

provide corridors to contestation that is peaceful should clearly be a priority to both international donors and the Rwandan government.

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HEALTH AND DISEASE

William Beinart and Karen Brown. *African Local Knowledge and Livestock Health: Diseases and Treatments in South Africa*. Woodbridge, U.K.: James Currey, 2013. xvi + 304 pp. Maps. Notes. Index. \$90.00. Cloth.

African Local Knowledge consists of a systematic compilation and analysis of ideas about animal disease and its treatment, including the use of medicinal plants, among African livestock owners. Based on extensive field interviews conducted at nine sites in the North West Province, the eastern Free State, and the Eastern Cape, it provides a fair sampling of African veterinary knowledge in modern South Africa. The authors describe a varied and uneven terrain of ideas and practices produced by more than a century of interaction between biomedical (Western “scientific”) and naturalist theories of causation and cure and provide findings of considerable interest. Biomedical explanations still have only limited penetration in most communities. While vaccines and commercial medicines are in fairly wide use where they are available and affordable, they are often adopted with no acceptance of the aetiology on which they are based. Thus owners who dip their cattle may not necessarily see ticks as the vectors of particular diseases, though they are aware of the challenges to general health that heavy infestation poses. Environmental and nutritional explanations for sickness are still the most commonly held, and herders will generally attribute the well-being of their animals to the state of the pasture. If the grazing is good and animals are eating well, they are healthy; disease strikes unexpectedly. Ideas of non-natural causation are also important locally, mostly in the form of belief in the power of ambient spiritual forces (rather than the malevolence of witches) to cause harm and in the danger of pollution, often gendered.

The details of this valuable survey will be of particular interest to those involved with livestock in South Africa as scholars or veterinary practitioners, but the book is framed in such a way as to engage a much wider audience. Beinart and Brown situate their arguments and findings within the context of debates about the nature of and interactions among different sorts of medical (or, in this case, veterinary) knowledge. Drawing on the larger body of theory developed for human medicine, they address questions of veterinary pluralism, incorporation, and adaptation and of change over time. South Africa, with its long history of veterinary research and state

intervention, is an ideal field for investigation. Even though stock numbers have declined somewhat and urbanization has grown, livestock-keeping is still central to local communities, both rural and peri-urban, as a good investment and a marker of status and identity, if no longer primarily as a means of subsistence. However, as opportunities for African smallholder pastoralism have expanded with land reform, the role of the state in providing veterinary assistance and maintaining disease control has diminished, leaving livestock owners to their own devices. This has perhaps contributed to the high levels of uncertainty, skepticism, and pragmatic experimentation that the authors observed. They argue that current veterinary knowledge and practice are both fragmented and pluralistic, and they point out that there is considerable variation in ideas and practice within as well as among communities. Moreover, local knowledge is both locally situated and globally influenced, much like the communities themselves. For these reasons, the authors avoid the simple dichotomy between “indigenous” and “scientific” systems implied by the use of terms like *ethnoveterinary*. In their view, there is no longer a bounded and coherent body of “traditional” veterinary knowledge transmitted from generation to generation in South Africa, against which biomedicine is apparently failing to make headway. The notion of “local knowledge” better captures the plural, hybrid, and shifting reality in which individual livestock owners make their own diagnostic and curative decisions.

African Local Knowledge is an important book. Its wider arguments are engaging and should encourage a rethinking of older, binary oppositions between “science” and “tradition” in other regions of African pastoral production where patterns of grazing management have also changed and where these ideas now seem equally outdated. Just as the influence of earlier environmental and veterinary ideas generated in South Africa and discussed by Beinart in earlier work gradually spread northward during the colonial period, so these new postcolonial appraisals may have a similar impact on development thinking and practice.

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LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND THE ARTS

Adeshina Afolayan, ed. *Auteuring Nollywood: Critical Perspectives on The Figurine*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 2014. 457 pp. No price reported.

This is the first comprehensive book to focus on a single Nigerian film, *The Figurine* (2009), and its filmmaker, Kunle Afolayan. The book, which reflects broadly on the creative film industry known as Nollywood, sees this