

Patricia Hayes and Napandulwe Shiweda turn to the legacy of ‘colonial’ or ‘ethnographic’ photographs. The former reflects on the ways in which these ‘empty photographs’ (56) might be made to reveal more than is apparent in the image, for example through attention to oral tradition – ‘sonic photograph[s] of the past’ (73) – in spite of the vehement refusal of such imagery by younger generations of South Africans for their ‘historical disrespect for the black body’ (61). The latter compares photographs made by Alfred Duggan-Cronin and native commissioner, C.H.L. ‘Cocky’ Hahn in Omhedi, Northern Namibia, ‘complicat[ing] notions of colonial photography’ (182) by attending to her interlocutors’ affective responses to the photographs and the role they play in contemporary heritage practices.

Other chapters present studies of an ‘anxious photographic visibility’ (52) in imperial texts on Central Africa (Isabelle de Rezende); the photographic practices of the Chinese community in Mozambique from the 1960s through to independence (Drew Thompson); the relationship between cloth, digital photography and surface aesthetics in Nigeria (Okechukwu Nwafor), which includes a fascinating insight into the way in which digital photography with its potential for the ‘constant intervention of the photographed’ (242) can reconfigure the relationship between photographer and client; a comparison between Joseph Denfield’s recirculation of historical photographs and Daniel Morolong’s urban documentation, coinciding in 1960s East London (Phindi Mnyaka); and, finally, the visibility of Mami Wata cults in Benin (Jung Ran Forte).

If it is not easy to escape the ‘troubling’ dominance of the ‘ethnographic’ as sub-Saharan Africa’s photographic inheritance – a situation that ‘poses great challenges and disincentives to young people in the continent engaging in their own history of photography’ (308) – it is at least possible to resituate the medium within new constellations, revealing new ways of thinking and writing the history of photography in Africa. Bringing together a collection of essays written with an openness to multiple connections, ‘loosen[ing] the constraints’ (305) imposed by paying too much respect to writing on photography from elsewhere, this volume makes a valuable contribution.

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South Sudan’s Injustice System: law and activism on the frontline by RACHEL IBRECK
London: Zed Books, 2019. Pp. 301. \$25 (pbk).

doi:10.1017/S0022278X20000294

This book is about courageous people working for fairness, rights and civil order in South Sudan in a context of everyday extreme violence, fear and authoritarianism since 2013. Focused specifically on activists working within court and police systems in South Sudan’s towns and displaced camps, it documents their struggles for what Ibreck calls ‘law from below’. Drawing from observations, documentation, interviews and meetings over 2014–2019, and a year of town court observations conducted by these South Sudanese legal activists over 2015–16, Ibreck uses a framework of theory on public authority and legal pluralism to outline the heart of the book, which details the practical everyday work of these legal activists.

The book starts at the big picture – with the 2011 Constitution, and Salva Kiir Mayardit and Riek Machar, the two elite protagonists in South Sudan since 2013, introduced in the first chapter – and then gradually focuses down to the personal lives and tactics of these activists themselves (unidentified, for their safety). Ibreck is clear that this is a study of urban law work and workers, and the book only very generally alludes to the legal challenges of the majority of South Sudanese people who still live outside of towns. After Chapter 1's quick survey of the history of Sudan's legal politics and South Sudan's secession and collapse, Chapter 2 details the breakdown and political capture of statutory justice systems, and the plight of their few justices and lawyers, since the civil war started in 2013. Chapter 3 details what remains of the town courts, and the improvisations and jeopardies involved in challenging abuses and claiming rights in these systems. Then we are taken into cases, via court observation data and interviews: Chapter 4 presents three case examples, over land, women's legal rights, and the death penalty, and Chapter 5 outlines the personal lives and careers of three legal activists. The brief and final Chapter 6 extends these two chapters in an exploration of the tactics of these legal activists to limit and challenge various injustices and abuses. The study slowly builds an argument about the nature of time in situations of protracted conflict and risk: these activists are struggling with urgent injustices and daily threats and fear, while fighting the long game over land disputes and women's rights, and updating, scrapping and reworking their tactics as the wider dynamics of South Sudan's political space and civil wars shift around them.

The later chapters are the most exciting, as they detail how people have built expertise and tactics, developed and tested lines of argument, and strung together safety nets and networks, as personal arsenals against the growing power of state violence. There is not enough space here for a closer explanation of the legal arenas these individuals honed their expertise within, for example in Juba through the wars of the 1990s and 2000s. And while we are always aware that the activists here want to uphold the law, it is sometimes unclear what the law specifically is, or what principles and practices these legal workers want to uphold in different cases. Similarly, Ibreck does not fully explore the specifics of what is generally called customary law, a plethora of negotiable and absolute rules, standards and common practices that diverge and overlap between South Sudan's many ethnic societies. More work here might help us better understand the specific shape of citizenship and rule of law that these activists are working towards.

The book is based on research alongside legal organisations and charities, including directly employing these activists in workshops and court observations. As noted by Alex de Waal in his Preface to this book, rule of law and access to justice programmes have a lot to learn from the careful political expertise of these activists in navigating terrifying security cultures and complex, shifting legal terrains. The methodology, however, is presented in an Appendix. Ibreck emphasises the tension between UK academic production and the need to act in solidarity with those whose work is under study: further reflections on the design and workings of this research might highlight some paths forward for action researchers, and even some useful ways to challenge the standard workings of academic and government-funded research.

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