

## Reviews

**Ghana: transition to democracy** edited by KWAME A. NINSIN  
Dakar, Senegal: CODESRIA, 1998. Pp. x + 252. £13.95 (pbk.).

Ghana has had a chequered post-colonial political history. After independence, in 1957, a decade of initially democratic, latterly dictatorial, rule by Kwame Nkrumah and his Convention People's Party government ended in 1966 with a joint police/military *coup d'état*. After handing over power to elected civilians in 1969, the military struck again in 1972. Following a junior ranks' coup in early 1979, which brought Flight-Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings to power for the first time, an elected civilian government took charge following elections later the same year. After a traumatic two years of conspicuously unsuccessful rule, Rawlings returned to power via a further coup in late 1981. Nearly two decades later, Rawlings is still there, now an elected head of state presiding over a democratic political system. Initially rejecting 'Western-style' multi-party democracy as 'unsuitable for Ghanaian realities', over time Rawlings became an apparent convert. Elected president by impressive margins over his nearest challenger in 1992 and again in 1996, his party, the National Democratic Congress, managed to achieve substantial parliamentary majorities in the two elections.

It would be fair to say that Rawlings is a controversial figure, not so much internationally where he is widely regarded as one of the 'good guys' for his strong determination to liberalise Ghana both politically and economically, but at home. To certain sections of the Ghanaian population, especially many among the intellectual elite clustered at the Department of Political Science at the University of Ghana at Legon, he has been a political charlatan or chameleon, someone who presents an appropriate image to the relevant audience but without sincerity. Certainly this reviewer found that several of the contributors to this book who he met in the 1980s and early 1990s viewed Rawlings in this way.

The book, distributed by the African Books Collective (The Jam Factory, 27 Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HU, UK) then is of personal interest to me, not only for its impressive content but also in that it indicates generally that there is now greater acceptance of Rawlings and his works among the intellectual elite than there was a decade ago. Unfortunately, however, in several chapters the analysis ends in 1994; consequently, the second national level elections in 1996 and their outcomes are not comprehensively dealt with, although Ninsin's concluding chapter does examine some of the issues inherent in the 1996 elections and their aftermath. This is unfortunate, since looking at the two elections and their aftermath more comparatively and in a more focused manner would have been interesting.

The chapters, ably marshalled by Kwame Ninsin, erstwhile senior lecturer in the Political Science department and now at the African Association of Political Science at Harare, nevertheless cover much ground: from the political impact of structural adjustment to the involvement of the

international community in Ghana's democratisation processes and all points in between. While invidious to single out individual contributions in this strong collection, the book is particularly effective in the chapters which look at the impact of civil and political society on Ghana's democratic transition, including the role of civic associations, political parties and the press. From the other side of the fence, other crucial political actors – that is, state organisations and the armed forces – are also well dealt with. However the usefulness of the book for students and researchers is somewhat limited by the absence of an index.

Ninsin's concluding chapter argues that there was a large measure of democratic progress in Ghana between the 1992 and 1996 elections, with political leaders demonstrating positive leadership by 'strengthening the institutional bases of the fledgling democratic order' (p. 228). In a Gramscian-style analysis Ninsin avers however that the whole process of democratisation was undertaken by the political elite for their own selfish ends, 'because clearly the success of legitimising the liberal democratic order served their own aspirations for power'. Civil society's role, according to Ninsin, was merely that of the 'watchdog', unable conclusively to influence events and outcomes (p. 228).

Whether Ninsin is correct in the medium term remains to be seen. Rawlings must stand down at the next elections due in late 2000. Whether Ghana has indeed made considerable progress along the road to democratic consolidation will become clear then: does the democratic system in fact revolve around the figure of Rawlings or has there been significant institutionalisation of democratic processes? In conclusion, this book will be useful for those examining the transition process in Ghana from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s. The individually strong chapters collectively make the book a coherent, comprehensive whole.

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**Ogoni's Agonies: Ken Saro-Wiwa and the crisis in Nigeria** edited by  
ABDUL RASHEED NA'ALLAH  
Trenton, NJ and Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, Inc., 1998. Pp. 388.  
\$21.95 (pbk.).

This edited collection examines the literary and political work of Ken Saro-Wiwa, leader of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni people (MOSOP), who was executed by the Nigerian government in November 1995. The contributions of poetry and prose, by African, European and American writers, point to the international concern about the impact of the global oil industry upon local populations in Nigeria. The main strength of the collection is the way in which the writers encompass and explore the complex negotiations that occur between local populations, ethnic leadership, the Nigerian government, Western governments, multinational oil companies and consumers of oil in the West. The diverse contributions elucidate the crosscutting social and political loyalties that complicate the articulation of

Ogoni political demands. In the preface, Kwame Appiah points to the colonial history that informs the concerns of post-colonial government and contemporary economic relations with the West. The book is divided into eight sections. After an introduction, sections two to four debate the current political and economic crisis in Nigeria. The broader political questions raised by Ken Saro-Wiwa's role in MOSOP is examined and related to the experience of ethnic communities in Nigeria and their relation with Nigerian government and multinational oil companies. Sections five to eight focus more closely upon literature by Ken Saro-Wiwa and include excerpts from two interviews with him and a comprehensive bibliography of his work.

Sections two to four bring together diverse perspectives on Ken Saro-Wiwa and MOSOP. In section two, writers consider how internal divisions within Nigerian society contributed to the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa. Adotei Akwei examines the Ogoni tragedy as part of a wider crisis of legitimacy of the authority of the Nigerian nation. He considers how social movements such as MOSOP indicate the dynamism of civil society in Nigeria and the potential for political reform. The contribution by Desmond Orage, the son of an Ogoni chief allegedly murdered by the MOSOP youth wing, highlights the complexity of local politics. Desmond Orage argues that Ken Saro-Wiwa led younger MOSOP members from the consensus that had been forged between local traditional chiefs and ordinary people in 1990 and into conflict. Ato Quayson's chapter provides a shift away from individualised stances towards a broader perspective that places Ken Saro-Wiwa within the tragic contradictions of the post-colonial state that brought about his death. Ato Quayson argues convincingly that the main political impact of MOSOP rested in its attempts to redefine relations between traditional Ogoni rulers, and the Nigerian state of multinational oil companies through mobilising ordinary Ogoni people. MOSOP wanted to negotiate directly with oil companies and not simply receive oil revenues through state patronage. Ato Quayson ends by arguing that Ken Saro-Wiwa underestimated the extent to which violence would seem an appropriate political tactic among his supporters who lived with the violence of the military on a daily basis.

In section three Ogoni politics are considered within wider contexts. Wumi Raji presents a view from northern Nigeria, arguing that the Ogoni crisis is part of a national problem of government and not simply a consequence of dominance exercised by northern Hausa-Fulani over southern ethnic minorities. Andrew Apter provides an insightful study of the ways MOSOP was perceived inside Nigeria. Many Nigerians saw MOSOP's demands as ethnically motivated, parochial claims for an Ogoni state and a slice of the 'national cake' of oil revenues. However, the struggles of the Ogoni also came to stand for nationwide concerns. Apter argues that in the 'ecological turn' taken by MOSOP the fragile eco-systems of the delta provided 'an organic idiom' for the precarious equilibrium of Nigerian civil society within a destructive state (p. 155). Sections five and six focus upon how literature can inform political movements in Nigeria. Harry Garuba approaches Ken Saro-Wiwa's novel *Sozaboy* as a study of minority experience in Nigeria. Eckhard Breitinger shows how Ken Saro-Wiwa reached a new mass audience through his writing for television and newspapers and how this familiarity with the

media brought MOSOP the public media profile that the movement had earlier lacked.

