BOOK REVIEWS

ANTHROPOLOGY & SOCIOLOGY

Wim van Binsbergen and Rijk van Dijk, eds. *Situating Globality: African Agency in the Appropriation of Global Culture.* Leiden: Brill, 2004. 314 pp. Photographs. Maps. Notes. Chapter bibliographies. $44.00. Paper.

The nine chapters of *Situating Globality* are proceedings of "Globalization and New Questions of Ownership," a conference convened in 2002 at the dynamic African Studies Center of Leiden as the last exercise of a five-year project called "Globalization and Socio-Cultural Transformation in Africa." The book is divided into three parts: "Globality Through Appropriation: Analyses at the Continental Level," "Globality Through World Religions," and "Globality and African Historic Religions."

Wim van Binsbergen, Rijk van Dijk, and Jan-Bart Gewald begin their lively introduction with a caveat: Over the past twenty-five years, "globalization" has come "to mean all things to all people,... run[ning] the risk of losing its explanatory meaning" (5), even to the extent of becoming "'globaloney'" (36). Stressing that platitudes about the homogenization of African cultures are often belied by close studies that reveal how "parochial identities appear to thrive on the impact of globalization" (7), the authors emphasize the agency of Africans seeking to exploit new circumstances. In their quest to avoid "glo-baloney," however, and especially in their acerbic approach to certain colleagues' work, they fling down a gauntlet: Will their volume finally define globalization and distinguish it from other long-standing forces of change? While Binsbergen's identification of earlier change as "proto-globalization" (23) clears no waters, the authors' stress on "global multicentredness" (19) resonates usefully with contemporary studies of discrepant modernisms, "ethnoscapes," and other shifting relationships. In the long run, though, the particular case studies presented in *Situating Globality* are likely to be of greater interest than attempts to pin down quixotic neologisms like *globality*.

Francis Nyamnjoh begins a strong chapter with an exhortation to overcome the "meta-narratives of bliss and gloom" common to studies of globalization that concentrate upon transnational capitalism "to the detriment of initiatives or responses at the very local level" (57). Nyamnjoh's view that

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a "traditional emphasis on public service media" has become a "casualty" of the "narrow, individual-centered philosophies of personhood, agency and property rights" associated with "neoliberalism" (58) will strike some as a contradiction of his dismissal of "meta-narratives of bliss and gloom," especially those who may wonder whether truly "public service media" have ever existed in Africa or anywhere else. Of greater interest is the author's all-too-brief discussion of the radical transformations of African communications wrought by increasing use of e-mail and cell phones. These few paragraphs are the most engaging and on-message of the book, and one hopes that Nyamnjoh will write at greater length about these "very local-level" adaptations of very global technologies.

A paper on "Pentacostal Pan-Africanism and Ghanaian Identities in the Transnational Domain" by Rijk van Dijk is also stimulating. It concerns the "highly liberal notion of religious entrepreneurship" promulgated by the Reverend Mensa Otabil and based upon "an African appropriation of the Bible" (175, 176). Through an "appealing combination of Afro-centrism and Pentacostal liberation theology," Otabil seeks to "break... a mentality of 'slavery,' 'dependency' and... 'begging attitude'" that he finds "prevalent among many Africans" (176, 178) by providing a phenomenology of hard work and promised success.

Compelling chapters full of thick description of "weddings, wealth, and women's value" among Mawri people of Niger, and "the persistence of female initiation rites" of Bemba people of Zambia are contributed by Adeline Mesqualier and Thera Rasing. The collection is completed by pieces by Jan-Bart Gewald on "global media and violence" in Somalia, Wim van Binsbergen on whether "ICT can belong in Africa," Sanya Osha on "the poetics of corruption in a global age," Roy Dilley on "global connections" versus "local ruptures" of Islam in Senegal, and Ferdinand de Jong on "the social life of secrets" regarding his research in southern Senegal.

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Carolyn Pope Edwards and Beatrice Blyth Whiting, eds. *Ngecha: A Kenyan Village in a Time of Rapid Social Change.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004. xiii + 336 pp. Photographs. Figures. Map. Tables. Bibliography. Index. $60.00. Cloth.

A tremendously exciting book, *Ngecha: A Kenyan Village in a Time of Rapid Social Change* offers many enticements to a Kenya scholar. Written in clear, lucid prose by a number of authors who have worked together intimately, the voices of the individual collaborators are molded into a smooth whole by the two editors, an anthropologist and a psychologist, who also are the co-authors of all but three of the nine chapters. This is precisely what the