

legal records gleaned from the Kenyan and British archives. Branch does a fine job of teasing compelling personal stories out of these official and semi-official colonial era records, but it is frustrating that he does not spend much time considering how the violence and danger of the Emergency might have influenced how his subjects articulated their 'loyalism' in conversation with, and in reference to, a foreign and autocratic imperial regime. This problem of evidence is precisely why it has been so hard to write the definitive history of the Mau Mau Emergency, and it is very much to Branch's credit that he has done so well in restoring the loyalists to their central place in the story. Moreover, his book's sharp and clearly written narrative account of the revolt and its aftermath means that it is accessible to lay readers and could serve as an introductory text in African history courses.

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## WEST AFRICA AND THE UNITED STATES IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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*The United States and West Africa: Interactions and Relations*. Edited by ALUSINE JALLOH and TOYIN FALOLA. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2008. Pp. ix + 477. £45/\$80 hardback (ISBN 978-1-58046-277-8); £17.99/\$24 paperback (ISBN 978-1-58046-308-9).

KEY WORDS: West Africa, culture/cultural, economic, politics/political.

The historical relationship between the United States of America and West Africa is a subject that is complex and has evolved over time. In that sense it is no surprise that it has received mixed attention from historians. *The United States and West Africa: Interactions and Relations* is a collection of essays emanating from a conference held at the University of Texas at Arlington in 2005, and it fits into the tradition. The book contains a total of 22 essays divided into five chronological/thematic sections: 'Trade and politics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', 'Forging cultural connections: Africa and America', 'Forging cultural connections: Africa in America', 'U.S. political and economic interests in West Africa', and 'Looking towards the future: U.S.–West African linkages in the twenty-first century'.

Part One deals with several historical topics, with articles on the start of an official American involvement in the region through its consulate in Sierra Leone (1850–80), the repercussions of Liberian colonization plans for the black population in Virginia, and economic relations between the United States and Nigeria in the colonial era (1900–50). All three are gems of original research, with lots of new information, providing valuable insights and avenues for debate in the respective areas of research. In this respect, the article on Marcus Garvey, by Ibrahim Sundiata, deserves special mention. Garvey and his pan-Africanist political movement have been studied extensively, including his influence on West African thinking. Nevertheless, Sundiata shows a whole new side to the movement by setting its activities in the context of Liberian independence politics. The article is a joy to read.

Parts Two and Three deal with culture, a hot topic in African American studies, more specifically in relation to the history of the Atlantic slave trade and its cultural heritage (including roots tourism and African American identity formation). Five

of the six articles in these sections deal with subjects central to the debate in this field (African American intellectuals in Ghana, African Americans' perspectives on West Africans and vice versa, cultural bridge building). Together they form a valuable addition to that same debate.

Parts Four and Five focus wholly on current affairs, including topics such as radical Islam, foreign aid, good governance and democracy, resources (oil), and security. These articles are an interesting compilation of the United States' interest (sometimes non-interest) in the region, but lack a solid treatment of the West African position in the relationship as a whole. A credible reason for this lies in the fact that contemporary West Africa, although a somewhat homogeneous historical area when seen from the outside, has hardly any political or economic coherence. West African politics are state politics; West African security issues are sub-regional at best; resource management is a national affair, and so are – perhaps strangely enough – radical Islam and issues of good governance and democracy. This is not to say that several authors do not make an effort to take a comprehensive approach, but there are too many limitations to do it effectively in a work of this type. A positive exception here is the article by Dumbuya on the 'institutionalization of foreign relations in an age of ideological ferment', where US foreign policy is charted against the development of West Africa from colonialism into independence, and in which West Africa plays a truly independent role in the analysis.

The book shows the enthusiasm and the joy of authors, and their commitment to the chosen theme and the assignment of the conference: to write an article from an alternative historical vantage point and within a multidisciplinary context. The ambitious level of the project as a whole proves too high, however. In the end, the book targets a too widely dispersed spectrum of interested professional readers/researchers. The general theme is not properly synthesized. This could have been done in a general introduction and conclusion to the volume, but it is not. The introduction is not much more than an inventory of the themes touched upon, and a general conclusion is missing altogether. The first article, by Oyebade and Falola, 'West Africa and the United States in historical perspective', alleviates the problem a little, but not completely; it provides a general historical overview without commenting on the themes addressed in the sections and articles.

In conclusion, the effort to present a new, multidisciplinary historical review of relations between the United States and West Africa has not succeeded. Individual articles are highly interesting and contain useful material for further research on specific topics and periods. It is very interesting to see that themes that, at a first glance, seem to be following well-trodden research paths hold interesting new perspectives and even new basic historical information. In this respect the individual authors should be applauded for their efforts to add substantially to our knowledge and understanding of the theme.

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