Kwasi Konadu's *The Akan Diaspora in the Americas* (2010) is guilty of developing an uncomplicated vision of a homogeneous 'Akan' cultural heritage in the Gold Coast – one that, he argues, survived virtually intact in the Western Hemisphere for centuries.

Among the contributions offered by Shumway is her analysis of Anomabo – a place, according to a British governor of settlements in the Gold Coast, 'where the Negroes are Masters' (p. 1). Unlike the slave trade conducted through Cape Coast and Elmina, which were controlled by European trading companies, the physical and political terrain at Anomabo meant that the Borbor Fante and, later, the Coastal Coalition had a direct role in what Shumway styles a central 'hub' of the slave trade. Indeed, the volume of trade at Anomabo outstripped that of both Cape Coast and Elmina and the town's elite demonstrated their agency in and mastery over the slave trade conducted at their coast.

For some, the role of the Anomabo elite in the full spectrum of historical agency will not come as a surprise and Shumway may linger on this a beat too long as she seems to be responding to a dated historiographic current that focused on Atlantic Africans as victims or passive objects in the processes occurring around them. For most readers, the elevation of Anomabo and the centrality of Fante peoples in commercial, political, and cultural affairs in Shumway's narrative will serve as a refreshing counterbalance to the Asante-centricism and notions of 'Akan' homogeneity in the study of the Gold Coast and its diaspora.

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FROM WOMAN'S WAR TO MASS MOVEMENT

doi:10.1017/S0021853712000643

The Women's War of 1929: Gender and Violence in Colonial Nigeria. By MARC MATERA, MISTY L. BASTIAN and SUSAN KINGSLEY KENT. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Pp. xiv + 278. £55, hardback (ISBN 978-0230-30295-2).

KEY WORDS: Nigeria, family, gender, protest.

The Women's War of 1929, known in the older literature as the Aba Riots, has become one of the best-studied examples of gender resistance in colonial Africa. The event, which could be easily turned into a successful documentary or dramatic mini-series, lends itself to lively historiographical debates in graduate seminars, and the primary sources available can be used to engage both undergraduate and graduate students in methodology, survey, and specialty courses. The work under review here is one of two recent books published on the event; it uses the abundant source documents to reconstruct the history of the episode and its aftermath. The second work assembles the same set of documents as a teaching aid with some analysis of the event that overlaps, and sometimes differs from, the book under review.[1] The books complement one another well and could profitably be used together.

Issues of causation, process, and outcome form the core of Marc Matera, Misty Bastian, and Susan Kent's book. It repeats the well-known outline of the event's

[1] Toyin Falola and Adam Paddock, *The Women's War of 1929: A History of Anti-Colonial Resistance in Eastern Nigeria* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2011).

history drawing upon archival data. The book's narrative about the event's impact on reforming the colonial administration, built around a 'Warrant Chief' system, is also well known. As to the event's origin, which many previous scholars treat as anti-colonial, the current book sees the war not simply as a case of anti-colonial resistance but as a broader attempt to redefine women's relations with men, a point made many years ago by Caroline Ifeka-Moller. The motives for the war, drawn from archival sources, reveal anger directed at male leaders in village politics and in the colonial office, at the policy of taxation, and at various authoritarian institutions of colonial governance and control. The sources, however, are less compliant when used to sustain the authors' key conclusion that the war was about 'shifting the balance of all men's relations to women' (p. 236).

The authors recognize the multiple driving forces that emerged as more and more women joined: some women were eager to be part of the system while many others asked for a radical change. The trio's reflections on the body of evidence reveal the multiple tensions, but they themselves highlight the most pervasive, radical view among the women, a view that questioned and then destroyed the 'material manifestations' of a colonial regime. Described as brave warriors, the aim of the radical participants in the women's war, as explained, was not to enthrone matriarchy or unsettle 'masculine concerns', but to rethink the world in which resources of the land would be shared with equality and justice.

The most difficult issue the three authors grapple with is the overall outcome of the resistance on the women. Their assessment of the impact of the resistance includes an overview of historiographic debates about the consequences of the riots. An extreme view, expressed as far back as 1966 by Judith Van Allen, dismissed the war as a failure, concluding that women never regained their autonomy and settled into an entrenched system of patriarchy. However, carrying forward a feminist interpretation in the works of notable scholars such as Nina Emma Mba and Gloria Chuku, this book attributes success to the women and engraves their efforts in nationalist political thought.

