

In addition to the words of Cuban and African leaders, the book brings to light accounts of other participants such as members of the Cuban Five, a ‘paramilitary’ group of Cuban nationals who targeted counter-revolutionaries in the United States and abroad (p. 106). In oral history interviews, these figures recall the conditions on the ground in Angola and elsewhere, providing firsthand accounts of battles and daily life in war zones across the conflict (pp. 107–17). Indeed, one of the strengths of *Cuba & Angola* is that it presents multiple accounts of the same events, yielding historical complexities and continuities that enrich the text. Besides the speeches and interviews, the book contains a glossary of ‘individuals, organizations, and events’ (p. 137) and several maps that will assist readers who are unfamiliar with the subject make sense of the various terms, places, and proper names associated with the war in Angola. As the accounts collected here demonstrate, this protracted conflict represented more than just an anti-colonial struggle in Africa – it served as transnational proxy war between the United States and international communism in the postwar era. Thus, scholars and general readers of twentieth-century African, Afro-Latino, and African American history will find this title a compelling and informative addition to an understudied chapter of the Cold War and its impact on Africa. *Cuba & Angola: Fighting for Africa’s Freedom and Our Own* succeeds in focusing scholarly attention on the Angolan Revolution and the significance of pan-Africanism to the ultimate success of that struggle.

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RAPTOR POETICS

A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo.

By Allen F. Roberts.

Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013. Pp. xi+311. \$85, hardback (ISBN 978-0-253-00743-8); \$30, paperback (ISBN 978-0-253-00750-6).

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Key Words: Congo – Democratic Republic of, colonialism, museums and memorials, oral narratives.

In 1883, an ambitious Belgian officer of King Leopold’s proto-colonial International Africa Association (IAA), Émile Storms established a fortified outpost on the eastern shores of Lake Tanganyika from where he hoped to combat the slave trade and spread his civilization. A year later, he mobilized over a hundred mercenaries to attack an equally ambitious local warlord, Lusinga. Other than a belief that Lusinga defied civilized practices and European authority, Storms offered little justification for his actions. His men attacked Lusinga’s fortress, massacred his fighters, and captured his followers as booty. They gave Lusinga’s head, impaled on a spear, to Storms. Like many other victims of nineteenth-century European violence, the skull was taken back to Europe for study. Lusinga’s sculpted ancestral figurine became Storm’s trophy and, then, treasured *objet d’art*, stored at the Royal Museum for Central Africa at Tervuren, Belgium.

Allen Roberts uses this assassination to explore the encounter between late nineteenth-century European and Congolese, specifically Tabwa, cultures. There is no scholar more familiar with Tabwa culture, art, and customs, as revealed in his many writings over the last few decades. But Roberts proves equally adept in describing a European culture steeped in an arrogant worldview that it claimed to be 'scientific' and progressive but was often little more than a justification for European conquest. In addition to Roberts's many years of fieldwork, the study is informed by a meticulous treatment of published sources and archives found at the Royal Museum for Central Africa. He is equally generous in referencing academic sources on Africa and beyond to illustrate his many points.

Roberts describes the bateleur eagle, famous for its deft maneuvers as it surveys the landscape and sweeps toward distant prey, as an evocative Tabwa cultural idiom. He does not burrow into the micro-details of the clash between Storms and Lusinga. Instead, the encounter becomes the landscape from which he surveys aspects of European and Tabwa culture and history, and, then, like the bateleur eagle, swoops in. The appreciation of any particular section of the book depends on the taste of the reader for his prey.

A fascinating chapter begins with a Tabwa description of the dances of Storms's fighters as they advanced on Lusinga's stronghold. Roberts uses the detail from this Tabwa narrative to reflect on the many meanings of the *kutomboka* dances found across Luba-related areas. Another chapter deals with Tabwa sculpture and funerary rites. How would Lusinga have been buried if his head was not taken by Storms, Roberts asks? The symbolic analysis, influenced by Victor Turner and Luc de Heusch and informed by a close study of Tabwa words, is ambitious and controversial. Given the flight of erudition regarding these subjects, esoteric even to Tabwa, the reader is often left in awe. We might wonder who else is capable of such interpretations; nevertheless, we remain enticed by their intellectual elegance.