The diverse perspectives of the contributors highlight the complexity of post-colonial Nigerian politics and indeed problematise the agenda for democratic resistance outlined by Biodun Jeyifo in the foreword. Biodun Jeyifo describes ethno-nations like the Ogoni as 'true communities of suffering and resistance' and identifies these social aggregates as sites of potential democratic resistance (xxiv–xxv). Yet, the essays that follow illustrate the contradictions raised by ethno-nationalist movements within the confines of the post-colonial state. Biodun Jeyifo considers that ethno-nationalism has shaken off the spectre of secession that has hampered such movements in the past (xxv). However, it could be argued that the political impact of MOSOP lay in the extent to which the movement transcended a bounded ethno-nationalism and instead linked local and global concerns. MOSOP highlighted the corrupt patronage politics of the state, forged links with neighbouring communities, identified complicities between Federal government and Western oil companies and focused the attention of the international media upon the environmental destruction that has devastated people's livelihoods in rural areas of the south.

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**A Handbook of Eweland, vol. I: The Ewes of Southeastern Ghana**

edited by FRANCIS AGBODEKA

Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 1997. Pp. 393. £19.95 (available in the UK from African Books Collective, Oxford).

Since the 1970s, prominent intellectuals and businessmen from the Volta Region of Ghana have sponsored a series of initiatives designed to further an awareness of the unique cultural heritage and development needs of that part of the country. This publication arises largely out of the efforts of the late Hope Yormekpe, one of the leaders of the Volta Youth Association in the 1970s, in instigating the Organization for Research on Eweland (ORE) in 1993. The stated intention was to publish research on the cultural and natural resources of Eweland, with a view to ploughing any proceeds back into education in the area. The first volume deals with the Ewes of southern Ghana (the Anlo and their neighbours), with separate volumes planned in respect of the northern Ewe of Ghana and of the Ewes of Togo and Benin. Given the relative abundance of material on Anlo, the case for starting with northern Eweland might have seemed more compelling. However, one assumes that there was a larger number of researchers primed to write on the southern Ewe, which also explains how the ORE was able to go into print relatively quickly.

As the editor observes, this is properly described as a handbook as opposed to the standard collection of academic essays constructed around a common theme. The essays, most of which are in fact contributed by academics drawn from the Ghanaian university system, aim to provide a broad overview of many different aspects of human activity in the research area, ranging from music and linguistics to fishing and tourism. The underlying objective is

geared towards furthering 'development' and, for that reason, the contributions are somewhat didactic in tone. The essays are mostly accessible to non-specialists in the specific disciplines. F. K. Atakpa's article on the Ewe language, for example, is one that can profitably be read by those who lack a background in linguistics. The essays also complement each other quite well, with surprisingly little overlap between them. D. E. K. Amenumey contributes a useful synopsis of pre-colonial history which adds a time perspective which is missing in some of the other contributions which work within a sociological/anthropological present. On the whole, the first volume will serve as a useful point of reference for anyone wishing to know more about the peoples of the sub-region. One looks forward with interest to volumes 2 and 3 which will fill an even larger gap.

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**The African Economic Dilemma: the case of Cameroon** by EKEMA J. MANGA, Foreword by William Kwame Dadson  
Lanham, NY, Oxford: University Press of America, Inc., 1998. Pp. 280.  
\$46.00.

The publication by the University Press of America of Ekema J. Manga's book should be welcomed in Cameroon by the partisans of long-range planning strategies. Indeed, since the mid-1980s, Cameroonian authorities have abandoned the use of long-range strategies for stabilisation and adjustment policies recommended by Bretton Woods' institutions. This book should also be welcomed by those who think that solutions to the economic difficulties of developing countries can be found locally, through the implementation of good macroeconomic policies and good governance, which should create a good economic environment propitious to foreign and local investments. It should be remembered that the Cameroonian economy underwent a dramatic economic crisis in the 1980s and the early 1990s. Indeed, the economic performance of this country had been worrying. While the inflation rates were low at the end of the 1960s, they rose sharply from 1973 to 1988, reaching 17 per cent in 1974 and 1983. On the other hand, economic growth fell sharply in the mid-1980s. Since then, the country has experienced slow and even negative economic growth rates. In 1988, the authorities implemented a structural adjustment programme. Yet, although economic growth seems to be back since 1997, observers agree that the results obtained are globally disappointing.

The purpose of the book is to analyse and present, in eight chapters, research on the economic dilemmas and long-range planning strategies to revive the Cameroonian economy. Before really tackling the issues of long-range planning strategies, in chapter 7, the author sets the scene in the first five chapters. Indeed, in chapter 2, he overviews briefly the literature on long-range planning strategies for economic management. Chapter 3 addresses the methods used. The author uses two qualitative research techniques: a

historical method, and a descriptive in-depth interview method. Chapter 5 discusses Cameroon's economic history and the problem of inflation. The chapter outlines the cost of inflation and formulates some recommendations on the macroeconomic policies which should be implemented in this country in order to fight inflation. Chapter 5 examines the key issues in the economic management process in Cameroon, the problems and prospects for reforms. In this chapter, the author examines the importance, role and size of the public sector in Cameroon. He also presents the reform episodes in this country and compares the benefits of the Cameroonian centralised system and those of the Canadian decentralised system. Chapter 6 focuses on some trade policy issues and the role and impact of a devaluation of the exchange rates. Trends in private and foreign investment are also sketched in this chapter. Chapter 7 presents the strategies to revive the Cameroon economy and proposes a strategic management model.

The achievement of Ekema J. Manga is to outline precisely the exogenous and the endogenous causes of the collapse of the Cameroon economy in recent years. The author also points out clearly the main drawbacks of former practice concerning the implementation of long-range planning strategies in Cameroon, among which the involvement of French experts, and the fact that the Cameroonian authorities lack a 'minimal sense of the real economic problems' are considered by the author as the most important. The causes of the decline of foreign investment are explored and some remedies are proposed. Indeed, it could be emphasised that Ekema J. Manga's text abounds in proposals for ways to overcome Cameroonian economic stress. On the other hand, the author resorts to modern tools of economic analysis (graphs and CGE model) in order to simulate the effects of the costs of inflation and those of a change in government policy or in the external environment.

Nevertheless, he often fails to make them fit the topic. Indeed, concrete applications to the Cameroonian case are lacking. The author also fails to clearly place the evolution of the Cameroonian inflation in a context of monetary union, and notably in the hypothesis of inflation convergence in the franc zone. Although the author resorts to the bilingualism argument, the comparison between Cameroon and Canada is questionable, on account of the differences in the level of economic development and the institutional arrangements of the two countries. Finally, the length of the chapters is unequal and chapters are untitled. The bibliography is not updated to take account of the tremendous development of literature on the Cameroonian economy in recent years.

Those weaknesses notwithstanding, Ekema J. Manga's approach should provide a good understanding of Cameroonian economic problems and some ideal which could help in designing policies that can trigger broad-based sustainable economic growth. Such an empirical study, although essentially descriptive and prospective, could be useful in that it could assist in formulating those policies and in establishing priorities in their implementation.

