inadvertently regurgitating a longstanding southern joke about velophile northerners, this description might well have come from a 1940s colonial public relations pamphlet.

The less-than-sure touch regarding the north and Islam is matched by rather weak coverage of Ghanaian urbanism. The two topics intersect in the editors' commentary on one of Kwesi Brew's poems, "The Slums of Nima." This may well be a quibble, but can Nima, Accra's largest northern quarter, or *zongo*, really be defined as a "slum" (inhabited, in Brew's poetic vision, by "thieves who robbed with violence")? Many residents of Accra certainly believe so (as they do of the old downtown Ga quarters of Ussher Town and James Town), but although Nima is certainly densely populated, most of its housing stock is not "informal." This selection cries out for a more nuanced reading of the urban landscape. Overall, however, this judicious collection of readings is a most stimulating introduction for those new to Ghana, while providing scholars already familiar with one of Africa's most vibrant nations a versatile and accessible teaching tool.

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## POLITICS, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, AND GLOBALIZATION

**Kate Baldwin.** ***The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs in Democratic Africa.*** New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. xv + 237 pp. Maps. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $32.99. Paper. ISBN 978-1-107-56644-6.

Are traditional chiefs in Africa "decentralized despots" (as Mahmood Mamdani calls them in *Citizen and Subject* [Princeton University Press, 1996]) whose enduring presence has limited the spread of democratization across the continent? Or are they legitimate community-level representatives capable of shielding rural Africans from arbitrary state power? These big questions are ones that scholars of African politics have grappled with for many years, and they form the focus of Kate Baldwin's *The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs in Democratic Africa*. This book addresses an important puzzling feature of late postcolonial African politics: that state recognition of chiefly authority and the resurgence of chiefly power have coincided with growing democratization across the continent.

Baldwin argues that increasing state recognition of chiefly power is a function of growing democratization across sub-Saharan Africa because chiefs increase electoral accountability through their role as "development brokers" (69). African states have historically lacked the autonomous administrative capacity to provide public goods. Although elected officials have an incentive to supply these goods in order to win votes, they are unlikely to do

so when they remain unsure that local communities will contribute resources required for their coproduction. They tend to rely, therefore, on partnerships with traditional chiefs who have a unique capacity, Baldwin argues, to help overcome collective action problems. Traditional chiefs are both unelected and embedded within their local communities. They have strong communal ties as well as a long-time perspective because they are not subject to electoral competition. As a result, they are more likely to invest the time in building enduring institutions.

The role of chiefs in implementing development projects matters for democracy in Africa because voters perceive future performance of elected officials in delivering public goods as being directly tied to whether or not they have a working relationship with chiefs. Therefore, chiefs influence voting patterns, but only indirectly. This point is important, however, since Baldwin's emphasis on this indirect influence differentiates *The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs* from much of the literature on clientelism and voting in which scholars emphasize how chiefs use coercion and community norms to broker votes on behalf of political candidates. From this perspective, the influence of chiefs has negative consequences for democracy because individuals are presumed to be voting based on political pressure rather than their own free will. For Baldwin, chiefs have little direct impact on voting patterns in rural areas. But they have an overall positive effect on democracy because they improve the capacity of elected officials to follow through on promises made during campaigns. This is the main insight of the book, and it is a counterintuitive one: that "democratic accountability in rural Africa operates better on the back of nondemocratic foundations" (17).

In chapters 5–8 Baldwin presents the data drawn from the country focus of her study, Zambia, which support the theoretical expectations presented in the first section of the book. She employs a mix of qualitative, quantitative, and experimental methods that draw from an array of sources including surveys, interviews, GPS analysis, and archival research. In chapter 9 she tests the external validity of the book's central theoretical claims by drawing on secondary research focusing on other African cases and Afrobarometer survey data.

*The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs in Democratic Africa* offers a fresh, uncompromisingly positive view of the role of chiefs in African democratization. Nonetheless, its central findings and conclusions will no doubt rest uneasily with observers interested in chiefly authority in rural Africa. My main concern revolves around the reduction of this authority to a system of rule predicated primarily on performance and the provision of public goods. In part 1 of the book Baldwin downplays the relevance of other sources of chiefly authority such as the role of chiefs in allocating and distributing land. The problem is that unlike the provision of public goods such as roads or schools, the distribution of land can have significant inequitable consequences to many residents within rural communities. Thus, while rural Africans may very well be supportive of chiefly authority as

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an institution or system of rule, this masks the heated debates over how this authority is practiced or exercised within rural communities. Simply put, when chiefly authority is reduced to public good provision, the *politics* surrounding African chieftaincy drops out of the analysis. Nonetheless, *The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs in Democratic Africa* represents as important contribution to debates surrounding political behavior, traditional authority, and democracy in Africa.

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**Mattia Fumanti. *The Politics of Distinction: African Elites From Colonialism to Liberation in a Namibian Frontier Town.*** Canon Pyon, U.K.: Sean Kingston Publishing, 2016. vii + 311 pp. Maps. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $115.00. Cloth. ISBN: 978-1-907774-46-1.

In *The Politics of Distinction*, Mattia Fumanti analyzes the intergenerational dialogue among three groups of black elites in Rundu, a booming mid-sized town on northeastern Namibia's border with Angola. With great ethnographic and theoretical gusto, Fumanti argues that the politics of leadership in northeastern Namibia is based not just on who is wealthy or on the linear passing down of power from seniors to juniors. It also involves the reflections of youthful strivers on the morality and comportment of older generations of leaders in their communities and their scripting of their own lives to meet communally mandated requirements of *nomukaro do nongwa* (exemplarity), *nondunge* (wisdom), *unongo* (goodness), and *efumano* (respect). Imagining oneself as an elite, and then becoming an elite, is thus an act of intersubjectivity—of putting oneself in the shoes of former and current elite groups and working to act with distinction.

The "present" of Fumanti's study is around the turn of the twenty-first century, but because he is interested in the way elite status is contested and transferred between generations, the first half of the book delves into the politics and subjectivities of the apartheid colonial period. During the 1970s and '80s, the older "colonial" elite—traditional and religious authorities, teachers, and businessmen who served on the bantustan Kavango Legislative Council—coexisted uneasily with the younger elite "intelligentsia"—students and teachers, often from privileged backgrounds, who saw education and the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) as the key to regional advancement and Namibian liberation from South African rule. Fumanti rightly eschews characterizations of the former as "sellouts" in contrast to the latter. He sees the two groups as unified around a dedication to education and the local concept of *usimbi*—leadership and power