The chapters on European culture and history cover well-trodden ground: many historians have already instructed us on the racism and brutality of nineteenth-century 'science' or on museum displays that reproduce colonial ideas and hierarchies. While the arguments are familiar, Roberts brings an unusual eye for detail, as in his reflection on Lusinga's skull, still in the Royal Institute of Natural Sciences in Brussels, or on his description of the display of Lusinga's ancestral figurine alongside a bust of Storms, first in Storms's drawing room, and, later, in the Royal Museum for Central Africa.

Roberts is certainly not as enamored with European culture as he is with Tabwa. The cover illustrations, discussed in the book—a watercolor of an imagined Storms and Lusinga's ancestral figure—both portray protagonists that look forward in determination and grasp their guns. Lusinga, with his smooth curves and abstract details, is more evocative than the mediocre painting that represents Storm as almost a caricature of the colonial swashbuckler. Elsewhere in the text, Storms appears as much like the Congo Free State administration that succeeded him: brutal, paternalistic, racist, and hypocritical.

There might be alternative perspectives. In 1885, Alfred Swann, a missionary who ardently supported the spread of European civilization and a European-led war against Arab slave traders, found Storms shortly before his return to Belgium. He was seated

aside his fortress after it had been burnt down, perhaps in a revenge attack by Lusinga's followers. Swann thought that in spite of the many criticisms of Belgian officers, Storms and another officer, Jules Jacques, were 'gentlemen in the highest interpretation of the word in their relations with both white and black ... determined to extend to the native races committed to their charge the blessings of civilisation'¹. An endorsement by Swann, himself an arrogant racial chauvinist, should be treated with skepticism. Still, even gauging by the evidence Roberts presents, Storms did not display the greed-driven behavior of many men-on-the-ground of the Congo Free State. Storms seems less representative of the administration of King Leopold's Congo than a dupe of the violent men who came to constitute it. The assassination of Lusinga might have been less of a typical performance of colonial hegemony, as Roberts claims, than an indication of a colonial failure – the civilizing mission of Storms – and the rise of a more predatory colonialism. The nuances in this history might then be shifted from a description of hegemonic cultural and symbolic structures to the elusive motivations of individuals and the contradictory implications of events; a history that would resemble the *bateleur*-like poetics of Tabwa narratives.

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THE COMMERCIAL AGENT'S LAMENT

Congo: The Miserable Expeditions and Dreadful Death of Lt. Emory Taunt, USN.

By Andrew C. A. Jampoler.

Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2013. Pp. xii+256. \$44.95, hardback (ISBN 978-1-61251-079-8).

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Key Words: Congo – Democratic Republic of, international relations.

The book follows the 'miserable' life and career of Lt Emory Taunt to highlight the history of relations between the United States and King Leopold II's Congo. Taunt was the first resident American commercial agent and consul to the Congo. This is a fascinating story, particularly to a reader who, in the early 1960s, was responsible for the promotion of US commerce with newly independent Congo at the American embassy in Leopoldville. I was later consul in Stanleyville, and for a time was held a captive by Lumumbist rebels, the 'Simbas'.

US diplomatic relations with Leopold's Congo began at the end of 1884 with congressional approval of Belgium's claim to the Congo and President Chester A. Arthur's recognition of the International Association of the Congo. The move, orchestrated by Henry S. Sanford, American minister to Belgium and ardent booster of Leopold, made America the first nation to recognize Leopold's authority in the Congo, even before the Berlin

¹ Alfred J. Swann, *Fighting the Slave-Hunters in Central Africa* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1969 [orig. pub. 1910]), 180.