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**Oral Epics from Africa: vibrant voices from a vast continent** edited by JOHN WILLIAM JOHNSON, THOMAS A. HALE, STEPHEN BELCHER  
Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997. Pp. 331, £29.50, £12.50 (pbk.).

As the title states, the editors have gathered a broad and diverse collection of transcribed and translated texts from a 'vast' continent – far vaster indeed than the Sahel and the Central African forest zones which the editors identify as Africa's 'epic belt'. Included are nineteen passages translated by the editors and other distinguished scholars from the Soninke, Mande, Songhay and Zarma, Fulbe and Wolof 'epics' of the Sahel; a northern and southern Egyptian version of the birth of their culture hero Abu Zayd from the *Bani Hilal*; and sections from the Fang/Bulu *Mvet Moneblum* ('Blue Man'), the Douala narrative of the trickster-hero *Djeki la Njambe*, and two pieces from the vast Mwindo narrative cycle of the baNyanga, famously recorded and translated by Daniel Biebuyck, in collaboration with Kahombo Mateene.

The title and organising principle of this edited collection begs the enormous question: What is an epic? The term itself arose out of the comparative study of Indo-European oral poetic forms. Scholars of African oral traditions as formidable as Ruth Finnegan and Jan Vansina have rejected the term 'epic' as too Procrustean in its formal elements (e.g. *in medias res*. invocation of the muse, cataloguing material culture, oral formulaic composition, etc.) to fit compositions from Africa, or indeed from any other than Indo-European oral tradition. The editors note these objections, but seek to universalise the term, or at least make it broad enough to include their African examples. As they argue: 'Epics are poetic narratives of substantial length, on a heroic theme... they are also multigeneric and multifunctional, incorporating more of a community's diversity than might have been expected; and they are transmitted by culturally "traditional" means. They are not the overnight creation of visionaries, whatever the role of individual creativity in the generation of a specific performance version' (p. xviii).

This definition is broad enough to cover diverse genres from every continent, vast or small. As for their criteria: narrative length certainly does not distinguish genre; trickster tales are often looped together into very long and amorphous compositions, like cartoon strips. Likewise, 'multigeneric' and 'multifunctional' speak more to a general African aesthetic of accumulation or assemblage than to any unique attributes to be found in these edited texts. No one would argue with the shaping force of 'culturally traditional' transmission, though the individuating role of the *griot*, *griotte* or *karisi* is a hoary subject in oral literary debates. The editors themselves, along with scholars like Biebuyck, have celebrated the idiosyncratic brilliance of those master performers who have provided them with their epic texts.

So we are left with the 'heroic theme'. According to the most common understanding of that term, all these texts do celebrate 'heroes' who are male protagonists of noble lineage, and born with prodigious gifts. Those from the Sahel are fixed in dubious dynastic histories: autochthonous lads wrapped in imported *barakah* who are showered with the highly formulaic, homiletic praises of the griots, those press agents (*mutatis mutandis*) for their royal

descendants. It is the web of their praises which provide the woof of these texts. If one were to search for parallels to these Sahelian traditions, praise singers from Hausaland to Zululand would provide obvious examples.

Central African 'epics', however, are untouched by the world religions. Their micreant heroes are in fact divine kings in the making, and narratives about them follow a trajectory from Trickster to God. Analogues to these characters exist in many African oral traditions, all of which contain a trickster figure who can develop divine proportions under the right political and social circumstances. Those circumstances of course do not include Islam, which has space for only one divinity.

All of this is not to say that there are no fruitful parallels to be drawn between characters such as Son-Jara and Mwindo. But in their enthusiasm for discovering an African epic, the editors may have overvalued an Indo-European oral literary model with only the most tangential relations to African narrative traditions. The editors' plight seems similar to those pre-Saussurian grammarians who tried to fit English into a Latin grammar, without taking into account the actual structure of this Creolised German language which obeyed its own grammatical logic. Instead of seeking parallels in alien models, Africanist scholars might likewise find this edited volume useful in the nascent study of constituent genres in Congo-Kordofonian and Afro-Asiatic oral tradition.

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**Haraka, Haraka ... Look before You Leap: youth at the crossroad of custom and modernity** edited by MAGDALENA K. RWEBANGIRA and RITA LILJESTRÖM

Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1998. Pp. 271, £19.95, \$31.95 (pbk.).

The title of the book derives from the often cited Swahili proverb *Haraka, Haraka, Haina Baraka*, meaning 'haste has no blessing'. The title refers to a rise in teenage pregnancy in Tanzania that, according to the authors, has been accompanied by a disintegration of family values and a lack of community commitment guiding its youth. The book is a sequel to the 1994 *Chelewa, Chelewa: The Dilemma of Teenage Girls* about the lack of reproductive health services and education provided to teenage girls. Both books were written by the multidisciplinary Teenage Girls' Reproductive Health Study Group of researchers based at the University of Dar es Salaam.

*Haraka Haraka* draws attention to a wide range of issues as they relate to teenage sexuality, including attitudes of various ethnic groups (Nyakyusa, Wamwera, Gogo, Yao, Zaramo, Haya); generational changes in attitudes toward sexuality; particular societal groups like stone-breakers, brick-lifters, street youth, boys, elderly men and others; the legal framework of reproductive rights; how the decline in initiation rituals has affected perceptions of sexuality among the youth; and positive steps taken to educate single teenage mothers.

The book argues that customary initiation is losing its significance at a time when the modern education system is unable to provide adequate alternatives



in socialising youth into responsible sexual, reproductive and marital relationships. These changes have serious and sometimes fatal consequences for youth as the danger of HIV infection and of other STDs remains high. Pregnant teenagers are more likely to suffer from complications due to self-induced abortion and from higher rates of maternal mortality, not to mention the societal ostracism of unmarried mothers. Pregnant teenage girls have difficulty continuing their studies in Tanzania, therefore unlike boys they find their future opportunities limited.

These general conclusions are examined with in-depth interviews carried out throughout Tanzania. Extensive quotes and descriptions of the daily lives of the interviewees provide snapshots of the context within which teenage sexuality is experienced. The authors offer impressionistic accounts of their discussions with interviewees. It is unclear how representative these interviews are given the limited use of statistical data and the brevity of interaction in the locales. One study among the Wayao, for example, included two focus group discussions and six interviews. Some of the studies involved discussions solely with men or with women, which by definition yields inconclusive observations that are difficult to evaluate, given the different experiences of men and women.

The book states the importance of accounting for gender, generational, religious, ethnic, matrilineal/patrilineal, urban/rural and other such differences. Nevertheless, it sheds little analytical light on these differences beyond the descriptive narratives. With the exception of Rosalia Katapa's chapter on 'Nyakyusa Teenage Sexuality', the lack of anthropological and historical depth to the studies frequently results in simplistic claims made with little substantiation. Most disturbing were appeals to general understandings of 'African tradition' or 'African culture' to explain various complex and variable phenomena in the introductory chapter. One chapter based on a study in Bunju, Coastal Region, fails to refer to an extensive anthropological study conducted by Marja-Liisa Swantz in the 1960s in the exact same village on related concerns. Similar observations could be made of the absence of reference to the work of Mathias Mnyampala, Peter Rigby and Gregory Maddox in the discussions of the Wagogo and to Birgitta Larsson's work in the case of the Bahaya.

The brevity of time spent conducting the fieldwork that serves as a basis for this project had its own consequences. The reluctance of informants to divulge critical information to Zubeida Tumbo-Masabo illustrates the methodological problems of conducting short-term research on sensitive topics and the necessity of establishing long-standing relationships of trust.

