

CD-ROM, where catalogues of all the analysed material can also be found. Each chapter concludes with a synthesis and interpretation, all engagingly written with numerous insights about how much can be learned about life in the Cape during the heyday of the VOC, and some important challenges to previous interpretations of these materials. The concluding chapter draws these observations together in a series of well-crafted and historically informed vignettes. Six appendices provide supplementary information on a variety of topics. These are followed by a very helpful index.

This volume offers scholars with specialist interests in the period, locality, and/or the VOC valuable descriptions and analyses of the everyday detritus of early Dutch settlement at the Cape. These will prove to be invaluable sources of reference for dating and contextualising similar finds from other VOC sites, whether in South Africa or elsewhere. It is also more than this. It is an accessible and thought-provoking interpretation of a large body of material remains, much of which was previously unpublished, associated with the VOC presence in the Cape; a passionate defense of historical archaeology and demonstration of its potential; and, a call to arms for the revival of archaeological research on this crucial phase in South Africa's history.

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## UNEVEN TERRAIN

*Materialities of Ritual in the Black Atlantic.*

Edited by Akinwumi Ogundiran and Paula Saunders.

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**Key Words:** Anthropology, comparative, currencies, diaspora, material culture, religion, ritual.

This book originated in a symposium at the Society of Historical Archaeology in 2009. In their introductory chapter the editors say the contributors seek to show how objects, places, and landscapes assume agentive roles in rituals that contribute in everyday lives to cultural formation, identity, memory, and self-realization. Their approach embodies current trends, substituting a concern for historical context, creative bricolage, and situational specificity for a preoccupation with fixed ethnic identities and related questions of 'authenticity'.

The editors review some of the many dichotomies that scholars have put forward to cope rationally with the apparently irrational (sacred/profane, ritual/ceremony, meaning/practice, and so on). They praise Catherine Bell's performative understanding of ritual and Charles Pierce's work on the social construction of meaning, and they refer briefly to Bruno Latour and Alfred Gell on the attribution of agency to objects that mediate social relationships, but it is difficult to discern the influence of any of these theorists in the book. Some of the contributors abuse their freedom from the old imperative to associate American traits with specific African peoples by reverting to the methods of nineteenth-century anthropology, hunting through a vast pan-Atlantic literature in search of traits, taken out of context, to support speculations about function and meaning.

The best demonstrations of the effects the editors intend are provided by the two final chapters: Cheryl LaRoche on the African Burial Ground in New York and the President's House in Philadelphia and Brempong Osei-Tutu on Cape Coast Castle. Both show how historical associations and powerful emotions govern the inscription of meaning on particular sites and lead to the creation of rituals that are simultaneously political statements and agencies of personal transformation. The contested interpretations of Cape Coast Castle, by the Ghanaian government on one side and groups of African American activists and pilgrims on the other, sensitively set out by Osei-Tutu, also prove that 'meaning' is not an intrinsic property but a function of an object's mediation of social relations. Akinwumi Ogundiran's own chapter on the role of cowries in Yoruba rituals of self-realization shows how the specific materiality of the shells, and their history in the Atlantic trade as a currency convertible against slaves, labor, and goods, 'offered the most versatile intellectual resource to articulate, contemplate and interpret new experiences of individuality and personhood in multiple cultural domains' (p. 78).

Other chapters vary greatly in quality. Some of the authors should have heeded the archaeologist Matthew Reeves, who deplores the tendency to exoticize finds that seem unusual to us and thus potentially 'spiritual' when in fact they may have been simply instruments of everyday life. 'The presence of [such artifacts] has been heralded as representing everything from African survival to resistance against hegemonic patriarchy' (p. 176). This advice also raises, of course, the question of how we are to distinguish between 'ritual' and 'everyday life', especially when ritual is credited with specific but unverifiable functions, all inevitably assumed to be beneficial.

One can sympathize with an archaeologist who, after much labor, needs to have something to say about an inscrutable object. It is not always possible to recover from local informants their memories of long-dead performances or to find help in archives. Grey Gundaker, who has had the advantage of being able to meet the African American makers of figured 'special yards', nevertheless warns us against the hasty attribution of meaning and describes her own methodological precautions. Speculation may lead to valuable insights, but a plethora of 'may haves', 'potentials', 'possibles', and the like gives rise to the uneasy feeling that meanings are being inscribed on enigmatic objects in rituals of academic self-realization.

So, *caveat lector*, but there is much of interest here. Pablo Gómez mines Spanish inquisition archives for details of the lives and practices of healers, finding for example, that Pedro Congo learned much of his art from Yorubas after his arrival in Cartagena. Both Gómez and Danielle Boaz, writing about Obeah in the Jamaican legal system, comment on the interplay of African/slave practices and ideas with those of dominant Europeans, who until the late eighteenth century generally entertained beliefs similar to those they denounced. In his account of Hueda shrines Neil Norman finds archaeological evidence to connect the coming and going of vodun to the history of the Atlantic trade, and reminds us that the accumulative and improvisational nature of ritual assemblages did not originate in the Americas. He shares with other contributors some discomfort with the concept of 'religion': deities become 'cosmological actors' and prayer becomes 'cosmological conversation'. Candice Goucher surveys the role of iron and its rituals from Bassari in Togo to

Ogun in the Caribbean in the shackles of the slave trade; as a commodity in that trade; its increasing use on ships; and, its forging of identity in the Americas.

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## COOPERATION BEYOND CONVERSION

*Who Shall Enter Paradise? Christian Origins of Muslim Northern Nigeria, ca. 1890–1975.*

By Shobana Shankar.

Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2014. Pp. xxx + 209. \$80, hardback (ISBN 978-0-8214-2123-9); \$32.95, paperback (ISBN 978-0-8214-2124-6).

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**Key Words:** Nigeria, Christianity, colonialism, Islam, missions, religion.

English-speaking Protestant missionaries of the early twentieth century expected to have free range in British imperial domains. British colonial authorities, for their part, were generally content to let missionaries wander. But Northern Nigeria was an exception. There, British authorities grappled with a perennial fear that Muslims would find rule by foreign Christians so objectionable, regardless of how ‘indirect’ it tried to be, that they would rise in jihad. Convinced that Christian missionaries would inflame matters by proselytizing among Muslims, authorities tried to deflect missionaries from Northern Nigeria. When they showed up anyway, authorities urged them to settle in Sabon Gari, a new district of Kano that was developing as an enclave for foreigners. Missionaries would have none of it; they insisted not only on coming, but on spreading out as they wanted.

Shobana Shankar recounts this fascinating history with regard to the three Protestant missions that became active in Northern Nigeria: the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Sudan United Mission (SUM), and the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM). She focuses on the period from 1899, when the CMS reached Zaria, through the 1960s, including decolonization and the Biafran or Nigerian Civil War. Her sources are impressive. Besides using mission and British government archives, Shankar conducted interviews in 2001 and 2002 with dozens of people who had encountered missionaries in schools, orphanages, leprosaria (in a region where leprosy was endemic), itinerant medical clinics, and elsewhere. From these sources she reconstructed what missionaries did, and how Northern Nigerians worked with, built upon, or reacted to their efforts.

By 1900, nearly a century after the jihads of ‘Uthman dan Fodio, Islamization in Northern Nigeria was still a work in progress. Moreover, relations were somewhat fluid between slaves, ex-slaves, and free people; between locals and immigrants (including migrants from French-controlled Chad); and, between Muslims, quasi-Muslims, and non-Muslims (like the rural-dwelling Maguzawa Hausa ‘pagans’). In this milieu, missionaries believed that many people, Muslims included, were receptive to their messages.