

le politique, le social, et l'économique, même si les relations avec cette dernière sphère apparaissent comme peu approfondies. Sans que les auteurs ne le soulignent toujours de manière assez explicite, leurs analyses permettent de constater la permanence des logiques culturelles swahilies sur la longue durée. En ce sens, le lecteur trouvera que ces contributions font écho à différents travaux, notamment ceux de T. Ranger et de J. Glassmann. Le monde culturel de la métropole tanzanienne se caractérise, il y a un siècle comme aujourd'hui, par sa capacité à assimiler des influences extérieures, tanzaniennes ou étrangères. W. Graebner, A. Perullo, et S. Hill montrent ainsi comment des genres musicaux ruraux, européens, arabes, congolais, et américains furent intégrés jusqu'à devenir des sons caractéristiques de l'ancienne capitale, permettant d'animer ses nombreuses soirées et fêtes. A. Ivaska s'intéresse à de jeunes urbaines qui surent, au tournant des années 1960–70, faire respecter cette tradition d'ouverture. En recourant aux concepts politiques dominant de l'époque, elles purent imposer en justice leur droit à porter des mini-jupes dans l'espace public alors que de nombreux jeunes hommes en voie de déclassement économique et social tentaient par différents moyens de leur interdire. T. Tsuruta, qui s'intéresse aux deux clubs de football de la ville, et W. Graebner, qui dresse un panorama de la scène musicale sur le siècle, mettent en évidence la permanence de cadres associatifs entourant ces activités. Les clubs constituaient un lieu majeur de sociabilité, facilitant l'intégration des migrants arrivant en ville, mais ils étaient également un lieu d'affirmation d'un 'nous' ethnique ou social se transformant parfois en champ de bataille. A cet égard, l'absence de structures associatives autour du principal genre musical en vogue auprès des jeunes, le rap, montre la profondeur des évolutions socioculturelles de *Bongoland*.

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## RESTORING THE LINK BETWEEN CULTURE, IDENTITY, POLITICS, AND GOVERNANCE

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*Identity, Diversity, and Constitutionalism in Africa*. By FRANCIS M. DENG.  
Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2008. Pp. xiv + 271.  
\$50, hardback (ISBN 978-1-60127-035-1); \$19.95, paperback (ISBN 978-1-60127-034-4).

KEY WORDS: Governance, identity, political culture, politics/political.

Francis Deng argues in this interesting, persuasive book, that Africa has been poorly served by its constitutional reliance on structures and norms inherited from colonial states and later built upon by new elites determined to maintain authority and power. In particular, he critiques African governance for its failure to build upon and incorporate traditional 'African' values and culturally distinct world-views, which might offer a more effective solution to the crisis of identity politics that Deng suggests is prevalent in the region. Such arguments are not, of course, new (nor, indeed, entirely absent from official donor policy). But Deng restores the actual constitution, as opposed to the broader sweep of 'good governance', to the central focus of analysis.

In this book, Deng moves from an historical analysis of the formation of African constitutions to a consideration of how they have failed to deal with ethnic and

minority-group diversity. He continues to explore how identity interplays with politics in Africa, usefully taking a pluralistic perspective on identity-based politics, neither falling into the trap of asserting it as a primordial force nor dismissing it as irrelevant. The book then turns to one of its central arguments: that the application of the principle of self-determination needs to be moved beyond the national level to apply to minority groups within the nation, even if the ultimate implication of such an extension would be to support a principle of secession for minority groups. The book argues that unity-at-all-costs models of government, inherited and refined by post-colonial governments, have suppressed ethnic minority claims and identities, and created tensions between governing elites and those excluded from post-colonial settlements. While preserving national unity should be the priority, Deng suggests this can best be achieved by respecting the needs and demands of minority groups for their interests to be reflected in the state. The best remedy against fragmentation and splintering states is for those states to adopt truly pluralistic policies and to engage fully with the diversity of groups and interests within the state, giving such groups a reason to want to remain engaged and hence removing a key rationale for separation.