The book, therefore, suffers in many places from a lack of evidence in substantiating its central claims. For example, anthropologists have long argued that initiation rites in many groups may have been a major reason for teenage pregnancy in that they encouraged early sexual experimentation. Thus, it is problematic to attribute a rise in teenage pregnancy to the dying out of these practices as this book does. Even the claim made in the conclusion, that there has been an increase in teenage pregnancy requires scrutiny given that prior to the introduction of formal education the age of marriage and pregnancy occurred around the time of puberty. Thus, we would need

evidence that these numbers have indeed increased. One final note: the manuscript has a large number of typographical errors (e.g., 'Nyakyusa' is spelled 'Nyakusa' throughout) that are a constant source of distraction to the reader.

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**East African Expressions of Christianity** edited by THOMAS SPEAR and ISARIA N. KIMAMBO  
Oxford: James Currey; Dar Es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota; Nairobi: EAEP; Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1999. Pp. 340, £14.95 (pbk.).

The unifying premise of this collection is that it is incumbent on the historian to account for the unmistakable evidence that Christianity is one of the most dynamic social movements in Africa today. It takes African historiography to task for failing to give due consideration to the appropriation of Christian faith by African peoples as a phenomenon requiring detailed study in its own right. As a contribution to making good this deficiency, the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Dar es Salaam brought together 'academic and church scholars' for workshops which generated the material now presented in this volume. Introductory essays by Thomas Spear and Gregory Maddox set out the theses which underlie the detailed local studies of which most of the book is composed. The contemporary dynamism of African Christianity can only be explained by in-depth examination of Africans' reception of the new faith. In particular, the interpretative role of early African church leaders calls for further exploration. At the heart of such study lies the question of *translation* and here recurrent reference is made to Lamin Sanneh's ground-breaking study *Translating the Message* (New York: Orbis, 1989). So much so that the book could be read as an extended East African case study of Sanneh's thesis that vernacular translation handed the initiative in the appropriation of Christian faith to the receptors who were able to interpret the message in terms which had resonance in their social and cultural context.

One of the most salutary features of the book is its determination to demonstrate the dangers of generalising about African Christianity. It insists that a highly empirical case-by-case approach is required if a proper understanding is to be reached. Among those who take pleasure in demolishing stereotypes are Kathleen Smythe who points out that Fipa Catholic converts in Nkansi District 'sought only religious knowledge, not a new way of life' (p. 135); David Sandgren who reaches a similar conclusion after examining the experience of Kamba converts under the Africa Inland Mission (p. 176); and Richard Waller who demonstrates how deeply unattractive was the picture of Christianity presented by the first Maasai Christians who were severely handicapped by 'their lack of success and legitimacy as Maasai' (p. 107).

The book is weakened by being overambitious in the range of history covered – from the colonial period right up to the 1990s. The case studies of first-generation Christianity cohere well around the two introductory essays

but the more contemporary studies are too diffuse and the thread tends to be lost. Surprisingly, there is little direct scholarly engagement with alternative approaches to understanding African Christianity. James Giblin's robust critique of the work of the Comaroffs (p. 309) is the exception rather than the rule. Occasional inaccuracies have slipped through. Gregory Maddox refers to 'Chilembwe's Watchtower Movement' (p. 32) when, in fact, there is no evidence that the Providence Industrial Mission, which John Chilembwe founded and led, understood itself in Watchtower terms or could fairly be characterised as such. It is surprising that the editors refer to the East African Revival (Balokole) as starting in the late nineteenth century (p. 246) when this term is normally used to describe the well-defined historical movement which began in Uganda in the late 1920s.

The book opens up several areas which invite further research: the move beyond functional analysis to examine what it meant to be captured by 'the poetry of the religion'; the role of Christianity in subverting the ideologies of colonialism and neo-colonialism; the use of contemporary oral sources, particularly popular discourses in bars, markets and bus stalls where Christian images abound; serious scholarly engagement with the explosion of 'fellowships' and revival movements only loosely associated with official church life but carrying much of the dynamism of African Christianity in the late twentieth century – as indicated in the highly suggestive study of Josiah Mlahagwa. Certainly the book offers illuminating perspectives on the extraordinary drama which has unfolded 'as different Christian theological concepts flowed across cultural and linguistic divides to acquire new meanings in the minds of African converts' (Spear p. 6). Those concerned to take account of this important dimension of African life will not regret ordering a copy.

KENNETH R. ROSS

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**Here Comes your King! Christ, church and nation in Malawi** by  
KENNETH R. ROSS

Blantyre: Christian Literature Association in Malawi (CLAIM), 1998. Pp. 200. £9.00 (pbk.).

The Kachere Series, of which this book is No. 5, is an initiative of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Malawi. It offers literature which enables students and others to engage critically with religion in Malawi, its social impact, and the theological questions involved. Kenneth Ross has been a guiding spirit in this publishing effort, and all students interested in contemporary Malawi are in his debt. This book is a series of essays, nearly all of which in an earlier form have appeared elsewhere. Some connecting thread has been supplied for this collection, but there is inevitably some repetition. The essays are all admirably clear, with copious footnotes which manifest a wide range of relevant reading.

The first three are primarily theological. Ross claims that a great untapped resource for doing theology in Africa is the lived Christian experience of the

faithful; African theology has a source in 'the worshipping life of the community'. To establish the self-understanding of Malawi's Christians, he supervised two studies of Christ and the church. The essays are constructed from questionnaires administered by undergraduate students in the north of the country in 1995 and 1997 respectively. Ross is careful not to claim too much for data collected from fairly rough and ready methods, but the results are suggestive and interesting; this reviewer would have liked to know more about the respondents, particularly how representative they were (if there is such a person as a representative Catholic or Presbyterian in Malawi).

Chapters 4–9 are less expressly theological in intent, dealing with the role of the church in national life. Chapter 4 tries to use four crucial events in the life of the Presbyterian church to establish how the church understands itself. Chapter 5 describes the role of the church-based Public Affairs Committee in Malawi's transition to democracy between 1992 and 1994. Chapter 6, an account of the partnership between the Church of Scotland and Malawi's Presbyterians, traces the role (not negligible) of the former in Malawi's transition. Chapter 7 is a sketch of Blantyre's Presbyterian leaders under Banda. Chapter 8 looks at the role of Christianity in creating Malawian identity, and the final chapter looks at the church's contribution in the years since the transition.

In these later chapters, Ross's central theme is the enormous and positive contribution the Christian churches have made in the history of Malawi, particularly in its recent transition; expressions like 'midwives of the new political dispensation', 'conscience of the nation', 'integral to the democratic transition' and 'leading role' abound. Of course, there are reservations and qualifications required – and Ross is as aware of these as anyone. If the churches began the drive to democracy, one must still explain why they were coopted for the previous thirty years (pp. 94–5, 114–16, 132–2). When one talks of the demands for accountability, one must remember that the churches themselves are not immune to the corruption afflicting the state (pp. 181–4). In talking of their contribution to forming one nation, one must admit that the churches themselves are split on ethnic lines – the Presbyterians' central synod dissociated itself from the other two, and supported Banda during the transition (pp. 160, 175). And all the talk of Malawi's transition cannot disguise the fact that for most people very little has changed (pp. 168–72). These reservations must always be born in mind – as Ross puts it, 'the ambiguity remains'. Some might think the ambiguity remains to a greater degree than Ross admits, and that the church's overall contribution is less triumphant than is suggested here. Obviously, one of Ross's aims is pastoral; he is concerned that the Presbyterian church in Malawi make the full contribution it might, and transcend its limitations, both in the past and now. Nevertheless, these essays contain a mine of information about and reflection on contemporary Malawi, and Ross deserves the gratitude of historians and any social scientists interested in Malawi today. He has certainly succeeded in his avowed aim of provoking 'an ever more intensive theological engagement with church and society in Malawi'.

