

Marchand Sidibé and Samuel Sidibé, the director of the Malian National Museum. It will be perfect for undergraduates.

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**Allan Charles Dawson, ed. *Shrines in Africa: History, Politics, and Society*.** Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2009. Distributed by Michigan State University Press. Africa: Missing Voices series, no. 5. xvii + 210 pp. Figures. Maps. Photographs. Notes. References. Index. \$39.95. Paper.

This book is a set of ethnohistorical and archaeological essays on the general theme of how African shrines serve as “cultural signposts” for ethnic, territorial, and social boundaries. Four of the six essays are thematically coherent because they all focus on the northern Ghana region. The two remaining chapters examine shrines on the Cameroon–Nigerian border and saints’ tombs in Morocco. The concept that serves as a touchstone (or perhaps shrine?) for the authors in this collection is the seminal work of Igor Kopytoff on the dynamics of social frontiers, settlement patterns, and ritual authority in Africa. Such a model suggests that much of Africa’s mosaic of identities, languages, and social forms results from cycles of social segmentation, mobility, and consolidation. This volume identifies shrines as part of this process, and demonstrates that they mediate both territorial and ritual relationships between first settlers and subsequent immigrants.

The first four chapters stick close to the ground, both literally and theoretically. The contribution by Judith Sterner and Nicholas David examines ceramics in the Mandara mountains of northern Cameroon and north-eastern Nigeria. The authors show that the differences in social organization among the Sirak, Sukur, and Gudur polities result in different pottery shrines and therefore different archaeological remains. A second chapter by Tim Insoll, Benjamin Kankpeyeng, and Rachel MacLean seeks to supplement Meyer Fortes’s work on the oral traditions of the Tallensi of northern Ghana with archaeological reconstruction of settlement patterns. They discuss the “ritual objects” found in preliminary excavations at the Nyoo shrine and suggest some of the clay objects’ social contexts. Allan Dawson’s essay on “earth shrines” among the Konkomba people, also of northern Ghana, shows how this group continues to focus on a large baobab tree at Yendi, despite their having been pushed away from that area several centuries ago. The author interprets Konkomba discourse about maintaining ritual practice at Yendi as the idiom of current identity politics and old territorial claims. Charles Mather’s chapter on the ethnoarchaeology of compound abandonment attempts to outline how archaeologists might recognize shrines when excavating sites in northern Ghana. Unfortunately for future scholars in the region, he finds that shrines are unlikely to end up

in archaeological contexts because the pots are usually carried away when a homestead is abandoned.

The final two chapters have wider ambitions in terms of ethnographic depth and theoretical scope. Carola Lentz compares the shrines of two groups in northern Ghana and southern Burkina Faso, and demonstrates that some shrines have “daughter stones” that helped the Dagara people legitimize new territorial claims. The more spatially fixed shrines of the Sisala people do not allow such expansion. In a discussion of the territorial and healing cult aspects of shrines, Lentz also shows how earth priests make use of the ambiguities between these “fields of ritual power” to negotiate new claims. The final chapter by Doyle Hatt develops an analytical framework for understanding “saints’ tombs” in Morocco as a regional system of symbolic meaning and social organization. As sites of pilgrimage, these shrines are rather different from the West African examples elsewhere in the book. Hatt organizes the case studies with semiotic categories derived from the anthropology of religion (such as the “esoteric–exoteric” contrast) to show that saints’ tombs are a loosely structured system of meaning that generates Moroccan culture.

The Lentz and Hatt chapters in particular deserve a wider audience than this book is likely to command. It is most appropriate for West African material culture specialists rather than general library collections. Although the title suggests a broad survey of African shrines, the focus of the volume as a whole is on a distinctly regional pattern of pots, stones, and ritual practice. The book is typo-free, but some of the maps and figures are confusing or do not match the terms in the accompanying text. Scholars of African religion, land tenure, ethnoarchaeology, and identity will find this book useful for rounding out literature reviews, but despite some outstanding individual contributions, the work will not serve as the cornerstone text on African shrines.

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**Kristen E. Cheney. *Pillars of the Nation: Child Citizens and Ugandan National Development*.** Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. x + 299 pp. Photographs. Maps. Tables. Figures. Notes. References. Index. \$52.00. Cloth. \$21.00. Paper.

This fresh, deftly argued ethnography extends scholarship on childhood and children by elucidating how, as highly capable though circumscribed social agents, children actively negotiate their own political identities while shaping an emerging national identity in contemporary Uganda. Combining the venerable variable of social age with the political economy of childhood at local and global levels, Cheney’s theoretical framework and rich data illuminate children’s key but paradoxical roles in national develop-