

# EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to introduce Volume 58, Number 1, of the *African Studies Review* for 2015. Since the beginning of 2013 the journal has been published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the African Studies Association (ASA). In the past several years, the *ASR* has become a leading scholarly journal of Africa globally, as measured by the size of the readership and the frequency of downloads of its articles and reviews. The articles in this issue focus on several topics of importance in African studies. The first five articles are concerned with aspects of popular culture and its broader social effects, including witchcraft beliefs, film, fashion, cell phones, and beer. The final four articles speak to issues of energy production and environmental degradation, wildlife conservation, and land allocation. The final piece is a commentary on the Ebola epidemic in West Africa.

This issue begins with Adam Ashforth's "Witchcraft, Justice, and Human Rights in Africa: Cases from Malawi." Here Ashforth argues that despite a century of colonial and postcolonial law which denies the existence of witchcraft, the communities of Malawi (and by implication many other African nations) still conceive of it as a real occult power in their midst. The author argues, based on specific court cases in Malawi, that conflict is reduced and better controlled if the institutions of law accept the fact that most people believe in witches and function accordingly, requiring strict standards of proof for the practice of witchcraft as distinct from the existence of the witch as an individual with power but no evidence of malevolent practice.

Justin Izzo's "Jean-Marie Teno's Documentary Modernity: From Millennial Anxiety to Cinematic Kinship" examines discourses and cinematic representations of modernity in two documentary films by the Cameroonian director Jean-Marie Teno. The author argues that themes of modernity expressed in Teno's films demonstrate how ideals and aspirations of modernity are marked by a sense of millennial anxiety, but also how the most recent of the two films, *Sacred Places* (2009), shows the occasionally antagonistic kinship between African cinema and its "brother," the *djembe* drum.

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Amanda Gilvin's "Games of Seduction and Games of History: Alioum Moussa's *Fashion Victims*" takes us to a November 2011 solo art exhibition in Niamey, Niger, where the Cameroonian artist Alioum Moussa, in Gilvin's words, "launched a critique of global participation in the industrial fashion system by employing secondhand garments as his primary medium" (55). Gilvin argues that the show had special meaning in a city that is attempting to cultivate both industrial and artisanal production of dress and fashion for global markets. She writes, "Moussa demanded that viewers reckon with their own consumerist dress practices and potential fashion victimization in what he described as 'global games of seduction,' and he offered tributes to the different 'fashion victims' by inviting others to play in shared games of history" (55).

Brian Hesse's article, "Africa's Intoxicating Beer Markets," traces the growth of international beer manufacturing and sales throughout Africa. While African consumption of commercial bottled beer is among the lowest in the world (nine liters of commercial beer per person per year as compared to seventy liters per capita in Europe and North America), the author argues that commercial beer producers, both nationally and globally, view the African market with great eagerness as they hope that African markets will both rejuvenate their global marquee brands and expand regional markets with the production of new locally sourced brews.

We move from beer to cell phones with Marcus Watson's "Cell Phones and Alienation among Balsa of Ghana's Upper East Region: 'The Call Calls You Away.'" Using ethnographic methods, Watson looks at the impact of the mobile phone on relationships and society, arguing that while cell phones help users connect with distant loved ones, they also plant seeds of alienation between users and those who remained physically present. This article offers a more nuanced understanding of the otherwise general assumptions and observations about technology in Africa and the impact of cell phones on interpersonal relationships.

The focus of the April issue then shifts to environmental concerns and their political implications, as well as associated topics such as energy production, wildlife conservation, and access to land. "Grand Designs: Assessing the African Energy Security Implications of the Grand Inga Dam," by Nathaniel Green, Benjamin Sovacool, and Kathleen Hancock, describes the planned construction in the Democratic Republic of Congo of the world's largest hydroelectric project. The authors argue that despite promises to bring electricity to many millions of Africans who currently lack access, the project will most likely increase risks to the citizens and the environment of the DRC. The article provides a meticulous analysis of the various factors that could influence the dam's potential effect on the DRC's energy security as well as the various costs involved. The authors suggest that once the dam is built and on-line, energy distribution will likely be highly uneven, benefiting those in South Africa and other wealthier areas far more than most people in the DRC.

In a second article considering issues of energy, political power, and the environment, “Oil, Poverty and Power in Angola,” José León García-Rodríguez, Francisco J. García-Rodríguez, Carlos Castilla-Gutiérrez, and Silvério Adriano Major use the theory of the resource curse to analyze how Angola, with its immense wealth in petroleum reserves, has become a country marked by massive economic inequality and political corruption. The authors investigate how little changed from the colonial to the postcolonial period in Angola in terms of how the government managed its relations with the oil industry. But the many years of war and political instability since independence have combined with the environmental degradation caused by the decades of drilling to exacerbate the worst effects of economic over-reliance on a single export commodity.

Jeff Schauer’s “The Elephant Problem: Science, Bureaucracy, and Kenya’s National Parks, 1955 to 1975” explores the relationships among the local, national, and global constituencies that formulated wildlife policy in Kenya during the 1950s and 1960s. Looking at policy toward Tsavo National Park in both the colonial and postcolonial years, the author discusses different administrative philosophies and understandings of the application of ecological sciences in national parks, which often were more concerned about appealing to different international constituencies than they were with accommodating to the needs of the local populations. This resulted in a paralysis that led to an administrative overhaul of the wildlife departments in the 1970s.

Continuing the discussion of policy within Kenya, Kennedy Mktutu’s “Changes and Challenges of the Kenya Police Reserve: The Case of Turkana County, Kenya” looks at particular problems in the isolated region of the northwest Turkana. Here the main security force is the Kenya Police Reserve (KPR), an unpaid force armed by the state. With little infrastructure and largely mobile pastoral populations, Turkana County faces challenges of low state penetration where small arms and armed intercommunal conflict are widespread. The author argues that the state is further weakened as these police forces take on paid private security roles guarding new oil exploration and drilling sites, potentially triggering new conflicts over access to land and over the political devolution of power in Kenya.

Appropriately, we round out the articles in this issue with a Commentary on the Ebola crisis in West Africa, by Adia Benton and Kim Dionne. This commentary was written at a moment when, according to the Centers for Disease Control, more than twenty thousand people in West Africa have contracted the disease and over eight thousand people have died. The authors provide details and a timeline of the recent outbreak and then ask some important questions about the historical and political factors that may have contributed to the outbreak itself, to the poor health care networks in many of the affected countries, to the lackadaisical international response to the epidemic, and to the sensationalist media coverage of the crisis in the West, particularly in the United States.

As *ASR* editors, we were pleased with the variety and quality of papers presented at the recent meeting of the African Studies Association, and we look forward to receiving some of these papers as new submissions to *ASR*, as well as continuing to welcome submissions at <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/africanstudiesreview> from all scholars engaged in the breadth of disciplines called African Studies.

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