Indeed, the authors' overall assessment of the 1929 war is positive. They note the element of resistance in the events but go beyond this make a bolder point that the war was an attempt 'to meet social change head-on, to try to shape change and to assimilate that change in relation to a clear, pre-existing vision of the world' (p. 236). In stressing the spiritual and cosmological dimensions of the war, the authors broaden our analysis beyond political and economic explanations, carefully linking protest to existing notions of death and barrenness. As more and more women in some other groups in the south-east were drawn into the protest, they argue, an 'expansive notion of womanhood' emerged, enabling women to develop greater networking skills that led to a 'true mass movement' (p. 239). The book concludes by pointing to the 1929 movement as a 'model, a memory, and a method of protest' (p. 239) informing contemporary women's associations as well as contemporary political actions. On the continuity of women's resistance, historical eras and contexts do shape activities and behavior; however a linear genealogy of resistance is always difficult to make, since one movement may not necessarily have any connection with the previous ones. It remains unclear whether these Igbo and Ibibio women were typical or whether their self-consciousness became widespread after 1929.

The gendered analytical framework of the book means that the text could be used for women's history and for Nigerian studies. The basic outline and contours of the social and political history are clearly mapped out in a way that students can understand. While the authors do not ignore divergent views and the generalized themes imposed by the colonial documents, the authors privilege the testimonies of the women and foreground cogent social and political issues. The major

achievement of this addition to the literature is a clear demonstration of the linkage between policies, gender, and self-constructions.

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DWELLING AND BELONGING IN THE MANDARA MOUNTAINS

doi:10.1017/S0021853712000655

The Dancing Dead: Ritual and Religion among the Kapsiki/Higi of Northern Cameroon and Northeastern Nigeria. By WALTER E. A. VAN BEEK. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. xii-345. $99, hardback (ISBN 9780199858149).

KEY WORDS: Cameroon, religion, ritual.

Walter van Beek's *The Dancing Dead* is a remarkable testament to a career spent in great part working in Kapsiki communities in the northern Mandara Mountains of Cameroon. Since the 1970s, his research in and writing about this region has illuminated a variety of aspects of Kapsiki lifeways, including their symbolic systems, the relations between blacksmiths and non-smiths, marriage practices and gender roles, and the symbolism of beer in Kapsiki society. His accessible and absorbing *The Kapsiki of the Mandara Hills*, which focused on the complex relationships between Kapsiki men and women, has been virtually the only anglophone ethnography on this important area of Central Africa. Now, 25 years later, van Beek has returned with a second, equally fascinating, English-language ethnography of the Kapsiki and their Higi compatriots in Nigeria.

The Dancing Dead examines Kapsiki and Higi ritual systems, perhaps the most spectacular of which are the structures of ritual and mourning that surround the deaths of individuals, and which figure in the book's title and cover image. However, its range is wider than that. It includes three primary sections, the first of which provides necessary historical and cultural background, while the second and third discuss 'rituals of dwelling' and 'rituals of belonging' respectively. Rituals of dwelling include a complex set of beliefs and sacrifices that position Kapsiki/Higi individuals, households, and communities in a challenging social landscape inhabited by persons both human and non-human. Such positioning of people in the landscape is everywhere a salient issue in the densely populated and domesticated northern Mandara Mountains. Rituals of belonging, on the other hand, figure in the life-cycles of Kapsiki and Higi people themselves, and include those rituals associated with birth (with particular attention to the birth of twins, an event fraught with potential and hazard), with marriage and initiation, and finally with death. Needless to say, these two categories of ritual are intimately linked, through a set of common symbolic associations and through their positions in a cycle that works on annual and longer rhythms.

Through the book, van Beek integrates detailed ethnographic descriptions of these central elements in Kapsiki/Higi society with a broader theoretical discussion of how ritual works in that society. He notes, first, that Kapsiki/Higi ritual involves elements of both imagistic and doctrinal modes of religiosity, to use Harvey Whitehouse's differentiation between low-frequency/high-intensity religious experiences that persist as memorable events in a person's life, and high-frequency/low-intensity experiences that are reinforced through repetition and learning of doctrinal systems. Like most traditional African religious systems, Kapsiki/Higi does not have a formal, centralised doctrinal structure, and the