

General themes take up the remaining four papers: two reflect interestingly on changes in the media of transmission – from oral through print to digital – and two address the question of gender in *orisa*-worship. The last of these – Lorand Matory’s hard-hitting riposte to Oyewumi’s thesis that pre-colonial Yoruba culture did not recognize gender – is arguably the most impressive piece in the book, though also the least essentially concerned with its subject. A Postscript by the historian of Yoruba religion John Pemberton, to whom the volume is dedicated, agreeably rounds the collection off.

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DIASPORA INTELLECTUALS AND THE END OF COLONIAL RULE

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Ending British Rule in Africa: Writers in a Common Cause. By CAROL POLSGROVE. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009. Pp. xviii + 186. £60, hardback (ISBN 978-0-7190-7767-8).

KEY WORDS: African diaspora, decolonization, intellectual.

African diaspora intellectuals, their writing and networks, played a critical but until now largely ignored role in the end of colonialism in Africa. This, at least, is the contention of a growing body of literature in recent years that focuses on a circle of intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century. Carol Polsgrove’s new book, which describes the writing of George Padmore, C. L. R. James, Jomo Kenyatta, Richard Wright, and Peter Abrahams, is a welcome addition to this list. It provides valuable new information on the relationship between these writers, their diverging opinions, and the personal antagonisms that grew up between them over decades. Padmore is the central figure, and the other writers emerge throughout the text as they collaborate and conflict with Padmore’s vision of an independent Africa.

The central tenet of the book is that, by examining these figures as writers, we arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between their writing and their political ends. This is taken up in the first three chapters, where the barriers faced by Padmore, James, and Kenyatta to get their work published in the 1930s and the opportunities that they created for themselves by writing and publishing together are described. Polsgrove asks us to consider that their act of writing was a desire simply to be accepted as authors, and that this in itself carved a space for critical thought that had not existed for colonial subjects before. More direct evidence that they themselves saw writing this way would have been useful. As a journalist herself, Polsgrove pays attention to the practical details of relations between agents, publishers, and editors – an aspect of writing that she notes is too often ignored in intellectual histories.

As the narrative reaches the 1950s, Polsgrove turns to the intellectual and personal tensions between these men. She provides evidence that Wright actually informed on Padmore to the US State Department, throwing into question their seemingly close friendship. Tension between James’s ‘ivory tower’ intellectualism, Kenyatta’s ‘tribal loyalties’, and Padmore’s practical political activism are noted. Some of the contradictions in the behaviour of these men emerge through Polsgrove’s analysis; as, for example, when Padmore became involved in the suppression of media in Ghana after 1957.

The hints at a critique of these men's work are a welcome addition to the often polemical studies that do exist, particularly when it comes to work on Padmore. Yet there is room for more: the book shows *how* their writing differed over time, but not *why*. For example, when James's *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* interpreted events in Ghana as a social revolution while Padmore's earlier *Gold Coast Revolution* analysed events alongside contemporary nationalist movements, we are left wondering why James and not Padmore was willing to make this link. There is much in the previous history of these two men, combined with the international political context at the time, that could explain James's invocation of socialist revolution and Padmore's omission. There are still many questions left as to how the betrayals among friends affected the course of action and methodology of each man. By engaging further with their social and political context, it is possible to get at the limitations that each man faced, what they conceived as achievable within their own sphere of possibility, and how they prioritized their ideas.

By the end of the book, a central question remains – was this group of writers actually a community or has this classification been placed upon them? Most of Wright's books carried the theme of race rather than colonialism. James's corpus focused more upon issues of class and socialist revolution. Abrahams's writing displayed his skepticism of an independent Africa. Nkrumah was more a statesman than a writer. What was the 'common cause' for which these individuals were working? Given that they were on different continents at various times in the narrative, and in and out of contact, what kind of 'community' were they? Polsgrove's use of Benedict Anderson's phrase, the 'imagined community', for this group is a literal rather than theoretical tool for analysis, and seems a misapplication of the term, since Anderson's thesis applies to the construction of the idea of the nation as such, rather than simply any abstract invention of a community. The evidence presented in the book indicates that the common cause was not actually 'Ending British Rule in Africa' – this was, primarily, Padmore's goal.

There is still much to applaud in this book. The research is invaluable to future analysis of these men and the women who assisted them. The tensions among these writers as independence in Africa neared, and the contradictions in their own response to approaching independence, provide a useful window into how the potential for freedom also opened the way for contention and repression. *Ending British Rule in Africa* is a call for further analysis of the impact of decolonization on those who had conceptualized its path in the preceding decades.

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THE HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHY OF WESTERN CAMEROON

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Encounter, Transformation, and Identity: Peoples of the Western Cameroon Borderlands, 1891–2000. Edited by IAN FOWLER and VERKIJKA G. FANSO. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009. Pp. xxvii + 253. £58/\$95, hardback (ISBN 978-1-84545-336-7).

KEY WORDS: Cameroon, colonial, colonialism, gender, identity, women.

Although this book is that reviewer's nightmare, a Festschrift, its authors and editors have made a serious effort at thematic coherence. As indicated in its title,