

corruption and dictatorial “Big Man” rule’ (p. 17). This theorization of the state fails to explain the developmental efforts perceived in the copper sector compared with construction. The use of patrimonialism obscures the diverse range of motivations and ideological preferences shaping policy choices and performance in different sectors. The book would have gained from using some of the insights of the growing body of literature on political settlements in Africa, which accounts for the existence of pockets of efficiency in seemingly patrimonial states. Despite this caveat, the book remains a particularly robust theoretical and empirical contribution to understanding China in Africa and will thus be a must-read for scholars and students of development, China and Africa, and for anyone interested in global capitalism.

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Andrew Apter, *Oduduwa's Chain: locations of culture in the Yoruba-Atlantic*. Chicago IL and London: University of Chicago Press (hb US\$90 – 978 0 226 50638 8; pb US\$30 – 978 0 226 50641 8). 2017, x + 216 pp.

‘Does Yoruba culture exist, and if so, where and when is it located in West Africa and in the Americas?’ So asks Andrew Apter in the introduction to his study of the Yoruba-Atlantic. Over the course of five chapters, Apter assiduously uncovers – or rather recuperates – what he defines as a revisionary model of Yoruba hermeneutics, which helps clarify both the historical construction of Yoruba identity (ethnogenesis) and the adaptation of Yoruba ritual languages and practices among African diaspora communities in the Americas. The chapters are all adapted from earlier research outputs, which were published between 1991 and 2013. As such, *Oduduwa's Chain* should be seen as much as a record of Apter’s career as a scholar of West Africa and the Black Atlantic as an important intervention in the critical fields of social anthropology and cultural history.

Apter emphasizes throughout the book that his aim is not to offer an exceptionalist account of the contributions of Yoruba cultural forms throughout the Black Atlantic, but rather to demonstrate the utility of Africa-based and Africa-oriented frameworks for illuminating historical trajectories across the Atlantic. The titular image of Oduduwa’s chain, a malleable Yoruba creation myth that establishes a genealogical bond connecting different ritual kingdoms and collectivities across as well as beyond Yorubaland, is emblematic of Apter’s approach. It constructs Yoruba culture as a generative framework of re-fabrication that has shaped as well as been refashioned in New World histories.

The book’s first chapter sets up this ambitious project by intervening in a long-standing debate in contemporary African diaspora studies. It introduces the controversial but influential work of the anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits, whose advancement of a distorted syncretic paradigm to explain how supposedly discrete African cultural frameworks have been passively mediated and transposed in African-American societies has been widely dismissed as essentialist. While Apter is stringent in his critique of the problematic aspects of Herskovits’ syncretic paradigm, he nevertheless works to recuperate syncretism as a productive conceptual frame, arguing that it can do justice both to the inventiveness of New World African identities and to their deep connections with African peoples when refracted through the prism of a revisionary Yoruba hermeneutics of power.

The hermeneutics in question is defined as a dynamic and adaptive critical practice among Yoruba societies that hinges on the complex relation between implicit social knowledge and political economy. Schematizing this hermeneutics of power through an analysis of the dynamics of Yoruba ritual organization and orisha worship, Apter draws out the cultural continuities between West African and African-American practices. He argues that the association of African gods with Catholic saints among populations in places such as Haiti, Brazil and Cuba developed as a strategy of cooperative empowerment. This revisionary formulation informs the rest of the book, with the subsequent chapters exploring different trajectories and modes of Yoruba cultural transmission throughout the Yoruba-Atlantic.

In Chapter 2, Apter applies Yoruba revisionary strategies to the dynamics of creolization in the New World in order to interrogate the problematic notion of origins that continues to haunt research into the African diaspora. Elaborating on the revisionary logic of deep knowledge and ritual modalities within socio-political structures in Yorubaland, the scholar reveals the West African origins within Haitian Vodou. The third chapter delves deeper into the association between politics and orisha worship by analysing their manifestations and mediations in two northern Ekiti Yoruba kingdoms. Comparing the different historical transformations within the Ishan and Ayede kingdoms from around 1845 to the present, Apter reveals the connectivity between orisha clustering in West Africa and the Americas, casting Yoruba religion as a growing transnational phenomenon.

The final two chapters add further conceptual vectors to Apter's account of the Yoruba-Atlantic. Chapter 4 explores the transposition of West African female gender constructs among American plantation societies, while the final chapter argues that a distinctive semantics of quantification has contributed to Yoruba ethnogenesis as a transatlantic phenomenon. These analyses not only contribute greater detail and clarity to the earlier chapters, but demonstrate the efficacy and urgency of research that foregrounds African origins in the Black Atlantic and explores their multiple instantiations and locations.

A book that is at once recuperative and reflexive, *Oduduwa's Chain* revivifies scholarly approaches to Yoruba culture while offering a fascinating insight into its author's own critical life. Navigating the rich resonances and transformative trajectories that constitute this complex terrain, Apter makes a powerful case for the primacy of Yoruba cultural modalities within the vibrant history and analytical field of the Black Atlantic.

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Gregory Smulewicz-Zucker (ed.), *The Political Thought of African Independence: an anthology of sources*. Cambridge MA: Hackett Publishing Company (hb US\$89 – 978 1 62466 541 7; pb US\$34 – 978 1 62466 540 0). 2017, v + 280 pp.

There has been a marked shift in African historical knowledge and teaching since the turn of the millennium. Compare the absolute reliance of students on the revered knowledge of professors and authors up to the 1980s with the wide range and diversity of ideas and opinions that now populate historical scholarship. While it is easy to blame postmodernism and postcolonial deconstructions for what many see as disruptions to historical scholarship, they reveal the need to