

# BOOK REVIEWS

## ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

**Toyin Falola and Aribidesi Usman, eds. *Movements, Borders, and Identities in Africa*.** Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2009. x + 318 pp. Figures. Tables. Maps. Photographs. Bibliography. Index. No price reported. Cloth.

The editors assert that this collection “establishes the centrality of migration and movements of people in the historical evolution of Africa” (1) through case studies that focus on a wide range of geographic locations and draw on different types of sources. Their introduction offers a broad and well-informed, if not comprehensive, historical overview of migration in Africa.

The book brings together thirteen papers divided in two parts: “State Formations and Migration Crossroads” and “Movements and Identities.” The five contributions to the first part focus historically and exclusively on the Yoruba of southern Nigeria. The first four papers cite mostly archaeological evidence to examine social dynamics among the Yoruba during the precolonial era. According to Ogundiran, this evidence requires a modification of Igor Kopytoff’s “frontier hypothesis,” since it suggests that new social formations emerged out of intrafrontier migration rather than just metropolitan-to-frontier migration. Ojo’s contribution examines the thesis that Yoruba identity was formed in the context of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and concludes that a distinct Yoruba identity had already developed earlier. The articles by Ogunfolakan and Usman examine the northeastward migration of the Yoruba. Oshineye’s contribution focuses on the development of Yoruba architectural styles and documents the Brazilian influence brought to the region by returning liberated slaves.

The second part of the collection goes beyond historical examination of southwest Nigeria to look at migration elsewhere in the continent. The topical focus of these papers is also much more eclectic than that of the first part, ranging from an examination of how boundaries figure in the literature of the Ivoirian novelist Amadou Kourouma (Geloin) to an examination of the cultural roots of squatter settlement formations in South Africa (Steyn). Other essays address the impact of British anticolonial resistance on population movements in Kenya (Owino), the contribution of the immigrant Hausa community in Ghana (Abaka), the influence of migration on the development of ethnic markers in Zimbabwe (Nyambara), the fabrica-

tion of an Arabic genealogy by the Swahili in Kenya (Amutabi), and the French creation of a labor force in Upper Volta (Mande). Martineau's essay returns to the formation of Yoruba ethnic identity through a study of the place of Yoruba migrant associations in Benin.

Although a central focus of the volume is movement, it does not in fact move very far. Six of the thirteen articles are devoted to the Yoruba; indeed, the subtitle of the first part should have reflected this narrowness, rather than leading the reader to expect a broad comparative discussion of mobility and state formation throughout Africa. The second part does cover much more geographic and conceptual territory, but even this part leaves the reader feeling that the volume lacks focus and coherence. The introduction leads the reader to expect a volume on migration. Reading some of the articles in the second part, I had to keep referring back to the title, "Movements, Borders, and Identities in Africa," to remind myself that the volume was conceptually much more inclusive than the introductory essay suggests.

Despite this confusing lack of focus, however, most of the individual essays are very good. I would recommend the book to readers who are interested either in Yoruba history or mobility and identity in Africa. I myself am not a scholar of the Yoruba or of Nigeria, and indeed most of these authors are not scholars of mobility per se. Yet I found the first part on state formation interesting and informative, and the essays in the second section are a thought-provoking exploration of how issues of mobility, borders, and identity have played themselves out in various locations, historical periods, and political circumstances. The authors' limited expertise on the subject of migration does limit the extent to which they can engage with the literature on migration and systematically advance our understanding of migration as a social process. But the very fact that scholars who might not have thought to frame their research in terms of migration do so with such ease underlines the ubiquity of population movements in all social and historical processes. And as the editors rightly point out, understanding migration is a key to understanding the past and future of the African continent.

Michael Lambert  
*University of North Carolina*  
*Chapel Hill, N.C.*  
mlambert@email.unc.edu