

risk. In the third and last part of the book, Otu goes back to the Missionary Collections archives at SOAS University of London to examine letters exchanged in the post-independence period (1965–75) between the Christian Council of Ghana and Christian Aid, a British Christian humanitarian aid organization. These archives describe the concern with normalizing monogamy. Tracing this concern to the construction of the modern ‘civilized’ and Christian nation, Otu argues that this history is a palimpsest that can help us understand the contemporary fiction that Ghana is a strictly heterosexual nation. In the last chapter, he shows how LGBTIQ+ rights NGOs reproduce this fiction. Taking as an example the screening of the BBC documentary *The World’s Worst Place to be Gay?*, at an activity organized by a local human rights NGO, Otu argues that queer liberal projects are ‘sites of racialization’ that depict Africa as a homophobic continent. This, he argues, creates a ‘homocolonial trope’ in the same way that Christian missionaries created a ‘heterocolonial trope’ in the 1960s.

A significant focus of the book is Otu’s attentiveness to class dynamics. He describes the intimate relationships between *sasso* and other men, whom they call *gentors* (middle-class masculine-presenting men) or *logs* (working-class masculine-presenting men). Otu describes the monetary logic that shapes relationships and desires between *sasso* and *gentors* and *sasso* and *logs*, showing how these men are all related to one another in a political economy of intimacy. I would have liked to read more about the interactions between *sasso* and their *gentors* and *logs*. Embodying gender, class and sexual subjectivity differently, their intimate engagements could elucidate the tensions between the different, often contradictory, ideas and praxes of queer sexualities. Otu’s interlocutors were *sasso* who were familiar with, and often interacted with, LGBTIQ+ rights discourse and organizations. But how do *gentors* and *logs* – whose mostly normatively masculine gender and heterosexual identification make them unfathomable to queer liberal activism – relate to, or are impacted by, the work of LGBTIQ+ human rights interventions, if at all?

All in all, Kwame Otu has written a dense book about the fast-changing conditions of queer life in Ghana. He ends his conclusion with a series of pertinent questions about the futures of *sasso* and other queer lives in Ghana – questions that can only leave us wishing for more research from him and others, as a way to further queer queer Africa.

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Theodore Trefon, *Bushmeat: Culture, Economy and Conservation in Central Africa*. London: C. Hurst for the International African Institute (pb £20 – 978 1 78738 814 7). 2023, 256 pp.

This is a timely, valuable and highly readable book that comes at a time of heightened public interest in environmental issues. It provides an engaging and immersive description of the (largely unsuccessful) history of wildlife management in Central

Africa, and the persistent challenges in Congo Basin countries. These challenges have only grown over time despite efforts to halt what appears at times to be an unstoppable, headlong rush towards a future in which the region's great forests will be left 'empty' of their rich wildlife. Much of the value of the book lies in the author's commitment to viewing the issues from a human perspective – that is, through the eyes of the people who live closest to animals, hunt them, trade them and consume their meat.

At the outset, the author introduces some of the developments that have contributed to rising pressure on wildlife and the boom in urban bushmeat consumption, which include population growth, the expansion of urban areas, and deforestation stemming from agriculture and resource exploitation. Importantly, it is made clear that bushmeat is not a subsistence food eaten out of necessity due to a lack of better options; rather, to some, it is 'everything: it's money and food, [and] it's what makes [people] feel good' (p. 1). It is a delicacy and essential component of regional identity. As a means of connection between urban consumers and their rural kin, culture and ancestral home, bushmeat's social value is of great importance. For many Congolese, bushmeat is frequently the centrepiece on urban tables at weekend gatherings, and it is served to guests to show respect, gratitude and acknowledgement (p. 95).

Given his intended audience, the author does well to engage with the literature from a range of areas, including livelihoods, food security, wildlife management, zoonosis, bushmeat economies and consumption trends, while maintaining readability for non-experts. Primary ethnographic data is used to bring forth local perspectives throughout the book, ensuring that the priorities of local people are put at the centre of the discussion. The book will certainly be of benefit to professionals working in related fields, including rural and urban development, public health, conservation and environmental protection, who seek to view the issue of bushmeat from outside their own disciplines.

By presenting the perspectives of the actors involved in the supply and consumption of bushmeat, the author is able to penetrate the ideological divides between often conflicting development and conservation agendas. Trefon illuminates the realities of how bushmeat has featured, currently features, and is likely to continue to feature in the lives of hunters, traders, caterers, law enforcement agents, policymakers, conservationists and consumers. He is also able to show – through detailed explorations of each of these groups – that no single stakeholder group is a monolith, and that there is often stark variation within each category. This allows for a more realistic and practical examination of how future policy may be formulated not only to fulfil a particular ideological priority, but also to satisfy the real-life considerations and challenges that determine whether actors are able to comply with legislation and guidelines aimed at changing their behaviour.

Trefon warns that the implications for human well-being and the survival of wildlife in Central Africa do not look promising. It is difficult both to legislate and to enforce legislation aimed at changing behaviours in regions where the state is absent and very poor people have little option but to fend for themselves. Current legal frameworks are inadequate – they are ill-suited to the ecological, political, cultural and enforcement realities of today (p. 186). Crucially, they lack legitimacy in environments where 'hunting, trading and eating wild animals are ordinary, normal and desirable activities for many people' (p. 185). Villagers refuse to curtail their survival activities regardless of what the law says. As a community development worker in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo explained, ‘what may be criminal according to the law isn’t necessarily criminal in the eyes of villagers’ (p. 190).

The warning provided by this book highlights the central role of livelihoods and cultural heritage in conservation efforts. New and hopefully improved wildlife management strategies will continue to be formulated and implemented in the region in the coming years, and this book’s message reminds us that the success or failure of these strategies will depend on the extent to which they take account of the cultural, nutritional and economic importance that bushmeat holds for millions of people. Trefon concludes with a grim assessment of the implications of the current failings of wildlife management for human well-being and the survival of the wildlife that inhabit the region’s forests today – in significantly smaller numbers than in decades past.

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Khalid Mustafa Medani, *Black Markets and Militants: Informal Networks in the Middle East and Africa*, 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (pb £22.99 – 978 1 009 25772 5; open access – 978 1 108 96101 1). 2022, 426 pp.

Anyone who has viewed images of the masses gathered at Tahrir Square in Egypt or the protests in Khartoum must have wondered: what drives the sudden popular mobilization against authoritarian regimes that had once seemed timeless? This dense and challenging book offers a unique and invaluable window into the forces that compel societies in the Arab and African worlds to either revolt or consent to the power of their rulers.

In his book *Black Markets and Militants*, Medani explores the vagaries of elites in Sudan, Egypt and Somalia as they struggle to retain control over economies that are beholden to economic booms and busts beyond their borders. Medani starts his story of militancy and black markets in the period when these countries began exporting labour to oil-producing states in the Gulf, which entailed flows of remittances that constituted an economic force that could easily elide political elites. People generally accepted the lack of domestic employment as long as remittances kept flowing. Medani’s analysis becomes particularly interesting where he offers an account of the recent present, after the drying up of these remittances as oil states went bust, redirecting political grievances towards questions of domestic employment. Here, the equation is one of relations between remittance brokers, Islamists and the state: did the state manage to co-opt remittance brokers? Did Islamists do so instead? Or, as in the case of Somalia, was the political landscape different altogether?

Medani explores how regional identities, clan links and religious ties varied with fluctuations not only of state policy but also of global business cycles. In doing so, he presents a truly international political economy that does not, for once, centre on the West, and that is able to bridge questions of ‘interest’ and ‘identity’. Medani does so by