PAUL GIFFORD  
SOAS

**Making Ethnic Ways: communities and their transformations in Taita, Kenya, 1800–1950** by BILL BRAVMAN  
Oxford: James Currey, 1998. Pp. 283. £40.00, £15.95 (pbk.).

The flow of works on ethnicity in Africa that began in around 1990 has slowed to a trickle. Coming at the end of the rush, Bill Bravman's book significantly improves on some of the earlier contributions. His focus is on the notion of community – which he uses not in the rather vague popular sense, suggestive of harmony, but rather as a term which identifies a group of people who share an idea of belonging and mutual obligation, but who *also* argue over the implications of this shared belonging in terms of practice and behaviour. Spear's now well-known formulation was that ethnicity is about who is playing the game by the same rules; Bravman suggests rather that it is a question of with whom you debate the rules.

Bravman spends mercifully little time on the primordialist straw man now widely favoured for target practice, and also takes us away from the Barth-inspired notions of ethnicity as essentially boundary-marking which have dominated much of the American writing on the subject in recent years. Bravman's concern is rather with the deployment and construction of ethnicity through debates within the group. With a cheerful side-swipe (rather than the customary genuflection) in the direction of Benedict Anderson, Bravman uses his own notion of community to argue of particular trajectory to ethnicity among the people who live in the Taita hills of Kenya. Insisting that ethnicity is not simply a question of linguistic similarity or shared cultural practices, but is rather the product of 'cultural politics' which mobilise these similarities, he suggests that 'Taitaness' was first deployed in the early twentieth century by elder men who used it to argue for norms of behaviour which underpinned their authority; and was used again by political activists in a campaign over land alienation in the 1940s, before finally turning into a nostalgic and (he seems to suggest) uncontroverted category in a triumphant 'progressivist' discourse.

Bravman shows an impressive knowledge of his area, and a very competent blending of archival and interview sources supports his argument for the role of 'ethnic' discourse in arguments over wealth and authority. His treatment of the nineteenth century seems a little concise, but the discussion of the period from 1890 to 1950 is good solid history, with thoughtful discussions on encounters with missionaries, the brutal and erratic nature of the early colonial state, and the implications of labour migrancy. The latter discussion includes a good treatment of the relatively underconsidered role of daughters-in-law in patterns of tension over migrancy and migrant earnings. Ethnicity aside, this book is a useful study of change and social conflict in the colonial period in an East African society.

The major difficulty with the book is that it suggests that the idea of 'Taitaness' appeared and disappeared in popular argument with extraordinary abruptness. If, as Bravman argues, 'Taita' was not a category in local discourses of community in the nineteenth century, why did elder men choose this as the central discursive tool in their twentieth-century bid to maintain authority and control over resources? Bravman's implication seems

to be that this was the result of interaction with tribe-fixated missionaries and officials – but why did the notion have such apparent persuasive force in entirely African arguments? Nor does the apparent characterisation of Taita ethnicity after 1950 as a matter of cultural heritage, unproblematic in terms of cultural politics, sit very comfortably with Bravman's very persuasive demonstration of the power of this idea in arguments over behaviour and resource control in the earlier twentieth century. Did generational tensions really subside, as Bravman hints, with the rise of a new generation of more understanding, educated, elders? It is difficult not to suspect that the rather abrupt end of Bravman's narrative conceals continuing gender and generational conflicts in which ethnicity – and other constructs of community – continued to be central discursive tools. Isn't nostalgia a way of arguing about the present, too?

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**Guns Over Kigali: the Rwandese civil war – 1994 (A Personal Account)** by HENRY KWAMI ANYIDOH  
Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 1997. Pp. 131, £8.95/\$16.00 (pbk.).

Henry Kwami Anyidoho, a military scholar and a peacekeeper, offers a concise and well-documented personal account of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. After a brief overview of the origins of the Hutu/Tutsi conflict in Rwanda, he presents an insightful analysis of the events leading to the civil war and useful background information on the creation of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR).

Most studies of the Rwanda genocide present a simplistic view of the ethnic question, where a genocidal group of heartless and cold-blooded murderers is opposed to another more vulnerable one of innocent victims. However, Anyidoho is willing to thoroughly document each group's participation in the atrocities that were committed during the war, thus separating the victims from the offenders in each group and offering a complex and nuanced understanding of each group's fears and concerns. His perspective on the Rwandese Patriotic Front's (RPF) uneasiness with French efforts to establish a humanitarian zone, commonly referred to as 'Operation Turquoise' (p. 101) is particularly helpful. Indeed 'the French had assisted the RGF in the 1990 war and were also said to have trained and equipped the Rwandese Government Forces (RGF) and the Presidential Guards, in particular. The aircrew that perished with President Habyarimana in the 6 April plane crash was French' (pp. 102–3). So, as Anyidoho admits, 'why should RPF trust them?' (p. 103). He is also able to distinguish productive from destructive military tactics. For example, due in large part to a lack of 'in-depth political education', the *interahamwe* were a 'murderous militia organization' (p. 113) that emphasised the use of violence to eliminate political opponents. On the other hand, RPF's sense of cohesiveness, discipline and alertness explain their success.

A major strength and most compelling element of the book is Anyidoho's

reflections on the lessons he learned from his personal experiences as a peacekeeper. His recommendations should be heeded by military students and scholars, UN Security Council members, scholars of war and peace studies, and relief and humanitarian agencies. While numerous reports and studies have been conducted on the genocide in Rwanda, few have thoroughly documented the role of humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping operations in the country. This book is available through Africa Books Collective, a major distributor of books published in Africa, at the Jam Factory, 27 Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HU, UK.

Although this work does not focus on exploring Hutu/Tutsi relationships in Rwanda, one is left with the impression that the ethnic conflict between the Tutsi 'elite of Rwandese society' (p. 64), who were favoured by the Belgian colonialists, and the disenfranchised Hutu, was bound to happen. The Kayibanda and Habyarimana governments' actions that led to killings and displacement of thousands of Tutsi is de-emphasised. Indeed, one is left to wonder how the Tutsi came to be the 'elite of the Rwandese society' (p. 64), and yet have no power during the pre-war governments. Besides, Anyidoho reinforces colonial stereotypes of Hutu and Tutsi physical differences, where the value of each group was based on physical appearance (pp. 1–2).

Even though ethnic violence has become endemic to Rwanda, and the past has not solely been referred to for the purpose of 'fostering a healthy relationship among the family...the future of Rwanda could only be guaranteed as a country of united people if all ethnic and political groups were prepared to bury their differences and live together' (p. 120) as members of the same nation. This book represents an important step in honestly coming to terms with the past and offering constructive advice for the future.

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**South Africa's Future: from crisis to prosperity** by ANTHONY GINSBERG

London: Macmillan, 1999. Pp. 260. £42.50.

