

support traditional rulers in Nigeria, but in a way that was also critically attentive to the promise of modernity in a British colonial context.

Notably, the contributors do not only address publications produced in official colonial languages, particularly English, they also address the circulation of writings in many local languages. Several chapters thus deal with the politics of language and debates around standardisation, but they also scrutinise the interface of oral and written forms. This analysis shows that there is not a linear progression from oral culture to a print one. To the contrary, the volume offers multiple examples of the productive and ongoing relationship of written and spoken modes of communication, such as when people read printed texts aloud and transcribe oral genres for printing and distribution. In Kenya, people still take part in discussion circles — referred to as ‘the people’s parliament’ — to make sense of and debate newspaper articles, as Duncan Omanga shows in his chapter on the city of Eldoret.

The collection thus makes clear that new media do not necessarily supersede older ways of communicating. This volume further demonstrates that the interactions of Africans with print are longstanding and sophisticated, and that this topic deserves further historical attention.

ELIZABETH LE ROUX
University of Pretoria

FORCED MARRIAGE IN AFRICA

Marriage by Force? Contestation over Consent and Coercion in Africa.

Edited by Annie Bunting, Benjamin N. Lawrance, and Richard L. Roberts.

Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016. Pp. 358. \$80.00, hardback (ISBN: 9780821421994); \$34.95, paperback (ISBN: 9780821422007).

doi:10.1017/S0021853718000865

Key Words: regional, marriage, law, women, courts.

This edited volume is the product of collaboration between legal historian Benjamin Lawrance, the legal scholar Annie Bunting, and the social and legal historian Richard Roberts, who is one of the pioneers of the use of legal records for writing African social history. The book under review is one of a series of volumes edited by Lawrance that explore what legal historians and legal practitioners may learn from each other concerning rights questions, or more precisely, what we might consider to be rights violations in African and world history. Other titles in what is functionally, if not formally, this series include *Trafficking in Slavery’s Wake: Law and the Experiences of Women and Children in Africa* (2012), *Adjudicating Refugee and Asylum Status: The Role of Witness, Expertise and Testimony* (2016), and *Citizenship in Question: Evidentiary Birthright and Statelessness* (2017).

Marriage by Force is composed of twelve chapters that are organized into three chronological sections: Colonial Struggles, Post-Independence Transformations, and Contemporary Perspectives. In the first chapter, Roberts focuses on colonial French West Africa and civil disputes over marriages and children that took place there. In this analysis, Roberts shows how

understandings of consent in marriage converged with patriarchal regimes, ideas about property rights in people, and customary practices of labor mobilization. Given these interlocking forces, Roberts importantly argues that ‘the capacity to dissent requires the ability to imagine alternatives and the capacity to implement these alternatives’ (60). In effect, the range of marital possibilities that are conceivable in a given time and place create part of the calculus of the forms that conjugal consent and dissent might take. In a subsequent chapter, Olatunji Ojo tracks the many ways in which women could be forced into marriage in Igboland between 1900 and 1936. These varieties include the forced marriage of slave wives, kidnapping or seizure of free women, arranged marriages of young daughters, ritual forced marriages known as *isimmo*, and marriages transacted through pawnship. At the heart of all of these practices was a fundamental commitment to patriarchal power which was in some ways interrupted by British colonial transformations of marriage laws and custom.

Brett Shadle’s chapter historicizes the long debate in Kenya over the marriageability and appropriate marital age for females. In 2014, a national law finally set 18 as the legal age for marriage in Kenya. This law sought to resolve a longstanding question about the marker of ‘early marriage’ — was it indicated by biological age, sexual maturity, psychological disposition, or something else? Was the central problem of early marriage one of the young age of the females involved, or was it a problem of the preponderantly advanced years of their would-be male spouses?

