

lively debates among feminist scholars, but to persuade anyone interested in war's transformative effects that gender always matters.

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Joanna Allan, *Silenced Resistance: women, dictatorships, and genderwashing in Western Sahara and Equatorial Guinea*. Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press (hb US\$79.95 – 978 0 299 31840 6). 2019, 360 pp.¹

This book by Joanna Allan is a comparative study that analyses the resistance to the colonial and postcolonial regimes in Western Sahara and Equatorial Guinea from a gender perspective. Those familiar with the complicated political situation in these two former Spanish colonies in Africa, of which we are constantly reminded by the use of pseudonyms by the informants, will appreciate the courage of this work given the conditions under which it has been carried out. The research spans across Spanish colonial archives and fieldwork in Equatorial Guinea, the Saharawi refugee camps in Tindouf, Algeria, and Morocco-occupied Western Sahara.

The book is divided into three parts, with two chapters in each. The first part is dedicated to the colonial regime. The second covers the politics of gender in post-colonial states – in this case the Saharawi state in exile in the refugee camps of Tindouf, and in Equatorial Guinea. The third focuses on how repression and resistance are gendered in postcolonial regimes, specifically in the Western Sahara occupied by Morocco, and in Equatorial Guinea. In each part, one chapter is dedicated to each of the two territories. In this balanced distribution of analysis, the researcher manages to link both cases through constant comparisons and theoretical references, and by shifting the focus from the analysis of gender to geopolitics and from hegemonic discourses to daily resistance.

As the author herself recognizes, this distribution could be problematic. Access and the breadth of fieldwork had very different conditions in each location. This imbalance leads to greater development of the Saharawi case, which is more thoroughly illustrated. In addition, these different spaces and chronological periods have already been covered asymmetrically in the existing academic literature. In the case of Western Sahara and the Saharawi refugee camps, this work is riding the wave of the academic boom of monographs accompanying it from both historical and anthropological perspectives. The situation with research on Equatorial Guinea and the Western Sahara occupied by Morocco is very different, as the academic attention to these locations is much more limited, although not completely absent. The comparison of these two unequally researched spaces is a key challenge for Allan's approach, an endeavour that is achieved thanks to intense theoretical work.

One of the author's starting points is feminist theory, of which she makes extensive use throughout her research; she maps specifically gendered situations of oppression and the ways in which women have been resisting them. The idea of

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daily resistance as ‘weapons of the weak’, following James Scott, is central to her analysis. This perspective allows her to identify less overt and more silenced forms of resistance, such as how the use of popular culture allowed Saharawi women to show solidarity against arranged marriages during Spanish colonialism or to speak out in Malabo’s Semu market today. Allan manages to link all these situations thanks to extensive use of documentation and fieldwork, and an intelligent use of theory.

The author also analyses the construction of hegemonic discourses, making extra effort to reflect on the concept of *genderwashing*, understood as a claim, made in this case by authoritarian regimes, of commitment to gender equality while their practices work against this. She also links these marketing efforts to the exploitation of natural resources, taking intersectionality into account. Doing so points to both the Orientalist roots of the discourses of authoritarian regimes and the overlap of categories of gender, race and class that necessarily constitute resistance to them.

Allan manages to present a well-built argument pointing out the interrelations between the history of colonization and postcolonial regimes. As she observes, the argument that Arab and African women should be saved assisted colonization and the implantation of the Female Section, the Franco dictatorship’s women’s institution, in the territory. Also, this argument has been used by postcolonial authoritarian regimes in compliance with the international community in genderwashing operations. This observation, according to the author, does not apply to the discourse of the Polisario Front – the Saharawi nationalist movement. In this case, the participation of women in the early anti-colonial struggle helped mobilize the Saharawi nationalist discourse towards progressive goals and allowed for greater female empowerment.

On finishing this brilliant book, a discerning reader could draw two general conclusions. First, academic research on authoritarian regimes has underestimated the extent to which dictatorships use gendered discourse to consolidate power. Second, there is a need not only to make a gender reading of subaltern studies, but also to understand gender categories as a constituent part of social categories. In this way, the work brings together reading from the geopolitical point of view with a reading of gendered processes of oppression and resistance.

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Cassandra Mark-Thiesen, *Mediators, Contract Men, and Colonial Capital: mechanized gold mining in the Gold Coast Colony, 1879–1909*. Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press (hb US\$110 – 978 1 58046 918 0). 2018, 230 pp.

Cassandra Mark-Thiesen uses archival records to investigate labour relations in the early decades of semi-industrial gold mining in the Wassa area of Ghana. The centuries-old artisanal mining of Wassa was ‘discovered’ in the late 1870s by European entrepreneurs, who then ignited a more capital-intensive industry using steam-powered stampers to crush ore mined from deep shafts. The machinery, however, did not displace labour: mining companies needed significant numbers of manual labourers for extracting and processing ore. Recruiting and managing labour was an important determinant of profitability. Mark-Thiesen describes the economic