

wider African experience, and in particular his knowledge of Hausa and Yoruba, to broaden the range of situations considered, he offers proverbs, riddles, praise poems, speeches and illustrations, weaving a colourful network of thoughts, richly illustrated and sifted through theories. The last lines confirm the power of the spoken word at the heart of societal transformation. Appendixes, index and photographs add further to the value and interest of the book.

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OPOKU AGYEMAN, *The Failure of Grassroots Pan-Africanism: the case of the All-African Trade Union Federation*. Lanham: Lexington Books (hbk US\$131.00 – 0 7391 0620 1). 2003, 392 pp.

At a moment when African leaders and Africa watchers are preoccupied with the new African Union, its New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and the G8's proposed solutions to Africa's problems, Opopku Agyeman's book is timely. It is a carefully interwoven account of grassroots Pan-Africanism, labour activism, and the sacrifices of radical Pan-Africanist leaders whose efforts were thwarted by conservative and neo-colonialist opportunists. According to Agyeman, the latter – as well as the failure of grassroots Pan-Africanism in the labour and political spheres – contributed immensely to missed opportunities to empower the majority of Africans to overcome, through a strong political union, the continent's underdevelopment and lack of dignity.

Agyeman provides ample insights into why one of the rare Pan-Africanist organizations – the All-African Trade Union Federation (AATUF) – failed to unite African workers and to contribute to Africa's economic liberation. This is a notably interdisciplinary study of Pan-Africanism that spans labour studies, international relations, intra-African relations and the Cold War. Some of the issues addressed include the viciousness of the Cold War, how some African leaders were made to choose sides, and how that may have led some Pan-Africanists to rescind their membership of the Socialist International. According to Agyeman, these Pan-Africanists preferred to focus on the unique manner in which colonialism and neo-colonialism were antithetical to Africa's development. The Eastern bloc (led by the Soviets) would rather wage class struggles across the globe.

Agyeman uses the case of the AATUF to detail how Cold War rivalry severely hampered Pan-Africanism from achieving its goals of complete political and economic liberation and development of Africa. While the Cold War raged, both the West and the East used Africa to pursue their selfish goals. In this regard, this book is strongly recommended to the new student of Cold War politics and Africa and to the experienced practitioner who needs to refresh his/her memory about how devastating the Cold War was to Africa. Agyeman is able to place Africa's problems in a context broader even than the Cold War when he observes that, 'Pan-Africanism's central goals of continental equality with the rest of the world . . . entailed a basic transformation of African society and thereby of world society.' He cites Emmanuel Wallerstein to explain why the West in particular abhorred Africa's unity and progress: 'it was precisely because the dangers of unity were so great to the "existing world system"' (p. 28).

Agyeman's main theses, abundant documentary evidence and copious quotations should arouse the reader's interest in why African leaders – especially those enamoured of NEPAD, the G8 and recent IMF/World Bank programmes

to solve Africa's problems – are so enthusiastic about collaborating with so-called international development partners. Reflecting on Agyeman's theses in this book, one ought to be mightily sceptical about the efficacy of the newly proposed economic bail-out for Africa, including debt relief and the highly indebted poor country (HIPC) status clamorously sought by African leaders. Donor activities and their impact since the Cold War vindicate his deep doubts about reliance on donor assistance. He is thus right in emphasizing the need for caution and making a clarion call for undiluted Pan-Africanism as still the single most important solution to Africa's development ills.

For those seeking lessons from history to inform policies and actions to ameliorate Africa's dire conditions, Agyeman's book is highly recommended because, as the wise adage goes, those who ignore history are condemned to repeat it.

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MARGARET HARDIMAN, *Konkonuru: life in a West African village – the impact of socio-economic change on rural communities*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press (pb £14.95 – 9964 3 0291 6). 2003, 244 pp. (Distributed by African Books Collective, Oxford)

This volume explores the nature of the rural economy in West Africa, using one community in the Akwapim Hills of Ghana, Konkonuru, to illustrate some broader issues. Between 1992 and 1999, the percentage of Ghana's population classified as poor reduced from 52 to 40 per cent. Poverty is still pervasive, however, and this average masks regional and occupational disparities. Poverty in Ghana is largely a rural phenomenon: rural people are three times as likely to be poor as urban people. This rural nature of poverty suggests that it is concentrated in the informal economy, which may be taken to include agriculture. Among occupational groups, non-export food-crop farmers and the non-farm self-employed are still most at risk. Hence understanding the rural economy in Ghana from a poverty reduction perspective is of crucial relevance today, and *Konkonuru* goes some way to furthering this understanding. The book is largely based on fieldwork from 1970, undertaken while Hardiman was a lecturer at the University of Ghana, but has been updated by further research in 1990 and by the author's regular communication with colleagues and friends. It provides an interesting account of socio-economic change in this one community over the period. However, since *Konkonuru* is not up to date with current developments in rural Ghana, the education and skills training system or the economy more widely, it is more useful for the historical perspective it provides of Ghana's rural economy. Nonetheless, some of the issues discussed – land rights and agricultural systems, the poor quality of rural infrastructure, migration in search of employment, and the expected employment outcomes of education – are still relevant in 2006.

Hardiman discusses the issue of the lack of rights over land and commercial assets, which remains a key constraint on the development of the rural economy. The need for enforceable property rights is crucial since many in the rural economy find it hard to utilize their assets, which largely remain dead capital. She also notes the importance of using appropriate technology to modernize agriculture as a means to increase productivity. *Konkonuru* notes that a 'striking' feature of rural areas is the poor quality of infrastructure. Employment and livelihood activities in the rural economy in Ghana are constrained by the poor