Anthony Ginsberg is a man with a mission. That mission is nothing less than to save South Africa from itself. His stated aims are to persuade South Africans to confront the extent of the country's current problems; and to put pressure on their political leaders to introduce drastic changes so that crisis is transformed into prosperity. He believes that, despite the political 'miracle' of 1994, South Africa now faces enormous problems; whereby it will fall into poverty and political authoritarianism unless drastic remedies are applied, however painful those remedies may be.

Ginsberg's list of problems is long. First, it includes a crime wave, which the police and court system have failed to contain. That has led to a life of fear for many South Africans. It has also led to a waste of resources as individuals and organisations try to protect themselves; to a brain drain as those with skills flee the country to find safety elsewhere; and to a reluctance by foreigners to invest in a country which is so insecure. Second, through a combination of

mismanagement of the economy, an overblown bureaucracy, corruption and inefficiency the economy has steadily declined, so that per capita income has fallen while unemployment rises. Third, Ginsberg sees danger in a political system, in which there is a dominant ruling party. The danger, he argues, lies in the complacency and corruption which that breeds, in the power of vested interests (COSATU and the SACP) within the ANC, and in the absence of a powerful opposition which could provide an alternative government.

Ginsberg offers broad remedies for these problems. For example, in economic terms he is firmly committed to the free market, private enterprise and competition. Therefore, he advocates policies to attract direct foreign investment, to develop free manufacturing zones, to introduce business friendly tax regimes, to reduce state expenditure, to extend privatisation, and to promote a more flexible labour market. With such policies in mind he sees the process of government as that of a business organisation, which should be in the hands of 'experts' rather than politicians. 'If', he wrote, 'we are to run government along the lines of a well oiled machine, such as a profitable business, who would the electorate as the ultimate shareholders rather have at the controls – a seasoned team of experienced, and well educated experts and private sector executives, or a bunch of unqualified and unseasoned individuals, who have little or no experience in the private sector' (p. 190).

It would be foolish to brush over the economic, political and social problems identified by Ginsberg. However, it would be equally foolish to ignore the weaknesses of this book. It fails to appreciate the achievements and strengths of the ANC government as well as the massive problems it faces. Many of Ginsberg's remedies – such as a government of 'experts' – are simply impractical, and ignore political realities. Then the way in which he presents his case will probably recruit few converts. His argument is very repetitive. The same points are made time and again. Furthermore, the style is all too desperate, too hectoring. He writes at the top of his voice – peppering the reader with demands, calls for immediate action and doom laden predictions. To give but one example among many: 'We are', he writes 'staring into the abyss. We may well fall over the precipice – unless we learn how to solve our problems rather than just being arrogant, while continually defying the facts and claiming that everything is just fine' (p. 55).

The result of Ginsburg's efforts could well be to make South Africans throw up their arms in despair, rather than rallying them into action.

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**Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa** by JOHN NAURIGHT  
London: Leicester University Press, 1998. Pp. 214, £19.99.

There is now a substantial literature analysing racial aspects of South African sport. What distinguishes *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa* is the author's clever focus on the embodiment of cultural identity. Bodily displays and performances at ceremonies, military parades and celebratory marches and sport, John Nauright reminds us, are central to the 'learning of



identification and social place' (p. 21). Nauright pursues the theme of embodied sporting cultures through the imperial, apartheid and post-apartheid eras.

During the imperial era, sport, and in particular cricket, 'developed into a complex system of bodily presence and deportment that defined civilised behaviour' (p. 28). Will Whittam articulated well this peculiar British notion in *Modern Cricket and Other Sports* (1884): 'No German, Frenchman, or Fijee can ever master cricket, sir, / Because they haven't got the pluck to stand before the wicket, sir' (cited in Nauright, p. 28). Africans educated on British mission stations agreed; they quickly adopted the game to prove respectability and status. In the late nineteenth century, however, the idea of racial equality waned among British imperialists. They invented a host of new signifiers for black bodies – 'child', 'native', 'bare-footed non-Europeans' – to justify the exclusion of Africans from gentlemanly British playing fields. The only exceptions were 'ground boys', the 'Sixpences' and 'Jim Fishes', who rolled up the mats (p. 35).

Racial segregation did not, of course, preclude Africans from playing. But harsh material conditions limited their numbers and influenced their styles of play and bodily dispositions. Black cricket matches, for example 'lasted less than a day – the limit of free time available for leisure'. Under this constraint 'shot making' took precedence over defensive batting (p. 36). Similarly, hard, tough, intimidating play marked coloured rugby in Cape Town's District Six, an area ruled by gangsters.

Afrikaner conceptions of rugby challenged British notions of sport in the 1930s and 1940s. Rather than a game for inculcating fair play and gentlemanly conduct, Afrikaners seized on rugby to demonstrate their 'ruggedness, endurance, forcefulness and determination' (p. 87), and to prove that they could compete with *die Engelse*. Through rugby, Afrikaner men 'legally exact[ed] a measure of violent revenge' for their humiliation in the Anglo-Boer War (p. 84). Yet, Afrikaner rugby was never unmitigated violence. Afrikaner nationalists demanded discipline; they wanted men willing to subordinate their bodies to the demands of coaches, to 'control...urges that might lead to racial mixing or sexual activity outside marriage, and to display a public air of superiority in bodily relations with blacks' (p. 87).

The apartheid regime embellished and elaborated racial segregation in sport. Prime Minister Vorster decreed that black sportspeople could not represent 'white' South Africa in international sport. Municipal authorities went further, corralling and caging black spectators who watched international events at local sporting stadiums. Such unsporting conduct drew international ire and led to the formation of a strong protest movement. Not only did the regime and its supporters (illogically) castigate the protesters for politicising sport, they disparaged their corporeality. In the words of one South African reporter, the protesters constituted 'a tattered and bleak little congregation of chilly looking adolescents' (p. 133). Another decried the protesters' 'uncouth behaviour' and their 'spitting and cursing' (p. 144).

Even during apartheid sport played a significant role in nurturing black cultural identity. Soccer, for example, signified 'respectability' among urban Africans, highlighting 'initiative, political struggle, individual freedom,

escapism and capitalism' (p. 123). Soccer also allowed Africans to express distinct bodily styles. In the 1970s, Kaizer Chiefs' fans wore Afro hairstyles and bell-bottomed trousers (p. 121).

Both president Nelson Mandela and his minister for sport, Steve Tshwete, regard international sport as an important vehicle for building a post-apartheid rainbow nation. Nauright, however, sees little prospect of sport engendering a new, healthy national identity in South Africa. Rugby, for example, still retains its racist character, especially among tradition-bound whites who consider it a form of resistance to black cultural hegemony. The weight of Nauright's evidence supports his conclusion although he describes some interesting transformations and adaptations, including the involvement of a former apartheid minister for sport, Piet Koornhof, in a mixed-race relationship, and the adoption of 'Shosholoza' (a Ndbele migrant-worker song) as a national sporting anthem.

*Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa* lacks historical detail in some areas, notably black soccer, and leaves some important questions unanswered. For example, what role did racial divisions between Indians and coloureds play in the split in the domestic anti-apartheid sports movement in the late 1980s? But in the context of the author's objectives, these are mere quibbles: Nauright's highly original approach to the embodiment of racial culture makes the book essential reading.

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**A Morbid Fascination: white prose and politics in apartheid South Africa** by RICHARD PECK

Westport, CT; London: Greenwood Press, 1997. Pp. xiv + 197. £44.95.

