This chapter takes up the familiar theme of sex and violence, two thematic threads in the Nollywood repertoire, but in particular the relation to the transnational context. The author draws a link between Nollywood as a specific regional media practice in Anglophone West Africa and the uniquely powerful ways in which this marginal media tradition both inaugurated an important humanistic debate, facilitating deep insights into an entrenched subversive global economy that has remained pervasive and almost indomitable for more than three decades, and for which CNN, is now waging a belted media war.

In conclusion, while music was composed about the aftermath of urban housing crises on the lives of the adult population, very little attention seems to have been paid to its social impact on the lives of young people, especially in the postcolonial urban settling.

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Though there is a rich body of knowledge on African intersectionality, African literature on women empowerment, feminist literary criticism, black feminism, feminist literary theory, black literary discourses, etc., available today Pauline Uwakweh’s edited volume brings out a fresh and equally significant perspective that focuses upon the much-needed African women’s literary responses to wars and armed conflicts. It is a bitter reality that even if female characters played major roles in African literature or for that matter in war and conflict literature, there has been no acknowledgement or fair representation of women; instead male characters or men’s contribution or stories have been more highlighted. The male gaze dominates all and thus it comes to readers from the male’s perspective thereby hiding women’s contributions, heroic roles, and literary works. This volume essentially is a female viewpoint of literary discourses in war and conflict and is written with this purpose, thereby creating yet another novel discourse of reclaiming women’s lost or suppressed spaces in literary domain and therefore is a literary cum sociological effort to recast the gendered war/conflict situations.

It remains an established fact that earlier literary discourses in war and conflict were a male bastion. Therefore, this work stresses upon African writers and critics the need to document the dynamics of African political landscapes and tries to see how politicization of the conflicts itself breeds further violence and aggression against women. This work also brings out the need for documenting the postwar/conflict scenarios and their gendered aspects that are scarcely written about or even if written, always written by men. It is also true that the post war situation is hardly peaceful anywhere and even becomes more violent and brings more challenges and insecurity to women and children in such context that needs to be properly theorised.

The title chosen for the book is very intriguing, for “Women Under Fire” can mean women under criticism or women under attack. Perhaps Pauline Uwakweh means both, i.e., women’s voices remain suppressed while writing about gender, war, and conflict and the second
meaning that the plight of women and gendered relations under fire during war and conflict situations. The subtitle, “Literary Discourses in War and Conflict,” brings out the conflicting relationship between the interplay of gender and war and how gender practically operates in war like situations. The book’s foreword, written by the eminent African scholar and literary figure Dr. Ada Uzoamaka Azodo is like a microcosm of the whole work. She beautifully sums up the book as “not only a chronicle on armed aggression and violence against women and girls in armed conflict areas... [but] also a critical resource on how the endangered female passes from invisibility and passivity to agency” (p. ix).

The work is divided into two major parts. Part One contains the introduction by Uwakweh and five chapters by Jessie Sagawa, Tendai Mangena, Melissa R. Root, Julie Papaioanou, and Paul N. Touré that mainly discuss major themes of African women in war and conflict as victims and as agents. Part Two consists of four articles by Uwakweh, Emile Diouf, Moussa Issifou, and Nanjala Nyabola that conceptualize trauma, reintegration, and healing by critically paraphrasing various literary works. Touching upon the narratives of war and its impact upon women and children in terms of rape, captivity, combat, etc., the various chapters beautifully touch upon themes like violence, trauma, female agency, and resilience to theorize war literature from a gendered perspective. The respective chapters call for a fresh look into the postwar violence and its sources including male onslaught on women and the plethora of gendered challenges like that of reintegration. They also highlight the need for theorizing the ramifications of the gendered violence in Africa. The fact that mostly stands out is that less significance is given to the documentation of war miseries inflicted upon women. However, this work finely articulates women in war and conflict situations besides challenging the dominance of men in African criticism in the literary domain. Further the contributors have amply dealt with the themes of violence and the trauma conflict situations bring to women and girls and affects their health, and also forced displacement and refugee status that brings with it a plethora of crises like homelessness, poverty, sexual abuse, etc.

Pauline Uwakweh beautifully gives a critique of a patriarchy and especially literary patriarchy, while bringing war and gender issues under study. Her book demonstrates how women’s voices are missing in war literature and what can be done to overcome this lacuna. Women under Fire is certainly going to be an authentic source on literary discourse on war and conflict besides being a credible work on African literary criticism in the gender arena. Given its thick description the work is too provoking for future researchers not to go further and deeper into the themes touched upon. Throughout the chapters there been an intellectual engagement with various socio-literary themes bringing out various war realities especially the gendered relations and power play between them. This work can indeed be called Pauline Uwakweh’s and her fellow coauthors’ labor of love.

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