

descriptive material presented is without doubt what remains with the reader the longest and most vividly. Notwithstanding the fact that the balance of some contributions is at times liberally tilted towards empirical panoply rather than theory, a number of authors *do* try to enrich the received wisdom of assemblage thinking with conceptually productive questions about racialization (Christensen), performances (Tessa Diphoorn) and political becoming (Rasmussen).

To readers familiar with the contributors' existing scholarly work, the book as a whole may promise little novelty, and, indeed, overall it is not as theoretically ambitious as one may wish. However, it represents an indispensable resource and springboard for those wishing to delve deeper into the maze of private security provision. Lastly, it is essential reading not only for everyone with a specialization in security in African countries but also for those with a keen interest in the inner workings of private security on a global scale.

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Laura Routley, *Negotiating Corruption: NGOs, governance and hybridity in West Africa*. London: Routledge (hb £120 – 978 0 415 82526 9; pb £30.99 – 978 1 138 30843 5). 2016, xiii + 159 pp.

Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari was first elected with his compatriots' hopes that his new government would solve the country's terrible corruption. Just after his contentious re-election, their dreams of a better future appear at best to be deferred. In Nigeria today there is little consensus about what is going wrong with the president's anti-corruption war, but few would argue that it is being won. Today's frustration is nothing new, nor is the way it permeates Nigerian public life. Laura Routley's densely argued *Negotiating Corruption* provides new insight into the problem and, importantly, documents how Nigerians conduct their affairs despite their country's omnipresent corruption.

Routley makes two provocative moves. She engages with the vast literature on public corruption, particularly from within political science. She takes on a dominant strand that debates how and why African countries differ from European political norms, on the assumption that those norms tend to preclude officials' self-interested actions that might be glossed as 'corruption'. Routley appreciates the complexity of this literature, which encompasses models of a 'patrimonial' state that relies on affective ties rather than functional norms of office and celebrations of African political forms whose colonial-era disruption have led to today's dysfunctions. Routley demonstrates the inadequacy of such formulations, pointing to the semantic range of 'corruption' itself – the phenomena the word designates are too heterogeneous to admit one aetiology – and to the fundamentally negotiable nature both of corruption itself and of the governing practices from which it emerges. To the extent that corruption is objectively more prevalent in Nigeria or other African countries than elsewhere in the world – as opposed to being more visible or representing a larger proportion of GDP – this reality may result from the hybridity of the Nigerian government and national political life. For Routley, indeed, the inescapable characteristic of the Nigerian state is its hybrid, creole quality, bringing together diverse political and intellectual genealogies. Her use of 'hybridity' is indebted to but differs from Homi Bhabha's

influential account of the cultural admixtures of colonizer and colonized that suffused colonial society, both enabling colonial systems of rule and fatally undermining them.

These formulations undergird Routley's account of how a diverse group of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) negotiate the terrain of public corruption. The second part of the book pivots from what had been a dense, largely theoretical argument about corruption, the state and hybridity to a discussion of Nigerians' more pragmatic trials and tribulations. This study is based on long-term fieldwork within three Nigerian NGOs: a religious organization focused on human rights, one on women, and one on health issues. Routley's empirical basis here is participant observation within each of these and a series of rich interviews she conducted with her co-workers. She discerns that the NGOs' underlying strategies and their effective engagement with the 'local' depend on cultivating particular relationships, both with state actors and with the people they attempt to serve. That is to say, the NGOs are most effective at achieving their ends and serving their clients when they deviate (at least to some extent) from international norms of meeting preselected goals and following rules of transparency and equity. The demands of Nigerian daily life require a focus on long-term relationships, and on building these up in a manner that provides all concerned with incentives that, in the long run, will achieve the NGOs' ambitions.

Negotiating Corruption has a great deal to offer. Routley's approach focuses attention on the ultimate stakes of distributing public goods. Her theoretical conclusions are accordingly modest; rather than proposing a grand strategy for fighting or eliminating corruption, she demonstrates how a group of Nigerians have learned to live with it, and how their strategies should lead us to greater theoretical modesty. That said, I would have preferred that the synthetic account she develops in the first half of the book root itself more deeply in the field's intellectual history. As Routley demonstrates, she is acutely aware that scholarly paradigms of corruption are not objective, scientific models of an invariant object; they are part and parcel of an evolving international order, emerging from the varied enthusiasms of the post-World War Two development community. Similarly, Nigerian politics is not simply an ongoing interaction of hybrid political cultures. In Nigeria, as elsewhere, political culture is inseparable from the diverse historical trajectories of the local, national, regional and global. The early twenty-first-century context of the NGOs she studied must be understood in relation to the politics of the Nigerian Fourth Republic, to the post-9/11 international order, and to the ongoing fallout from the end of the Cold War.

In the end, therefore, Routley's book is a most useful provocation to scholars and to development practitioners, and it is one that will lead scholars in important directions. It is densely argued, and difficult to disaggregate in a brief review. Routley is at her most effective when engaging scholars such as Jean-François Bayart, Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, whom she joins in rejecting a reified view of African primitivism but considers too inclined to search for uni-dimensional root causes for corruption, or Giorgio Blundo and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, who she suggests provide a useful template for ethnographic investigation but who also reify the boundary between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate'. I would be extremely interested to see how her provocative insights could be extended, finding wider application both empirically and theoretically.

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