

unprecedented, recovering some US\$5 billion in looted assets. Nonetheless, high-level Nigerian corruption continues on a grand scale. The autonomy and capacity of the EFCC is still not on a secure footing and the judicial support needed in the anti-corruption struggle is often weak. Incumbent Nigerian state governors, some of whom control budgets larger than those of small African countries, are still immune from prosecution for corruption while they are in office. These are some of the reasons ‘authority stealing’ in Nigeria persists. For those wishing to understand the task at hand, there is no better place to start than with this insightful book.

ADAM HIGAZI

King’s College, Cambridge

State and Society in the Gambia since Independence, 1965–2012 edited by
ABDOULAYE SAINÉ, EBRIMA CEESAY and EBRIMA SALL

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For the last few decades Gambian Studies have been on a steady increase as more scholarly works are published in the form of both journal articles and books, out of which the *State and Society in the Gambia since Independence* so far seems to be the most ambitious project since Emeritus Professor David Hughes’ edited volume from 1991 (*The Gambia: Studies in Society and Politics*). Although being located ‘in the belly of Senegal’ (p. 218) and representing ‘an almost insignificant geopolitical value’ (p. ix) to many, the Gambia presents a unique case of African statehood and post-coloniality. Africa’s ‘smiling coast’ has always been a territory over which trade had been dominant – for centuries acting as one of the major transit points of triangular transatlantic slave trade – migration flows continuously happened, and various conflicts and wars were dominating the lives of its ethnic groups. The country’s vulnerable economy as a ‘peanut monoculture’ (p. 71) has been struggling with development for decades, and although election statistics also show that ‘Gambians do not see an alternative to [President] Jammeh’ (p. 174), the ‘seventeen years of quasi-military ‘liberalization’’ (p. 176) have not offered any way out of a permanent crisis.

This edited volume covers a wide range of topics from the historical roots of present-day Gambian society via political economy – and external relations – related issues to a number of socio-political questions such as education, gender roles and opportunities and community policing. Lamin Sanneh’s Foreword sets the scene in a neat manner, which is followed by a clear introduction about the rationale and structure of the book. Sixteen chapters written by 21 African, American and European academics and scholars then investigate their research questions in a disciplined and well-documented way – all of the authors fulfil the mandate they present in the abstract at the beginning of their respective chapters, which are coupled with consistently edited bibliographies.

Wright’s first chapter on the social and political settings of the Gambian colony under British rule between 1816 and 1965 contributes to a better understanding of the challenges the Gambia of today faces. Swindell’s second and Sallah’s third chapters elaborate on problems having afflicted agriculture

in the country, with its prime cash crop, the groundnut, as well as on the often overlooked 'Strange Farmer' (seasonal migrant worker) phenomenon. Chapters 4 and 5 by Perfect and Hughes, and Jeng, respectively, examine elections since 1960 and constitutional law making. Jeng arrives at the conclusion that the 1997 Constitution represents a 'constitutional tragedy, the substitution of hope with despair' (p. 146). In Chapter 6 Saine and Ceesay talk about post-coup politics and authoritarianism since the bloodless coup of 1994 up to the parliamentary elections of 2012, providing a clear argument and critical analysis of the entire process of 'de-transitioning' (p. 176).

Part II focuses on political economy and external relations, and we learn a great deal about trade unions in the Gambia in terms of external relations. However, perhaps more could have been exposed from a more global perspective, in particular the delicate relationship between the Gambia and China. Within the pan-African political realm the July 2006 African Union Summit and its consequences for The Gambia, for example, is also a major issue of scientific investigation. Chapter 8 by Senghor about the experiment of Senegambian integration attempts, however, offers a list of relevant 'pointers', which can be useful for other regional integration schemes across the continent (p. 244). Chapter 9 by Evans and Ray centres on the Casamance conflict in a very well-written essay.

Part III collects seven intriguing socio-political and literary discussions addressing the politics of HIV treatment (Chapter 10 by Cassidy), the education landscape (Chapter 11 by Gajigo), Gambian fiction (Chapter 12 by Barry), the 'dialectics of social change and continuity' via joking relations (Chapter 13 by Davidheiser), contemporary gender relations (Chapter 14 by Chant and Touray), mangrove ecosystems and female oyster-collectors, together with their harvesting and marketing practices (Chapter 15 by Carney, Crow and H. Ceesay), and community-based policing (Chapter 16 by Perrott). A recurring element of the authors' approach is their (sometimes rather harsh) critical voice about the incumbent president, his clientele and the prevailing order – as Nyang says in his Postscript, 'the tone is at times confrontational but it seeks [...] 'to speak truth to power'' (p. 517).

In sum, the editors sophisticatedly leave the readers with the desire to read more such fine essays about contemporary Gambian issues. We know that a second collection is underway, which hopefully will be a proper continuation of the first volume in academic criticism, in-depth analysis and well-documented narratives covering some other important groups of topics that matter in the Gambia of today.

ISTVÁN TARRÓSY
University of Pécs

Light and Power for a Multiracial Nation: The Kariba Dam Scheme in the Central African Federation, by JULIA TISCHLER

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Julia Tischler's monograph focuses on the Kariba Dam, an often overlooked subject that is critical for understanding a variety of themes related to