

economic crisis. Organized crime in Nigeria is likewise woven through political, economic, and spiritual connections. That process reaches its apex in oil windfalls, which invite corrupt state officials to use their spiritual resources to fortify their political and economic relations. The result has been the proliferation of criminal gangs in many communities around the country. Nowhere is this process more prevalent than in the Niger Delta where government officials, politicians, and businessmen – both local and transnational – work in cahoots with criminal gangs to smuggle oil. In this setting, politics becomes a business transaction that is built around criminal behavior. This process ultimately shapes the democratic process: ‘in effect, democracy Nigerian-style involves plutocrats doing deals behind closed doors and offering candidates for public election who are most likely to triumph, at least in a party’s heartlands, through rigged votes’ (146).

Throughout the book, Ellis draws attention to why it is important to see the evidence he presents as a form of organized crime even if, as he writes, ‘the typical Nigerian *modus operandi* stands in contrast to the more corporate-style structure of classic American organized crime groups that have exerted such a powerful influence on popular ideas about how organized crime works via films like *The Godfather* or the TV series *The Sopranos*’ (174).

This Present Darkness makes an important contribution by showing how crime – economic and political – is embedded in Nigeria’s entire history. The book will, in many years to come, provoke intellectual debate about the place of crime in Nigeria’s history. Unfortunately, Stephen Ellis died in 2015, so he will not be with us to further engage with many of the questions that *This Present Darkness* raises. But Ellis’s place in the intellectual history of the academy will remain evergreen.

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VICHY AND THE AFRICAN RESISTANCE

Free French Africa in World War II: The African Resistance.

By Eric T. Jennings.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. Pp. xvi + 300. \$84.99, hardback (ISBN 9781107048485); \$27.99, paperback (ISBN 9781107696976).

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Key Words: Second World War, French Equatorial Africa, Vichy, resistance.

Eric Jennings’ *Free French Africa in World War II* is the first monograph to historicize the immense role of Africa during the Second World War, particularly the French colonies of Cameroon, Chad, Ubangi-Chari, Gabon, and Congo-Brazzaville. In August 1940, in uncertain times and with much courage, a handful of Frenchmen and Africans decided to defect from the Vichy government. They rallied to the call from General de Gaulle who had left for London and had summoned the French to resist against Vichy and the German occupation of France. Under the leadership of the black, Caribbean-born governor Félix Eboué in Chad, these men overthrew the settlers and administrators who

had accepted the rule of the Vichy government. By late 1940, French Equatorial Africa (FEA) could provide Free France with its first legitimate territories, a large expanse of land, resources, and people. By late 1943, after the Allies had conquered the French colonies of North and West Africa, dozens of troops and aircraft could refuel in and take off from there to fight against the Axis. Jennings's book disentangles the military, diplomatic, and economic role of FEA in the war, and makes a significant effort to recover the experience and resistance of Africans during the conflict. Despite the subtitle, however, it remains grounded in Western and global history.

Equatorial Africa's most important contribution to the war was economic and financial. The colonies provided the Allies with essential land, resources and labor, at a time when the German Axis controlled most of Europe and blocked imports from Asia. When I teach this episode in my modern African history course, I often tell the story of the uranium ore, mined in Belgian Congo and processed in the US, which fueled the Hiroshima bomb. Yet the anecdote obscures the severe economic and financial efforts that colonial and metropolitan governments imposed on Africans, to collect rubber and gold and contribute money to the war effort. Starting in 1939, African workers and households had to perform forced labor (*corvée* in French) and pay special taxes for the war. War Bureaus controlled commodity prices, squeezing the profits made by African producers of cash-crops (oil, cocoa, and coffee). They also froze wages and the labor market, paving the way to massive discontent and to demands for political and social reforms after 1945.

