

national forces informing these decisions and their 'structural' budgets. On another level, they may take issue with the book's approach that sees the state as an independent agency cut off from its underlying structures of dependence and class politics. A number of economic historians have researched the significance of structural changes in the economy since Turko-Egyptian days, through the Mahdist state to the Anglo-Egyptian condominium, and later to independence, highlighting the retrogressive march of the economy from dependency to dependency, and from quasi-articulated development to maldevelopment and rentierism. Present by its conspicuous absence is any reference to this line of research and thinking that informed the critiques of the economic and financial policies and budgetary calculations of the late 1940s and 1950s.

Also absent from the book is any reference to local resistance to financial policies. The Cultivators' Equalization Fund, to give one example, was a serious bone of contention, and of later conflict between officials and farmers; there were also the notable workers' industrial actions against the first military government and also ignored resistance of subaltern movements in the peripheries. In other words, the people's narrative is ignored and what is presented is mostly history from above, not from below.

Young's is an exhaustive and extensive study; the book's chapters are well structured and cover the major periods of the country's economic history from 1820 to 1966, with a concluding chapter setting its sights on the theoretical horizons of a new African economic history. The book, however, leaves something to be desired as it is not clear which of the periods constitutes a 'critical juncture', to use the language of path-dependence analysis.

The author maintains that economic nationalism must have taken off at some point in time. Yet, unfortunately, the 'economizing logic of bureaucracy', with all its calculative financial skills, seems to have been hijacked not by developmental nationalism but by ethno-regionalism, the sorry outcome of which shows up in the failed separation of South Sudan and the dismembered state in the rest of the country.

Having said this, it should be noted that the particular significance of this book lies in its novel approach or 'paradigm in the making' as applied to the case of Sudan by digging into new archival records that shed fresh light on the country's fiscal history from 1820 to 1966. Furthermore, the book helpfully places the debate on African history and its rich socio-economic and political narratives within the contemporary theoretical context by opening up conversations that engage theoretical preoccupations such as Michel Foucault's bio-politics and Timothy Mitchell's 'rule of experts' theory. With Young's book, one can now confidently say that researching Sudan and African economic history has taken a new turn.

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Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *The Truth about Crime: sovereignty, knowledge, social order*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press (hb US\$85 – 978 0 226 42488 0; pb US\$27.50 – 978 0 226 42491 0). 2016, xix + 347 pp.

In *The Truth about Crime*, Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff develop a set of arguments, first outlined in their landmark collection *Law and Disorder in the*

*Postcolony*, about the role that crime and policing play in generating the political and social order in which we live. This 'we' embraces not only residents of South Africa and the United States, the main settings of the work, but anyone in the contemporary world living with the sovereign effects of crime and its suppression. Through a series of ethnographic vignettes and readings of popular culture, they argue that 'criminality has, in *this* Age of Global Capitalism, become *the* constitutive fact of contemporary life, *the* vernacular in terms of which politics are conducted, moral panics are voiced, and populations are ruled' (p. xiii). Crime has become the heuristic through which politicians, scholars and a public that voraciously consumes police procedurals and tabloids try to understand 'a universe that appears to be growing increasingly inscrutable' (p. xiii). The focus of the book is not crime per se, but rather what stories about crime do; what political common sense and 'truths' they generate; what state practices they enable; and the aesthetic forms that they take. The police officer and the criminal, engaged in a violent *pas de deux* in full sight of the public, make crime the central object of public discourse on everything from everyday neighbourhood life to corruption at the highest levels of government.

The 'five uneasy pieces' that make up the book's second half are as riveting as the pulpy sources from which they are derived; the story of a family terrorized by a witch's familiar on an isolated homestead near Mafikeng is chilling in a way that makes the reader viscerally understand how crime stories do the political work that the authors posit. A section on the vigilante group cum private security corporation Mapogo A Mathamaga vividly describes the organization's methods, while making a more abstract argument about the privatization of state authority and how it is perceived. One of the book's lessons is that the distinction between fact and fiction matters little in the telling of stories about crime. The authors put episodes of 'true crime' such as the killings of Reeve Steenkamp and Anni Dewani alongside works of fiction including the American television show *Breaking Bad* and the South African gangster film *Tsotsi*, revealing how the real and the fictive generate epistemologies and social orders in much the same way.

