

For Money and Elders: ritual, sovereignty and the sacred in Kenya by

ROBERT W. BLUNT

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For Money and Elders presents a timely analysis of the relationship between rituals, politics, authority and violence. Blunt's historical anthropology of elderhood in Kenya challenges dominant accounts of the role of oaths in Kenya, and simultaneously revives aspects of classic anthropological analysis of African political systems.

While much contemporary anthropological literature on African politics tends to focus on youth due to the scale of this demographic group, the book presents a timely analysis of the role of elders, and the way in which authority has been historically ascribed to them. Rather than focusing on elders as inherently sovereign, the book historicises various ways elderhood has been invested with political authority at different times, and explores the way Christian understandings of sovereign power and truth as singular are opposed to pre-colonial Kikuyu understandings with a more diverse and de-centred notion of sovereignty. Blunt convincingly reinvigorates Meyer-Fortes' and Evans-Pritchard's notion of acephaly, not as a static typology for political systems, but as an explanatory concept of decentralised power. This concept serves as a tool for critically exploring how oaths and the politicisation of oath-taking has changed and been contested from pre-colonial to post-colonial time.

The book provides an important reading that bridges the divide between the modern and the traditional, but more significantly, Blunt nuances our understanding of the meaning of oaths for Kenyan politics as he shows how rituals are placed firmly in contemporary politics. A body of literature has argued for the importance of seeing rituals and ancestral knowledge as a source for understanding how the past informs both the present and the future. Blunt shows how the meaning of rituals and ancestral knowledge has not only transformed over time, it has also been subject to political contestation and (mis)-interpretation by external forces, thus effectively historicising rituals and ancestral knowledge. It follows then, that rituals as a source of truth are multiple and simultaneous (as opposed to static and traditional), and when politicised the same becomes true of ritually sanctioned power and authority.

Blunt has a fine eye for the mundane nuances of Kenyan everyday life and how these inform social analysis, and he weaves such observations into the overall analytical narrative in sophisticated ways. This is evocatively expressed in the introductory elaborations of how matatu drivers' pejorative talk of a 40-cent coin depicting former President Mwai Kibaki is used to unpack the relation between gerontocratic masculine power, sovereignty and wealth. The theme of currency and everyday political critique is picked up again 150 pages later when an account is given of how 500 shilling notes were tellingly labelled 'Jirongo' (after KANU Youth politician Cyrus Jirongo) in a gesture to call out corruption and point out the connection between political patronage, mobilisation and cash hand-outs.

The author elegantly draws on his deep knowledge and understanding of Kikuyu culture and Kenyan politics to present a fine-grained ethnographic analysis. The ethnographic insights are balanced with thorough (at times dense) theoretical discussions and conceptual elaborations that position the book in conversation with anthropological classics and contemporary political philosophy on the post-colonial

condition. The book will appeal to anyone interested in Kenyan politics and it is a treat for readers fascinated by the correlation of politics and ritual practices. Beyond the regional relevance, Blunt's political and historical anthropology of the Kenyan state is generally relevant for understanding political realities in post-colonial societies.

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Inclusive Trade in Africa: the African Continental Free Trade Area in comparative perspective edited by DAVID LUKE and JAMIE MACLEOD.

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Inclusive Trade in Africa, the first book dedicated to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), opens what will surely be a rich academic debate on trade liberalisation in Africa. With all but one African Union (AU) member state now party to the agreement and 30 ratifications, AfCFTA's initial progress has surprised many sceptics. The success of the agreement suggests a broader perspective on inclusive trade and economic policy in Africa, which this volume aspires to deliver.

The book is guided by the question of how to best implement AfCFTA in order to deliver inclusive intra-African trade. Unlike many other free trade agreements (FTAs), even the most developed parties to AfCFTA face steep domestic challenges. This makes the developmental benefits of AfCFTA as much an important and novel endeavour as the traditional benefits of trade liberalisation. Most contributors to the edited volume are practitioners from the UN and other international organisations. UNECA is strongly represented – the editors too are UNECA staff members – and the book reflects the organisation's intellectual leadership on AfCFTA. Although largely written by trade lawyers and experts, it is still accessible to non-economists.

The book comprises three sections. The first considers the comparative lessons to be learnt from economic integration efforts in Africa, the Americas and Southeast Asia. The second part delves into key concepts within AfCFTA, including special and differential treatment, rules of origin, and aid for trade, with an emphasis on how these principles need to be interpreted differently than at the World Trade Organization. These chapters are quite general and engage with AfCFTA only briefly. The third part discusses the ongoing Phase II negotiations of the agreement, with chapters on competition policy and intellectual property rights. Consequently, the volume serves as a comprehensive reference work on AfCFTA's history, drivers and challenges.

There is much to commend in this volume. The first, comparative section is perhaps the most innovative contribution to the academic debate around AfCFTA. Instead of the overused and typically unhelpful comparisons with European economic integration, it highlights the successes and failures of integration efforts in Africa, the Americas and Southeast Asia, and identifies important lessons for AfCFTA. Understanding past trade liberalisation efforts in Africa, and the reasons for their failures, will be crucial for the successful implementation of AfCFTA. However, more systematic and in-depth analysis of African case studies would have been welcome, for example on the continuing challenges of the