The authorial note which concludes Richard Peck's book places him as a specialist in International Affairs, with a training in Political Science and International Relations. This is a background which makes him an outsider, professionally speaking, to his principal object of study: South African fiction. The preface announces a 'consciously interdisciplinary' approach which is 'not literary criticism'; yet Peck also seeks to affiliate himself with 'a shift in the nature of literary criticism in recent years', characterized by a progression from formalism to historicism. This nod to developments in literary theory ultimately seems gestural: Peck is a more literal reader of texts than the claimed affiliation suggests. What is interesting (and potentially instructive) about the book is that it may lay bare the limits of the intended interdisciplinarity.

Peck's thesis, taken on its own terms, is an interesting one: 'we see in South African anglophone literature a wide variety of approaches to politics, but on the whole that literature shows a morbid fascination with politics, consisting of a preoccupation with political issues combined with a vagueness about, suspicion of, or dislike for, politics' (p. 2). The presence of this morbid fascination, in which a preoccupation with political issues is undermined by the failure to deal adequately with political *processes*, seems potentially very

significant. One immediately forms a hunch that this morbidity probably *is* more prevalent in white South African prose than in other schools of writing, and that a broader culture of social and historical guilt may have given rise to a repressed political unconscious. The reader's appetite is whetted for a detailed symptomatic reading of this phenomenon. Peck's method, however, is more blunt than this. It involves the juxtaposition of political commentary with an account of narrative action, or a conflation of the politics gleaned from a text with the (presumed) standpoint of the author. This is a method which privileges questions of content over questions of form, and which is insufficiently nuanced to articulate the specifics of literary discourse.

Nadine Gordimer, South Africa's most famous modern novelist, supplies some exemplary instances of the perceived morbidity, in her case defined by a contradictory response – of both admiration and disapproval – to those who are politically committed. This ambivalence manifests itself in a problematic treatment of the private and the public, especially in her association of sexuality and political commitment. Incoherences in these areas are presented as symptomatic of Gordimer's own 'conflicted attitudes towards politics' (p. 149). In so far as they can 'serve political purposes', Gordimer's novels 'do so in the old liberal way: by making individuals aware of injustices' (p. 143). This is certainly the dynamic of Gordimer's fiction, and also a necessary novelistic principle. Neither must it lead to 'liberal' solutions. The missing figure in this discussion is Georg Lukács, whose work on critical realism, in fact, has sponsored Gordimer's emphasis on the dialectical interaction between public and private realms, in successive (and various) treatments. Also problematic in Peck's reading is the conflation of Gordimer's own political views with the attitudes ascribed to the fiction, since there is no necessary correspondence: one can contrast, for instance, the pessimism of *None to Accompany Me* (1994), her first post-apartheid novel, with the upbeat 'ambassadorial' role she adopted as a Nobel laureate, promoting the new South Africa.

Peck is more successful in his analysis of Wilbur Smith, where a literal approach to exegesis fits the more stable ideological subject. Peck demonstrates with conviction how Smith presents 'a mythology of apartheid more virulent than even South African propaganda of the 1970s' (p. 17). It may be that the method that works for popular fiction is too blunt for the explication of 'serious' fiction. The real test case, here, is J. M. Coetzee, South Africa's first postmodernist writer, and the figure most commonly opposed to Gordimer in discussions of relative political engagement. Curiously, Peck dispenses with Coetzee in a single paragraph, dismissing him for 'the abstraction and intellectualization of his treatment' of politics (p. 6). Coetzee, however, has a sophisticated rationale for his commitment to the discourse of fiction, rather than to the discourse of history, or of politics. A view that is becoming hard to ignore (and which Peck might well have confronted) is that Coetzee uncovers historicity *within* postmodernism, in a project which conjoins aesthetic and ethical concerns.

If, to the literary specialist, Peck's approach deals more credibly with popular than with 'serious' fiction, the riposte of the specialist in politics is easy to anticipate: does this not imply an elitist cultural divide which might

justify Peck's exasperation with a writer like Coetzee? To this, one can only say that the complexity of an overdetermined 'post-colonising' situation – the situation of the white writer in South Africa – demands a complex literary response, perhaps finally realised in Coetzee's richly ambivalent treatment of ideology, canonisation and marginality. Peck is not interested in the literary reading which might redeem such ambivalence, which in his own approach would become another instance of morbidity. For those convinced by the methodology, however, Peck will have opened up a worrying chasm between the political and the 'literary'.

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**South Africa: the battle over the constitution** by SIRI GLOPPEN  
Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997. Pp. xiii + 305. £42.50.

The central concern of this book is to unravel the normative structures of the democratic constitutional models that informed the constitution-making process in post-apartheid South Africa. Focusing on the interim Constitution of 1994 and its evolution into the 'final' Constitution of 1996, Gloppen proceeds to present the competing positions of the National Party and the African National Congress in terms of the former being a consociational approach and the latter a liberal 'justice model'. Analytically rooting these approaches in, and seeing them as being representative of, the writings of Arend Lijphart and Albie Sachs, it is further argued that: 'The justice model may be seen as Rawls' theory of justice applied to South Africa, while communitarian philosophy justifies the consociational approach' (p. 147).

In particular, both the consociational and justice models are drawn out with particular reference to how they handle the pressing problems of ethnic division and socioeconomic inequality. Here, Gloppen neatly highlights that the basic difference between the models is that whilst the consociational approach is more concerned with using constitutionalism as a tool for conservation and regulation, the 'justice model' is primarily interested in advancing transformation and justice. In addition, it is asserted that the consociational position is tied to consensual democracy, whilst the 'justice model' is informed by the ideal of majoritarian democracy.

In assessing the 'battle over the Constitution' Gloppen maintains that South Africa has witnessed a compromise between the two models; as the interim Constitution was 'a mixed constitution, leaning toward consociationalism' (p. 205), and the 'final' Constitution is interpreted to have made concessions to consociationalism through the incorporation of federal elements, the recognition of traditional leaders and the potential space for communities to seek a collective right to self-determination. Moreover, the 'final' Constitution is seen to be a "sequential" compromise; with the Constitution functioning like the consociational model if there is no majority party, and like the 'justice model' if there is a majority party.

Generally, Gloppen has constructed her case coherently and with a high level of analytical sophistication. The important question that must be posed

in reviewing this book, however, is whether Gloppen is correct in presenting ‘the battle over the Constitution’ in terms of *these* two models? First of all, it is not clear what is gained from the presentation of the two models in terms of linking them with the work of communitarian writers and John Rawls – especially when the originators of the two main positions – Lijphart and Sachs – do not make this move in their own works. Gloppen actually admits that, ‘There is little indication in Lijphart’s work of any direct interest in communitarian philosophy’ (p. 112), and that ‘Sachs does not refer to Rawls, nor to any of the theorists elaborating on his ideas’ (p. 70), and in fact ‘Sachs himself does not use the term *justice model* to designate his constitutional proposal, nor does he present it as a constitutional *model*’ (p. 89, n. 1).

Gloppen believes that her models ‘have dominated the South African debate’ (p. 120), but have they? Unfortunately Gloppen has made little attempt to directly show the influence of Sachs on the African National Congress or Lijphart on the National Party (in discussions with this reviewer both Arend Lijphart and Albie Sachs expressed very modest assessments of their influence). The models are not adequately grounded in an analysis of the everyday politics of, and actors in, the negotiating process. More seriously, they are not fully contextualised in terms of apartheid; nowhere in the book does the reader encounter a deep understanding of how the models stand in relation to the central tenets of apartheid ideology. Gloppen enters the debate as if what happened in the 1990s can be treated in its own terms. It cannot. The National Party’s position was influenced by the work of Lijphart, but not so much because of its articulation with the writings of communitarian thinkers, but because of its perceived articulation with the ideology of apartheid, with its particular reading of ‘group rights’ and ethno-nationalism.

