

autochthonies they argue for. Her interviews with religious leaders show the influence they have had in shaping their identities; her interviews with lay-people show diverse attitudes toward these religious identities. In this way, Leichtman's ethnographic study follows a historical trajectory of two separate groups while keeping in mind diverse, even divergent, perspectives within them. Her volume is a theoretically packed, historically grounded and ethnographically rich exploration into minority religious communities and their migrations.

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Humor, Silence and Civil Society in Nigeria by EBENEZER OBADARE

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In *Humor, Silence and Civil Society in Nigeria*, Ebenezer Obadare attempts to advance and deepen the tradition of critical scepticism toward scholarly inquiry into the meaning and possibilities of civil societies by posing critical questions around the non-associational concept of civil society. He then argues that thinking about civil society without referring to associations has the potential to liberate scholarship from the solitary confinement of associational fetishism in which it is currently imprisoned. Steering away from associational thinking is one way to escape what many scholars agree has now become a deliberating status in the civil society literature.

Obadare further argues that once the probability of imagining civil society beyond the strait jacket of associations is accepted, a new analytic horizon opens up in which we can be more attentive to the totality of social life outside organisations. The author argues that humour and silence are two key strategies of civic engagement utilised by the civil society for resisting the government particularly given those moments when open rebellion is an initiation to violent penalty.

The first chapter, titled 'A Terrain of Contention', traces the evolution of civil society and the idea behind it, while taking note that civil society has always been a site of hermeneutic battles. 'An African Discourse' is the title of Chapter 2, where the author described how the language of civil society emerged and became part of the vocabulary. In Africa this language was born in the late 1980s during the struggle between democratic forces and military regimes when African countries were in deep economic meltdown. According to Obadare, the circumstances surrounding civil society emergence were vital for an associational understanding of civil society. The exclusive focus on associations in Nigeria has thus led to a neglect of the historically robust social life outside associations.

Chapter 3, 'The use of Levity', focuses on the relatively overlooked weapon of resistance, which is 'humour'. The author observes that beside humour other non-traditional strategies include poetry, music, proverbs, dance, invective and drumming. In the Nigerian/African context, humour is integral to a

reality that compels the post-colonial subject to endless impoverishing. To the author, humour points to the diversity, wildness and spontaneity of social life outside formal associations, the unmapped spaces where the governor and the governed blend into a spectrum of possibilities.

In Chapter 4, 'Siddon Look' (titled after a phrase in Nigerian parlance which means sitting and watching but not participating nor interested in the event going on), the author made use of specific instances of successful invocation of silence to promote a non-organisational understanding of civil society and the possibilities of informality. Obadare focused on silence in order to juxtapose that humour (verbal) and silence (non-verbal) are related nodes in a communicative continuum. He sees the examination of silence and its possibilities as a useful strategy for rethinking the scholarly axiom which states that 'only voice can provide a way to political participation'.

In Nigeria, the resort to Siddon Look in principle is an invocation of silence stemming from the backdrop of state-sponsored violence and systematic persecution of enemies of the state. Obadare notes that silence is not necessarily the absence of speech but that specific social and political realities give rise to it. He also shows how silence is a part of discourse and language rather than the antithesis of communication. Silence can be a form of protest or a choice to avoid conflict against the logic of the political milieu and its underpinning ethos. Obadare posits that silence was the best way of giving voice while at the same time evading the penalty that open speech attracted in Nigeria under military rule.

Conclusively, the book is unique and innovative. Obadare achieved his aim of giving the idea of civil society in Nigeria a non-associational outlook. He also succeeds in showing silence and humour as major strategies used to promote the non-associational nature of civil society. However, Obadare's use of advanced terminology in the book will make it difficult for the ordinary reader to comprehend.

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Histoire du politique au Congo-Kinshasa by GAUTHIER DE VILLERS
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Written in French, Gauthier de Villers' book spans a bridge between fine-grained historiography of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire, hereinafter 'Congo') and a wealth of conceptual approaches that aim at making sense of post-colonial statehood and politics at large.

The book is organised in two main parts: in the first, more chronologically organised half, de Villers outlines the country's room for manoeuvre across changing international policy and power relations since 1960. It is followed by a second half in which the author works through a more cyclical timeline that describes the different epochs and trends from the very beginning of the Congolese (and then soon Zairian) state, all the way through its eventual decay into an ambiguous period of 'reconstruction' and 'transition' throughout the past two decades.