

Part Four ('Le Dernier de l'Empire') examines the fall of Songhay. Chapter Twelve treats the bitter decades of civil strife that followed the reign of the first *askia*. Chapter Thirteen analyzes the realm under the last successful monarch; prosperity, power, and religious fame came to rely increasingly upon unfree labor. 'Songhay under Dawud was in every sense a slave society' (354). With the fall of Songhay, Chapter Fourteen brings the story to a conclusion.

Through meticulous, rigorous, and affectionate scholarship, the author has carved an honoured place in the literature of world history for this West African dominion.

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POLICE WORK IN GHANA

Producing Stateness: Police Work in Ghana.

By Jan Beek.

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Police forces in Africa have long been considered as a paradigmatic expression of state failure. Most writings on African police assume that police work in Africa is fundamentally different than in other places: African policing institutions are presented as dysfunctional and corrupted organizations — characteristics that are explained either as a heritage of the colonial past, or as a by-product of neoliberal reforms. Jan Beek's book argues against this grain. The author spent eighteen months with Ghanaian police officers, observing them at work in their stations, in their patrol cars, and at their duty points. He came back with a thought-provoking thesis: police in Africa might be more Weberian in their approach and aims, that is, rational, systematic, and bureaucratic, than is typically imagined.

The core material of Beek's book is a rich description of everyday police work. Beek obtained a permit from the National Headquarters of Ghana Police Service to accompany police officers and conduct participant observation research at four different locations: the police headquarters of the city of Saasu, in the north of the country; the headquarters of the city of Akansa in the south; the headquarters of Nangodi in Accra; and the fraud unit of the Criminal Investigations Department (CID). He sat at counters, visited offices, and spent countless hours at days and night in patrol cars, sharing the life of police officers. The results are presented in eight chapters which contain lively descriptions from Beek's field notes and long quotes from interviews.

The first two chapters introduce the Ghana police service and its members. Chapter One gives an overview of the history of Ghanaian police forces, from precolonial times to present. The chapter explains how the Ghanaian police grew out of the Gold Coast Police that was created under colonial British rule. While acknowledging the influence of politics and

the market sphere on police work, the chapter underlines the slow emergence of a 'bureaucratic order' (6). Even if only partially realized, 'bureaucratic order' is a grand scheme that gradually emerged and is 'one of the main rationalities of police work' (44). Chapter Two introduces the sociology of Ghanaian police and describes modes of recruitment, experiences of training, and career strategies of police officers. The chapter offers a fine description of careers paths of junior police officers (constables, lance corporals, corporals, sergeants), inspectorates (inspectors) and senior police officers (superintendents, commissioners, inspectors general), and also offers surprising insights into the strategies of policemen. For most of them, the official administrative rules are inaccessible. This situation does not mean that police officers ignore the rules, but that they act upon their practical knowledge of the rules, rather than according to the rules themselves. Informal practices play a key role in career advancement (for instance, the practice of 'lobbying' one's hierarchical superior for favours). But those practices are also clearly identified as operating in contrast to formal rules (for example, 'lobbying' always happens behind closed doors, since police officers agree that these practices have to be hidden).