Part One of Jennings' book studies the chaotic rallying of French Equatorial Africa to De Gaulle and Great Britain in 1940. Chapter Two, 'Africa as Legitimacy', provides fascinating insights in the attitude of Africans in Equatorial Africa. Some officers, clerks, and troops aided the Free French to defeat the *Vichystes*, especially during the long battle to conquer the colony of Gabon. Others, animated by anticolonial resentment, voiced their support of Germany in hope that the Nazis would come to Africa and 'decapitate the Whites' (22). Part Two delves into war operations and specifies the contributions of French Equatorial Africa to the larger conflict. Although the topic seems dry, Jennings does an impeccable job at laying out the timeline and details of the war in Africa, and contextualizing them on the global scene.

Part Three, 'Resource Extraction, Wartime Abuses, and African Experiences', offers the most relevant materials for African history. Jennings insists on the devastation that the war effort imposed on the ground. One appalling example was the revival of wild rubber collection in African colonies after the Axis halted importation of the commodity from Indonesian plantations. In FEA, scenes of abuse, famine, and deprivation recalled the worst episodes of the Congo scandal at the beginning of the century. Jennings also explains how the war effort transformed colonial indigenous policies on the ground. But the main achievement of Part Three is the way in which Jennings focuses on African resistance. Helped by carefully curated visual archives, the author succeeds in narrating these tragic times from the perspective and experience of Africans. Chapter Six, on 'Rubber, Gold and the Battle for Resources' combines good economic data with interesting analyses of labor incidents on gold mines and rubber collection sites. Chapter Seven focuses on the deterioration of labor practices and regulations, with an interesting section entitled 'Carding' that recovers how French authorities asked Africans to carry identity and work cards during the war, inaugurating the bureaucratic mania of the postwar period.

Against each of these colonial attacks, Jennings brings in a dense account of African initiatives and rebellions. From testimonies and life stories, a rich African-centered experience of the war emerges, along with a better understanding of how local conflicts shaped the political negotiations of the after-war. As such, *Free French Africa in World War II* provides a solid background to the social and political history of Equatorial Africa in the 1950s, and to the era of independence.

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CITIZENSHIP AND BELONGING IN AFRICA

Citizenship, Belonging, and Political Community in Africa: Dialogues between Past and Present.

Edited by Emma Hunter.

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Key Words: Citizenship, politics, ethnicity, nation-state.

In her volume *Citizenship, Belonging, and Political Community in Africa*, Emma Hunter brings together a rich and diverse collection of essays interrogating the many meanings of citizenship in Africa. At the heart of any discussion of citizenship on the continent is the question of how Africans conceive of and relate to their political communities. As Hunter indicates in her introduction, this is a question that has long bedeviled scholars. But in seeking an answer to it, scholars almost invariably confront the prospect of privileging certain types of political communities over others. As a result, big concepts like the 'nation-state', 'colonialism', or 'ethnicity' often paper over the diverse ways in which Africans construct their political communities and, more importantly, how they maneuver and negotiate their ways into and through these entities. Hunter points out that this line of inquiry is further plagued by a deep-seated presentism, which tends to frame African encounters with citizenship as largely a postcolonial phenomenon.

In both the regional and temporal diversity of its chapters, Hunter's collection takes on the challenge of thinking through the issue of citizenship in Africa. Structurally, the collection is comprised of nine essays divided into three parts, plus an introductory chapter by John Lonsdale and a postscript by Frederick Cooper. Lonsdale, for his part, lays the intellectual groundwork for the collection as he traces the historical development of both African and Western ideas of citizenship and belonging. Part One, 'Citizens and Subjects in African History' features chapters by Nicole Ulrich, Cherry Leonardi and Chris Vaughan, and Aidan Russell, each of which interrogates the interplay between 'citizen' and 'subject' in the African past and, in Ulrich's case, delves as far back as the Dutch colonization of the Cape of Good Hope. Key to these essays is an analytical broadening of our ideas of 'citizen' and 'subject' beyond normative or legalistic definitions. Instead, each of these authors challenge historians and social scientists to understand these terms as