The book is, in part, a riposte to a way of thinking about crime that stretches from E. P. Thompson's *Whigs and Hunters* to contemporary descriptions of the carceral state, which emphasizes the role of policing and its double – crime – in making states, administrating populations and generating classes. To be sure, *The Truth about Crime* is part of this long and variegated tradition, arguing as it does that law enforcement remains somewhere near the centre of the state even as it strategically disengages from policing in some areas. But the originality of the work lies in its recognition that this is not how most people understand the meanings of crime. Still today, the authors remind us, it is the more retrograde ideas about crime that do the work of making the social and political world: for example, the notion that crime is the preserve of 'the indigent, the savage, the stranger, the poor' (p. 21) – the Victorian idea of the residuum, in short, still alive and well in the twenty-first century, albeit more commonly expressed today in the language of race than of class. That these ideas bear little resemblance to the reality of how much crime there is or who engages in it hardly matters – crime does not owe its capacity to generate 'truths' about the 'real' conditions of life to statistics, but to the horror stories that people tell one another in shebeens and shopping centres.

Is there an outside to this world made by crime? The book is most explicitly about South Africa since the end of apartheid, but it is marked by the political present of the US, where the racial and political valences of policing sit at the front of the mind. Some of the features they describe are particular to 'the post-colony' while others seem like characteristics of contemporary states generally.

It is hard to isolate what is unique to South Africa from what is not, although this slippage between geographies is also part of their point. Where and when crime's sovereign effects begin and end are not the main questions they ask, but they are worth considering.

In the end, *The Truth about Crime* does not provide what its title promises. Instead, it offers something more valuable – a glimpse into the machinery that refines fear, mistrust and violence into actionable social-scientific 'facts', often with dire consequences for those against whom they are turned. The work has appeal across disciplinary boundaries and is sure to incite substantial discussion in the many places that its analysis touches.

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Jesse Salah Ovadia, *The Petro-developmental State in Africa: making oil work in Angola, Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea*. London: C. Hurst and Company (hb £45 – 978 1 84904 476 9). 2016, 246 pp.

Jesse Ovadia's *The Petro-developmental State in Africa* is a masterly overview of the trajectories and prospects for oil-fuelled capitalist development in the petro-states of the Gulf of Guinea region, based on case studies of Nigeria and Angola. Exploring the nexus between local content policies and petro-development, Ovadia argues that 'a complex set of new domestic and international realities' represents a 'new moment' in the oil-rich Gulf, which 'opens up new opportunities for state-led development and capitalist transformation at a time when new producers of oil and gas are sprouting up across Africa' (p. 2). He notes that the current conjuncture 'opens a path to economic development through natural resources' (p. 2) and refutes the assumptions of the hegemonic and deterministic 'resource curse' school of thought that has influenced scholarship and policy thinking on the natural resources–development nexus in Africa.

By engaging in a transformational critique of the oil curse, the author brings natural resources as a positive factor back into the debate on development in Africa. Pushing the line that neoliberal policies have failed to lift these countries out of economic stagnation, the book argues that local content policies (LCPs) can provide the necessary leverage for African petro-states to pursue viable alternative paths to failed market liberalism by generating new investments and employment and growing an entrepreneurial African capitalist class. The book sets itself a rather lofty goal of seeking 'how countries of sub-Saharan Africa can throw off centuries of imperialism and underdevelopment' (p. 2), but it does well by grounding itself less in polemics and more in theoretically sophisticated and empirically rigorous material.

Its seven chapters provide a critical analysis of petro-development in Nigeria and Angola – Africa's oil giants – focusing on the evolution, trajectories and challenges of local content development in the upstream and downstream sectors of their oil industries, which are largely dominated by foreign oil multinationals. Chapters 3 to 6 analyse the relationship between the petro-state, ruling elites and oil policies, how oil companies and state oil corporations have implemented and managed LCPs, and the extent to which civil society actors and social movements have been able to influence oil policies to serve popular developmental