

pantheon of external backers in the World Bank, IMF, US and UK governments, as well as to international development celebrities such as Bono and Bob Geldof, the book is filled with references to mechanisms for evading local democratic process, through Economic Teams, Task Forces and legislation to 'lock in' reforms. Local sensitivities about outsourcing the Customs Service to a British corporation, and widespread resistance across Nigerian society to the removal of the petrol subsidy are simply dismissed as a product of ignorance and vested interests. The internal politics surrounding the reforms is reduced to a technical question of managing winners and losers, with little attention to the concerns of Nigerian society, or the effects of the reforms on them. While corruption and vested interests are very real problems in Nigeria, there is also a great deal of principled opposition and popular distress which reformers ignore at their peril.

Indeed, this is a book that says as much in its silences as in its stories. Despite references to problems of crippling poverty, unemployment and low levels of social expenditure, there is disturbingly little reflection on what Nigeria's current problem of 'broken institutions' owes to the last round of neo-liberal reforms implemented under the failed structural adjustment programme, which oversaw a draconian reduction of public expenditure and rolling back of the State with little attention to what would replace it. There are repeated references to hard choices and trade-offs, but the author is rather coy about who sets the priorities. Even less is said about the effects of these reforms on the Nigerian population. While Dr Okonjo-Iweala congratulates herself for doubling Nigerian growth rates between 2000 and 2007, she says little about the anomalies of rising poverty, catastrophic unemployment and spiralling unrest in a country with an average of 7% growth for the past decade. She simply notes that the neglect of the real sectors and the lack of job creation remain a weakness of the reforms, and places her faith in the private sector to do what the market failed to do in the last round of reform.

Under the guise of homegrown policy-making and technical competence, this book documents the on-going efforts to embed neo-liberal reforms in the heart of African governments, while glossing over the realities of political resistance, local democratic process and the effects on popular livelihoods. Even dressed up in Nigerian cotton prints, it looks less like local ownership than like international infiltration of the policy process.

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**I Did It To Save My Life: Love And Survival in Sierra Leone** by CATHERINE E. BOLTEN

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The collection of anthropological data can be as much an art as a science. Interviewing subjects, asking probing questions, listening to answers and then contextualising and making sense out of people's perspectives and stories, requires more than just being familiar with the various ethnographic data collection methods and techniques. In *Love and Survival in Sierra Leone*, the

anthropologist Catherine Bolten performs both the art and science of anthropology. Seven out of the eight chapters in this monograph are dedicated to the life histories of a small selection of Sierra Leoneans and their experiences of living through the decade-long armed conflict in the 1990s. We encounter and learn to know a soldier, a rebel, a student, a trader, an evangelist, a father and a politician. These detailed and sometimes quite intimate stories reveal above all how real people navigate the muddy and quickly changing landscape characterising political instability and armed violence. And through these histories we learn how some of the grander events—the rise of the Civil Defence Forces, the 1997 military coup or the 1999 attack on Freetown—that made national or international headlines were experienced on a more personal level. An additional insight is added by Bolten through her choice of fieldwork location. Her research and interviewees are living in Makeni, the headquarter town of the Northern province, which escaped most of the war's devastation during the first half of the conflict. But this changed dramatically following the 1997 military coup and even more so when the rebel Revolutionary United Front moved its headquarters from Kailahun in the far eastern part of the country to Makeni in 1998. In addition to the life-stories of the seven characters mentioned above, Bolton tells the 'life-story' of Makeni. From a rather neglected town during most of the colonial and post-colonial era—not incorporated in any significant national development effort—Makeni more recently has had its population accused of collaborating with the rebels, following the RUF's occupation. The book shows that part of 'anthropology as art' is in choosing interesting research locations.

In her work Bolten uses the conceptual framework of love – 'a Krio [lingua franca] term expressing the bonds of mutual identification, sacrifice, and need between individuals and groups of people' (p. 2). Love captures both the more patrimonial structured relations as well as the horizontal relations between social and economic equals. This works well for interpreting and understanding the experiences of the interviewees, but it would have been interesting to hear if Bolten feels that this is a useful concept to analyse conflicts in other countries, in Africa or even outside the continent more generally. And there are other types of bonds during wartime and immediately afterwards, that can perhaps result in some interesting insights if analysed through the lens of 'love'. I visited Makeni—almost by accident—in 1996 to witness the opening of an 'orphanage'. Sponsored by a British NGO/charity, the war-induced orphan children had their own compound with proper buildings, a school, games and toys, a generator for electricity, care-takers cooking for them, etc. For sure they were well 'loved' by these overseas well-doers. How ironic (if not cynical) was it that about 100 metres further down the road there was a ramshackle internally displaced camp with many children who lacked nearly everything that these orphan children had in abundance. The children affected by war in the IDP camp were not loved, but just surviving.

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