

different lens. It clarifies a lot of issues and provides a highly needed scholarly reference on the early presence of the Oromo in the central Ethiopian highlands.

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Kwasi Konadu and Clifford C. Campbell, eds. *The Ghana Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016. xiii + 476 pp. Illustrations. Index. \$27.95/£18.99. Paper. ISBN: 978-0-8233-5992-0. \$99.95/£69.00. Cloth. ISBN: 978-0-8233-7496-1. \$27.95/£17.99. E-book. ISBN: 978-0-8223-7496-1.

The Ghana Reader is the latest title to appear in Duke University Press's series of "World Readers." Following the success of an earlier series focusing on Latin America, its aim is to introduce a general readership to the history, culture, and politics of selected nations around the world, with volumes extending, so far, from Bangladesh, the Czech Republic, Indonesia, and Russia to South Africa, Sri Lanka and, in an interesting "first nation" variant, Native Alaska. That Ghana should join South Africa in representing the African continent in the new series is not surprising. Although modest in terms of population (currently some 25 million) and economic clout, it has long punched above its weight on the regional stage and is now increasingly doing so on the global stage as well. As readers of this journal will hardly need reminding, Ghana shot to prominence in the mid-twentieth century when, in 1957, it became the first sub-Saharan African nation to win independence from European colonial rule, and in the years that followed it remained a beacon for the pan-African liberation movement under the charismatic leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. Before that—as revealed in an efflorescence of historical scholarship generated in part by this precocious statehood—the region that would become the British colony of the Gold Coast and then independent Ghana had given rise to one of West Africa's most powerful and dynamic states, the Akan forest kingdom of Asante. Ghana's iconic modern status may have been forged in the crucible of the anticolonial struggle, but that status rests on a rich cultural legacy shaped by a deeper history. It is this past and present, in all its tumult and vibrancy, that the collection sets out to encompass.

The editors, Kwasi Konadu and Clifford C. Campbell, were handed a generously broad canvas on which to work, and they did an excellent job in selecting a diverse range of engaging readings representative of Ghanaian history and life. Their aim, they explain in a useful introduction, was to evoke a wide variety of voices, to include pieces of critical importance to an understanding of Ghana, and to present selections that, even if taken from scholarly works (as many of them are), can be readily appreciated by the

general reader. In the interests of engaging a nonacademic audience, the critical apparatus was kept to a bare minimum. The readings are grouped in six sections: the first focuses on deep historical currents as revealed by archaeology and oral traditions of origin; the second, on the first two centuries of African–European encounter on what the Europeans called the Gold Coast; the third, on the period dominated by the rise of Asante, 1700–1900; the fourth, on the period of colonial rule between 1900 and 1957; the fifth, on the era of independence; and the sixth, titled rather opaquely “The Exigencies of a Postcolony,” on a range of cultural issues shaping an increasingly cosmopolitan Ghana. Other than the pieces extracted from academic books or articles, there are a number of primary historical sources as well as works of literature, including six poems by Kwesi Brew (1928–2007), a scene from Kobina Sekyi’s famous satirical play *The Blinkards* (1915), and the lyrics of “Birth of Ghana” by the calypsonian Lord Kitchener (“Congratulation from Haile Selassie/Was proudly received by everybody”). The topics extend from the Flemish merchant Eustache de la Fosse’s account of a voyage to the Gold Coast in 1479–80 to web-based musings on President Obama’s 2009 visit to Accra, Ghana’s film industry (inevitably, “Ghallywood”), and mobile phone use (the latter by the academic and pithy cultural commentator Kwesi Yankah). Each piece is prefaced by a brief introductory note and is, on average, four to five pages in length.

The volume succeeds admirably in its aim to convey something of the essence of Ghana’s history, culture, and contemporary scene. Both Konadu and Campbell are historians who specialize in the history of the African diaspora, so this aspect of Ghana’s past and present—from the era of the slave trade to twentieth-century ideologies of pan-Africanism and on to today’s transnational cultural flows and cosmopolitan identities—forms a particularly strong thread. The editors, however, seem to have been unsure of how to characterize Ghana’s complex historical relationship with the world—on one hand, underscoring “an almost unquestioned acceptance of things foreign (300), and on the other, an adherence to “indigenous culture” (311). In terms of geographical balance, the northern savanna region of the country is poorly represented, which serves to perpetuate an established imbalance in Ghanaian affairs over time. Only three readings deal specifically with this region, two of which focus on the outbreak of deadly violence between the Konkomba peoples and their neighbors in the mid-1990s. For the general reader, this conveys—surely unintentionally—the impression that the north remains an isolated periphery plagued by entrenched backwardness and ethnic conflict compared to the real core of the nation in the largely Akan south. Passing references by the editors to “northern Islamic societies,” moreover, seem to suggest that historically the north is predominantly Muslim—which it is not. The rather clichéd nature of some images and accompanying captions do not help here. One caption to a photo of “a Muslim resident of northern Ghana on bicycle” informs us that “bicycles are very popular on the flat roads of northern Ghana, where male Muslims will ride to mud-and-stick mosques for prayer” (342);

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