

of excess, abjection, and precarious livelihoods with inventive use of margins and ambiguity; the uneven hold of capitalism in the face of different regimes of value, different rationalities, and “the messy realities of actual reasoning” (6); and gender, generation, and class divisions interacting with political and economic strains. In a short Foreword, James Ferguson pays tribute to Jane Guyer’s refusal to separate empirical reality and theorization (what she refers to as “radical empiricism” in her Afterword). He felicitously notes that she has always “worked from a careful and imaginative interpretation of ... mundane realities” and in so doing, “she has enabled us, again and again, to see how taken-for-granted analytical frames have misled us” (xvii). This echoes Frederick Cooper’s point on Jane’s ability “to use a concept to launch an enquiry, not to close off an analysis by slotting something definitively into a [received] category” (136). The essays follow her lead.

Pauline E. Peters

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

pauline_peters@hks.harvard.edu

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Nic Cheeseman, Lindsay Whitfield, and Carl Death, eds. *The African Affairs Reader: Key Texts in Politics, Development, and International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 372 pp. Index. \$40.00. ISBN: 9780198794295.

The African Affairs Reader provides a useful summary of the contributions made to the *African Affairs* journal in the last thirty years. Drawing from one of the oldest and highest-ranked African studies journals, the volume brings together some of the key texts that have shaped the study of African politics and societies. It includes thirteen re-published articles, as well as a general introduction that discusses how research on the continent has evolved over time. There is an additional introductory discussion before each section on topics including the African state; the political economy of development; elections, democracy, and representation; and Africa and the world. The volume presents a general overview of the politics of Africa and could provide a basis of African studies knowledge for graduate students as they develop their research projects.

The volume does a good job of outlining some of the challenges that researchers face when developing theories of African politics, such as when the editors emphasize the problems with “trying to generalize about the nature of ‘the African state’” (29). The introductory essays also attempt to situate African states in a broader global context. For example, in her discussion of the political economy of development, Lindsay Whitfield offers an important overview of how foreign capital can shape African prospects for development, but not always for the better. Similarly, Carl Death emphasizes the importance of “showing African agency and how African political actors have shaped the world we live in, as well as being shaped by it” (287).

The essays in this volume address the problem of generalizing across space and time. This is clearest in Nic Cheeseman's discussion of democracy and elections. He writes, "The impact of political liberalization has been promising in some respects and problematic in others" (196). However, while the volume offers a nuanced perspective of African politics, the essays could do more to provide conclusions regarding what the political theories generated in the pages of *African Affairs* tell us about the state and trajectories of African societies, as well as where more research needs to be focused to fill in the gaps of knowledge. The editors take a "safe" position in debates in African studies, outlining possible trajectories, pathways, and processes toward a "better future," without taking a clear position on what this future might look like or the conditions that might contribute to greater economic growth, democratization, or peaceful coexistence.

The strength of the volume lies in the individual articles, especially with respect to their careful articulations of the African state, rich understanding of why political clientelism persists, and delineation of how global forces interact with domestic interests. Crawford Young masterfully dissects the post-colonial state, highlighting that the reference to the colonial period has shaped the last fifty years, yet concluding "the post-colonial moment appears to have passed" (56). Catherine Boone explains how the historical origins of state building have coincided with distinct land tenure regimes, and suggests that contemporary property rights must be considered within a larger arena of constitutional politics.

Complicating conventional models of political clientelism, David Booth and Frederick Golooba-Mutebi explain how the Rwandan state centralizes economic rents in a way that enhances the personal incomes of the governmental elite. Yet they suggest that this provides a way to achieve economic transformation and social development. Anja Osei discusses how the dense interactions between MPs of different political parties and ethnic origins in Ghana create what she calls a consensually united elite, which serves as a strong basis for democracy. Digging deep into the formation of the ANC party in South Africa, Tom Lodge finds that "in the organization's early history, family and friendship bound leadership together in strong affective ties" (272), contributing to the neo-patrimonial politics in evidence today.

Peace Medie and Tim Murithi write the most timely and policy-relevant essays. Medie's insightful essay explains how the women's movement in Liberia influenced the enforcement of the national rape law. Murithi argues that the African Union has become the most significant norm entrepreneur on the continent, especially pertaining to the issues of peace, security, democracy, and development.

The volume claims to be the "essential guide to the big topics in African studies" (1). While it certainly summarizes the major topics that have been written about in *African Affairs*, it could have done more to highlight some of the most important emerging themes on the continent today. These include Africa's unprecedented urbanization, the use of different forms of political violence, the spread and politicization of diverse religious bodies,

the changing nature of traditional institutions, and the persistence of ethnicity in politics. By taking a predominantly state-centric approach, the volume overlooks the complexities of African politics at the local level, especially with respect to how political authority emerges and manifests in the context of daily life. By generalizing about the “big topics in African studies” from the publications in a single journal which focus mostly on qualitative research and single-country case studies (as the editors note on page 8), the volume neglects the contributions of many experimental, ethnographic, and survey-based studies that have greatly contributed to the study of African politics in the past twenty years. Despite these gaps, the book provides a solid baseline for understanding the state of African studies today.

Jeffrey W. Paller

University of San Francisco

San Francisco, California

jpaller@usfca.edu

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Paul Higate and Mats Utas, eds. *Private Security in Africa: From the Global Assemblage to the Everyday*. London: Zed Books, 2017. viii + 184 pp. Acknowledgments. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Paper. £24.99. ISBN: 978-1-78699-025-9.

The aim of this edited collection is twofold. It is first of all an empirical project whereby the contributors have all engaged in providing an ethnographic account of the everyday practices of non-militarized private security in a collection of country case studies in Africa. The book also aims to apply and, in some respects, further develop the global security assemblage framing as developed by Rita Abrahamsen and Michael Williams (who are also contributors). In brief, the assemblage framing abandons a Weberian notion of statehood, as well as the view that private security is always the antithesis of the state, taking instead the viewpoint that there is a need to focus on, as Abrahamsen and Williams themselves explain in chapter 1, “the multiplicity of actors, the different forms of power and resources available to them, and the manner in which they come together in a contingent whole to exercise powerful effects in specific sites.” Each chapter focuses on a specific site and reflects on the nature of the security assemblage that is described.

In brief, the empirical foci of the various chapters are as follows: In Abrahamsen and William’s chapter 1, they explore the assemblages of gold mining in Tanzania, where the need for soft approaches to security inspires relations between corporate, NGO, and community entities. Chapter 2, by William Reno, focuses on private security within the context of Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Somalia, particularly on the distance between the international agenda of reform and the reality of entangled personal, political, and kinship ties. Chapter 3, by Peter Albrecht, focuses on order-making in Sierra Leone, and on how multiple sources of non-state power intertwine with Western reform attempts, rather than being replaced by them. In chapter 4, Maya Mynster Christensen explores the lived experiences