As one would expect, given Deng's expertise, the most interesting discussion lies in applying notions of locally constructed constitutionalism to conflict management, human rights, environmental protection, and gender relations. Deng questions approaches in these areas that seek to apply 'universalist' (that is, largely Western-constructed) values and processes within an African context. He does not dismiss arguments that, for example, human rights have a universalist application, but suggests that building upon local values and worldviews can strengthen the application of such rights in culturally distinct contexts.

The historical discussion on the origins of modern African constitutionalism is rather weaker, consisting largely of a brief narrative of the transition to independence and the constitutional path taken by the first generation of post-Independence leaders. Similarly, Deng's efforts to highlight distinctive features of an African 'worldview' is ultimately rather limited. These accounts are far from satisfying in their lack of detail (particularly in a book that seeks to demonstrate the importance of the specific context). However, in the case of the latter, the book does identify four areas as offering useful examples for how African constitutionalism could build upon traditional values: the Akan understanding of 'personhood'; a survey of Dinka values; South Africa's *Ubuntu* concept; and the Rwandan traditional justice system, the *Gacaca* courts.

From the book a set of arguments emerges as to what form African constitutions might take if they are to address the governance problems at the heart of many of the continent's difficulties. Deng argues persuasively for the principle of consensus (not just majority consent) to be incorporated into government structures; communal identities must be given greater protection; the inter-connectedness of all people and communities must be embedded within the heart of a new constitution; and power must be decentralised in a real and meaningful way (including, as the ultimate right, minority rights to self-determination). By building on traditional African values, traditions, and worldviews, constitutional reform can, Deng suggests, create something that meets the needs of all Africans, undercutting causes of identity-based conflict and creating a sense of unity. It is, perhaps, an idealist's vision, but it remains an attractive one, and one that sees the solution to some of Africa's most intractable problems as already existing within its myriad of cultures and social systems. This eminently readable and enjoyable book restores the link between culture, identity, politics, and governance in a constructive, nuanced manner. Its use of African philosophy and thought, its highlighting of African successes not just failures, demonstrates how much the continent has to

teach the world, and what contribution an understanding of African ideas, values, and systems has for broader political reform.

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## PROPERTY IN LAND, LOCAL POLITICS, AND THE STATE

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*Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa*. By CHRISTIAN LUND. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. xiv + 200. £45, hardback (ISBN 978-0-521-88654-3).

KEY WORDS: Ghana, development, governance, land tenure, state.

Christian Lund's book is an important contribution to the growing literature about two interrelated dimensions of governance and development in Africa that are alluded to in the title: local politics on the one hand, and the dynamics of property – more precisely property in land – on the other. The study of local politics and of dynamics of property necessarily refers to the larger framework of the modern state in Africa, understood both as an idea or abstraction and also as a set of concrete institutions and practices.

The book is based on research in the Upper East region of northern Ghana, but the conclusions drawn from the analysis of particular cases (or 'microhistories') can be generalized for much of Africa. Property rights in land are the (temporary) outcome of a complex process of appropriating, legitimating, and defending access to resources (arable land, trees, ponds, etc.) located on a more or less precisely delineated territory. This process involves various actors and their agendas, both on the local and the national level, in a context of legal pluralism. The codification of individual or collective land claims in one form or the other does not preclude other people's attempts at securing rights to the very same resources, basing their claims on 'history' and 'tradition'. State legislation or state representatives are not the most powerful forces in the local arena. As the author points out, land-rights conflicts are not simply about competing claims, but also about who has the right to settle these conflicts. This is where not only competing claims but also more general questions of social identity, political authority, and state formation come into play.

What makes the case of Ghana special is the watershed event of a constitutional change:

When the 1979 Constitution declared that land held in trust by the government was henceforth to be handed back to its 'original owners', earthpriests, families, and individuals saw an opportunity to claim land rights from government and chiefs and to contest a political order that had developed throughout the twentieth century. (p. 2)

This is the pivotal event that forms the backdrop for the claims, conflicts, and court cases discussed by Lund. The constitutional change, and the legal and political transformations that followed, resulted in a number of unintended consequences, such as, for instance, the emergence of earthpriests as actors in the local political arena.