Chapters Three to Six analyse different fields of police work. Chapter Three considers the relations between police officers and their peers, that is, the 'police community' or 'police brotherhood', and the relations between police and politicians (86). Beek also describes the everyday production of police reports: 'To a great extent, police work consists of text production', he writes, and offers a close reading of those texts which are partly reproductive and 'copy work' (78). Chapter Four focuses on police and civilian interactions at traffic check points. The author observes how police constables stop cars, lorries, and *tro-tros* (passenger cars), check driver and vehicle licenses, and collect small bribes. The chapter presents a very nuanced interpretation of corruptive practices and shows that, in their interactions with civilians, police officers work to maintain a legitimacy which is both 'fragile and situational' (101). Chapter Five closely analyses police patrols. While a Foucauldian discourse analysis would consider patrolling as a tool of governmentality and part of a bio-political project, the description of everyday patrolling gives a different view: 'In the police car, an observer notices the precariousness and limited impact of such grand projects', Beek finds (123). Driving through the city at night, the production of 'the state' takes place through a rather fragile and relational (and at time violent) set of practices. Chapter Six explores criminal investigations, from the moment a civilian submits a complaint to the arrest of a suspect and the obtaining of a statement. In so doing, police officers navigate multiple normative orders. 'In Ghana, the police rarely send a case to court', Beek notes (176). The law is not the only option, and working a case means involving a whole range of actors, including civilians, intermediaries, 'friends of the police', and 'bail contractors'. However, this process does not mean that police officers ignore the law, although they often postpone its application.

Chapters Seven and Eight discuss the specificity of police officers' work, compared to other actors of policing. Chapter Seven assesses the relations between police and non-state policing agents like private security staff, vigilantes, and neighbours. In their everyday work, police officers engage in a constant competition with other actors. They attempt to control these other actors by cultivating personal relationships with influential civilians and politicians. In that struggle to establish a hierarchy between them and the private security actors, they are not always successful. However, they often manage to appear, in the eye of Ghanaian

civilians, as the most legitimate policing actors. Chapter Eight tells the life story of three police officers working at the CID in Akansa. Taking a close look at the personal trajectory of one detective constable, one detective lance corporal, and one assistant superintendent, Beek explores the social experience of ‘living bureaucratically’ (192). These portraits of Ghanaian policemen strongly depart from the image of corrupted policemen moved by greed and personal obligations. In spite of a lack of control over their professional trajectories, and often inaccessible official norms, many police officers do share a certain bureaucratic ethos, a specific sense of duty, and a high notion of their profession.

In his conclusion, Beek quotes a speech by Senior Officer Ndag, who notes: ‘There is an invisible power that makes people follow our orders without force’. ‘This’, Beek concludes, ‘describes aptly the legitimacy that stateness provides’ (205). Beek does not underplay the importance of petty corruption, boundary shifting, informality, and violence. However, he emphasizes the number of times when ‘police officers act according to bureaucratic order’ (1). More often than not, police officers do play by the rules — even if some of these rules are not written. Police work is shaped by a strong belief in the bureaucratic nature of the state. Thus, stateness is not an empty signifier, but ‘a quality of the police organization’ and ‘a result of everyday practices’ (1). Beek’s study makes a significant contribution, first to the dynamic field of police anthropology, and second to the anthropology of stateness.¹ This is an important book for the sociology of the state and it will be also a useful read for anyone who intends to drive a car or take a *tro-tro* in Ghana.

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SENEGAL ABROAD: LANGUAGE, RACE, AND IMAGINARIES

Senegal Abroad: Linguistic Borders, Racial Formations, and Diasporic Imaginaries.

By Maya Angela Smith.

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Maya Angela Smith has written an important and innovative book that addresses, through the prism of language and discourse, contemporary questions of migration and race among

1 On police anthropology, see M. Göpfert, ‘Bureaucratic aesthetics: report writing in the Nigérien gendarmerie’, *American Ethnologist*, 40 (2013), 324–34; J. Steinberg, *Thin Blue: The Unwritten Rules of Policing South Africa* (Johannesburg, 2008); J. Hornberger, *Policing and Human Rights: The Meaning of Violence and Justice in the Everyday Policing of Johannesburg* (London, 2013); S. Biecker and K. Schlichte, ‘Between governance and domination: the everyday life of Uganda’s police forces’, in L. Koechlin and T. Förster (eds.), *The Politics of Governance: Actors and Articulations in Africa and Beyond* (London, 2015), 93–114. On the anthropology of stateness, see J. P. Olivier de Sardan and T. Bierschenk (eds.), *States at Work: Dynamics of African Bureaucracies* (Leiden, 2014).