While forced marriage is commonly associated with non-Western and non-Christian societies, Francesca Declich explores the invention of ‘Italian Weddings’ in Somaliland, from 1910 into the Fascist era. Drawing on oral histories about the practice, Declich shows that Italian Weddings were a colonial innovation. In these relationships, Somali girls and young women were propelled into governmentally-arranged monogamous marriages with male laborers working on commercial farms. In so doing, Italian officials distorted customary initiation and marriage practices so that the bodies of girls and young women could serve male workers. The use of girls and young women as enticements to male labor in Italian Somaliland shares similarities with the use of female bodies in the mobilization of irregular military forces. That is a process that Stacy Hynd explores in her chapter, ‘Forced Marriage and Girl Soldiers in African Conflicts, c. 1990–2010’. Engaging with the scholarship on child soldiers and the history of childhood, Hynd argues that forced marriage in conflict zones emerges both from immediate conflicts, for which it serves as a tactic for achieving military success, and from historical patterns of structural gender violence, which make forced marriage imaginable.

In another chapter, Judith Ann Walker explores how the state intervenes to radically reshape ideas of marriage in contemporary Hausaland. Walker analyzes the phenomenon of mass marriages in Kano State, Nigeria. In this practice, the state-run Hisbah Board (which is charged with applying Shari’a law to the population) arrogates to itself the paternal power to consent to young women’s marriages. While mass marriages have been criticized as forbidden by some patriarchs in Kano (that is, conservative Islamic jurists), the state has defended mass marriage as an anti-poverty measure that ensures the protection of women and girls.

There are several other illuminating chapters in the book. Elizabeth Thornberry unpacks the practice of *ukuthwala* (abducting girls into marriage) in the Eastern Cape; E. Ann McDougall considers concubinage as a form of forced marriage in Mauritania; Bala Saho explores the challenge of traditionalism in Gambian marriage ideologies; Lawrance

and Charlotte Walker-Said analyze the work of homophobia and forced marriage in African asylum claims; and Mariane Ferme investigates how arguments made in the Special Court for Sierra Leone following the civil war of 1991–2002 had the paradoxical effect of enshrining some forced practices as ‘crimes against humanity’, while categorizing others as ‘customary’, and therefore noncriminal. Like many of the authors, Ferme raises the question of how contested practices that fall under the label of forced marriage interact with other problematic practices that are not so designated. How do the spectacular legal debates and decisions regarding consent and coercion in marriage reify or otherwise impact other contestations and conflicts that never make it to court?

In each of the chapters, scholars grapple primarily with the question of marriage — what defines it; what it encompasses and masks, as well as what sorts of social practices and domestic arrangements it produces; and the ways that these issues have been structured by law-making bodies like colonial courts or international courts. The forms of marriage that are covered in the book are chiefly traumatic forms, such as early marriage for girls, marrying of kinless slave wives, bush marriages of captive women in warzones, or marriage by abduction. One thread that runs through the chapters is the pervasiveness of a masculine sense of entitlement to possessing women. A question that the volume brings up for me is how forced marriages and the objectification of women within them have impacted men and ideas of masculinity. That is, how have transformations in forced marriage, either via their introduction, modification, or abolition, shaped gender relations and ideas of hegemonic masculinity, historically and in the present? Forced marriages, or what some call conjugal slavery, blur or even wholly erase the lines between marriage and slavery, wife, and property. They also create conflicts that produce the written records through which scholars attempt to understand the history and persistence of such strategies of filiation (11). Based on this work of social justice scholarship, as Emily Burrill rightly notes in her afterword, can we ask how scholarship interacts with legal and activist discourses to produce or challenge the normalization of forced marriage? In other words, and to come back to Roberts, what do debates about forced marriage make imaginable?

ABOSEDE GEORGE

Columbia University-Barnard College

THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF AFRICA

The Democratization of Africa: Dynamics and Trends.

Edited by Alexius Amtaika.

Austin, TX and Ibadan: Pan-African University Press, 2017. Pp. xxix + 401. \$20.00, paperback (ISBN 978-1-943533-13-8).

doi:10.1017/S0021853718000877

Key Words: regional, democracy, politics, development, political culture.

The preface of this edited collection explains that it is one of three books intended to ‘furnish leaders with a selection of recent literature’ (xi). I am not sure what kind of leaders will be reading this book, but the collection will present them with some challenges. The