

than institutional-based governance and justice systems are needed to address both security and social services concerns.

The book calls for consideration of deliberative or collective democracy in the administration of justice, suggesting that the latter best balances the rights of the individual with the rights of the collective. Perhaps this is a best case scenario, but in the worst case collectivism mobilises conformity. This is a normative question, of course, but in my view there is good reason for scepticism with regard to public-empowered or community justice.

I have four concerns in reading this book. First, it is weak on indigenous law. There could have been more discussion of pre-colonial traditional justice and the potential for its use in today's South Africa; second, there is not enough coverage of patterns of police control inherited from the homeland systems, giving the book an urban bias; third, the book should have provided a better understanding of socio-economic causes of crime and violence; and fourth, the historical analysis is weak on the continuity and change in terms of institutional patterns in South African governance.

Beyond this, however, the empirical work is solid, clear and detailed. The history is solid. As an academic work the book performs its task well. What is missing however is the passion and excitement that still characterises this remarkable country. A bit more passion might have helped the generalist through the reading process.

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Makers and Breakers: children and youth in postcolonial Africa

edited by A. HONWANA and F. DE BOECK

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Since the end of the 1990s, an increasing number of publications and conferences have dealt with the question of children and youth in postcolonial Africa. What is significant in current anthropological studies of youth is the rejection of teleological perspectives focusing on the transition from adolescence to adulthood, which in turn implied a very static view of the societies into which children and youth were supposedly 'socialised'. This volume, however, transcends such narrow concerns, as well as a recent tendency to view 'youth cultures' in isolation from social contexts, in its quest for analytical tools suitable for the challenging and often disturbing social and political transformations taking place in contemporary Africa. The twelve chapters, mostly written by anthropologists with a few historians, amply illustrate how children and youth are central and active in effecting these transformations, while simultaneously being deeply affected by them. This is an important volume which in view of its complexity and level of ambition deserves to reach a wide readership.

After an introduction which sets the stage for the individual chapters by describing contemporary African societies as unable to provide credible futures and

directions for its young, whether through colonial or postcolonial frameworks, the first of four sections, consisting of a chapter by the Comaroffs, traces the historical trajectory of the notion of youth as a category in and for itself in African modernities. They articulate the ambivalent and 'bipolar' predicament of youth in this era of 'millennial capitalism' as one of exploitation and exclusion, coexisting with creativity, hope and empowerment.

Delving straight into this stark reality of pain *and* agency, the next section presents four ethnographies that poignantly capture the ambivalent experiences of young people and children enmeshed in difficult circumstances. While the chapters by Honwana and Utas critique the designation of victimhood to children and young women in war, who are frequently presented as devoid of social agency in both popular and scholarly accounts of such situations in Africa, Reynolds' and Weiss' contributions probe deep into the cultural specificity of pain experienced by children in southern Africa, and youth hanging out in barber shops in Tanzania. They account for the subtle ways in which pain is expressed, recognised and even utilised as an active component in an emerging political consciousness.

The political potential of excluded categories is also followed through in the third section, in which Argenti and Durham explore how young people and women, by performing in seemingly marginal choirs and masquerade dances, appropriate political subjectivities that challenge received social and political orders. Through dramatising the unstable lived realities of the margins, these cultural performances take on subversive meanings that threaten to undermine (modernist) conventions of culture, heritage, ethnicity and liberal versions of personhood espoused by the political establishment.

But it is with the attempt of the last four chapters to go beyond the framework of the postcolonial that the volume breaks new conceptual ground for Africanist scholarship. Addressing an acute sense of disconnection and emancipation, in the face of crushing socioeconomic conditions and intensifying globalisation in African cities, from both modernist and traditionalist forms of political discourse (Abdullah), legitimacy (Diouf), and identity formation (Biaya), the authors illustrate radically novel ways of self-assertion among the African young. Often expressed through violent or illegal means, the forging of a 'syncinesic identity', in Biaya's terms, is characterised by practices, aesthetics, and socialities that demonstrate a severe rupture with both colonial and postcolonial precedents. One example is provided by Abdullah's analysis of the socio-historical origins of the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone. Another striking illustration is De Boeck's chapter on Kinshasa, where the transformations of kinship, gender, and exchange relations are articulated into increasing vulnerability of women, youth and children to accusations of witchcraft. In conjunction with such expressions of deep social crisis, the violent imaginary of the second world, now disconnected from the real and the symbolical, is unleashed on to the streets of Kinshasa.

The volume not only brings fresh insights into the predicaments of African children and youth, but also proceeds to address their place in a larger and more radical societal transformation, which in its nature is challenging received knowledge about African realities. Dealing with this epistemological rupture has

indeed enabled these scholars to make theoretical advances that will prove useful to future research in and of Africa.

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The African AIDS Epidemic: a history by JOHN ILIFFE

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One of the most striking aspects of this book is the intellectual honesty with which Iliffe approaches the subject – a historical account of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa. He acknowledges, explicitly, that the book is not a product of a thorough research process; rather the book's purpose is to present a historical account of the epidemic(s) for students and other interested readers. Iliffe's book represents the first solid effort to trace the history of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa. Drawing on research from a multitude of disciplines, including public health, anthropology, economics and sociology, Iliffe brings together a historical account that traces the origins and spread of the epidemic, its varied impacts, and the responses to it over the past thirty years. The value of the book is two-fold. First, it serves as a foundation for students entering into studies of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa. Second, Iliffe places the epidemic in the greater context of Africa's complex history. In doing so, he recognises that the epidemic is not a discrete event in Africa's history; rather it is intricately linked to the long historical forces at play on the continent. While the epidemic clearly has caused changes in Africa's historical direction (and, just as importantly, the historical direction of individual states), Africa's history has affected the epidemic's progress across the continent and the responses to it.

The book contains fourteen concise chapters that could easily be categorised into two larger topics. The first seven chapters trace the origin and spread of the epidemic from equatorial Africa to the rest of the continent's regions. These chapters delve into the complex medical and epidemiological literature about how the virus operates, its origins and its vectors of transmission. The chapters are at times dense, but certainly accessible to the lay reader. Implicit in them is that this may not necessarily be classified as a single epidemic, but that what Africa has faced for thirty years is multiple epidemics, shaped by socio-economic and political conditions within each region and each country. Hence when Iliffe discusses the views of and responses to the epidemic in the latter seven chapters, it becomes clear that each country and region has experienced a common epidemic in name, but not necessarily in the factors that have promoted its spread or the responses to it.

The book represents a strong introduction to the epidemic's history in Africa. Of course, it is already out of date, particularly given the recent research related to our misunderstandings of how the virus attacks the body. This, of course, is not Iliffe's fault, but it does show that what we know about the virus and its impact is sadly, like Iliffe's book, a work in progress. Nonetheless, this book will be an important contribution to understanding this tragic period of Africa's history.

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