In sum, whilst this book is an interesting and thought-provoking exercise in thinking about constitutionalism in the new South Africa, it is rather too detached from the realities and actors involved in the South African transition. It is hard to be convinced by an argument that rests on only two in-depth interviews conducted in Bergen (Norway) in 1991 (five years *before* the ratification of the ‘final’ Constitution) with Sachs and Lijphart. It is a pity that the author did not seek more in-depth viewpoints of the main protagonists in the constitution-making process. Why not interview the African National Congress’s leading negotiators? Why not ask National Party politicians such as F. W. de Klerk and Roelf Meyer whether they have actually read Lijphart or any communitarian writings?

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**Elections in Africa: a data handbook** edited by DIETER NOHLEN, MICHAEL KRENNERICH and BERNHARD THIBAUT  
Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1999. Pp. 984. £80.00.

Even before the return to competitive multiparty elections occurred in most African states during the 1990s, elections played an important part in the political life of many African states even though in most they did not, by their nature, decide the party of government because such choices were not made

available to the electorate. The return to competitive elections has enhanced their importance in many states and resulted in change of government through the ballot box in a considerable number. This splendid reference book provides detailed information on elections in all African states, including those of North Africa, from the pre-independence period up until 1998.

The three editors, all based at the University of Heidelberg, have put together a team of country specialists most of whom are German or non-Germans based in German universities. The book is organised on a country-by-country basis preceded by an introductory chapter on elections and electoral systems. Each country section provides a helpful background summary, a discussion of electoral rules and regulations (and how these have changed over time), details of election results, and a useful bibliography (although in one case I spotted this included a book which was scheduled for publication but which never materialised).

The wealth of information presented here will be of great value to Africanists interested in elections and to non-Africanist scholars seeking to make comparisons between Africa and other parts of the world. For a reviewer to describe a reference book as 'invaluable' may be a bit of a cliché but in relation to this volume it is thoroughly justified: I have little doubt that I will be consulting it on a regular basis.

JOHN A. WISEMAN

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**Consensus, Conflict and Change: a sociological introduction to African societies** by MARGARET PEIL and OLATUNJI OYENEYE

Nairobi, Kampala and Dar es Salaam, East African Educational Publishers, 1998. Pp. 345, \$25.00/£13.95 (distributed in the UK by African Books Collective, Oxford).

*Consensus, Conflict and Change* is an introduction to sociology meant for African students. It is an updated version of *Consensus and Conflict in African Societies* which was published in 1977, and it refers extensively to more recent sociological studies of various parts of Africa.

*Consensus, Conflict and Change* is a comprehensive and thorough introductory text that fully lives up to its purpose of providing African students with a knowledge of newer research on their societies. It has eleven well-written chapters. The first chapter introduces sociology as a 'social science which studies the social relationships among people as individuals and as groups and the influence of social, political and economic conditions on these individuals and groups' (p. 1). The chapter explains scientific method and goes through the most important concepts in sociology. Chapter 2 on social organisation outlines the ideal types of traditional versus modern societies, and of various types of authority (traditional, charismatic and rational). The chapter also (somewhat briefly) introduces the consensus and conflict models of society. Although the chapter discusses important topics in a meticulous way, I found no references to the 'classics'. Weber and Parsons are mentioned only by their last names when their main works could have been referred to; but this is

maybe inhibited by a bibliography that, though comprehensive, lists publications only since 1980. Similarly, there are no examples of adherents to either the conflict or the consensus model.

Chapter 3 explains socialisation, social exchange and social networks in an excellent way, although there could have been a more extensive discussion of 'impersonal and personal ties', for instance through Mark Granovetter's 'the strength of weak ties' or James Coleman's work on social capital. Chapter 4 (on differentiation) contains a good discussion of whether one can speak of classes in Africa (probably not yet!), and it has plenty of references and examples. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are about families, education and religion. While keeping a broad sociological approach, the chapters also deal with topics more specifically related to Africa, such as bridewealth, polygony and witchcraft. Chapter 8 on economic activities has been appropriately added since the 1977 edition. It has sections on occupations, women's work, industrial workers, unemployment, and dependency and world system theories. The discussions are interesting, although I am left wondering about the consequences of the flight from formal sector employment. Research by Aili Mari Tripp shows that women have gained more control and autonomy within the household as a result of their informal income-generating activities. The section on dependency and world system theory is a bit brief, with references to such authors as Samir Amin and Immanuel Wallerstein lacking.

Chapter 8 is followed by an interesting chapter on cities, rich with information and detail; the same can be said about chapter 10 which deals with social problems. The part on refugees I found particularly giving. The book concludes with a chapter on social change. It combines consensus and conflict theories to build an illustrative model of phases of social change (p. 291). It also has sections on modernisation theory (again references are missing, for instance to Walt Rostow), on GNP as a development indicator, on the introduction of new technology and of responses to change. A good chapter that touches upon important aspects of change, although I think African students would have liked to read about the globalisation of modernity, as for instance Anthony Giddens has theorised it. The 'clash' between modernity and tradition is something they face daily in curricula, dress codes, music etc. Also, rising rates of crime could be a response to aspects of the globalisation of modernity.

Each chapter ends by listing relevant discussion topics aimed at making the student relate the chapter to his or her own society. In addition, there are many good tables and figures which facilitate learning, and there is a comprehensive index. A separate section on the roots of sociological development research (Comte, Durkheim, Parsons, Weber, Marx) could have improved the overall value of the book. The omission of a separate section on the state and the colonial heritage is justified, since this is clearly a book about African *societies*. But as Peil and Oyeneeye are right to stress in their definition of sociology, political factors also do influence social relations, and I find this has been underplayed throughout the book. Recently, in Kampala, an angry mob caught three thieves, they let one of them run because he looked Buganda, but the other two were killed because they were thought to be Banyankole, the tribe of the president. Politicisation of ethnicity can thus

strengthen communalism in society, an aspect which is not addressed in the book. Nevertheless, *Consensus, Conflict and Change* is a valuable addition to the literature on African societies. There is no doubt that it will help African students to 'explore the basic principles of the structure and functioning of their own society and their place in it' as the authors express their hope in the preface. As such, it is highly recommendable.

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**Personality and Political Culture in Modern Africa: studies presented to Professor Harold G. Marcus** edited by MELVIN E. PAGE, STEPHANIE F. BESWICK, TIM CARMICHAEL and JAY SPAULDING  
Boston: Boston University Papers on Africa, 1998. Pp. 212. \$14.95 (pbk.).

This volume of fifteen short essays by students and colleagues of Harold Marcus examines aspects of African political history through primarily biographical studies. Most of the contributions focus on eastern Africa, especially Ethiopia where Marcus has made his reputation as a scholar and teacher. These contributors are bound together by a skepticism towards the 'recent flow of academic chic from Marxism to Postmodernism' that fails to account for 'any sort of intervening concrete reality' (p. 3). The book's focus on individuals, according to the editors, thus contributes to a critique against the excessive generalisations of theory-driven literature. These studies also collectively reject 'theoretical visions of radical discontinuities in political culture between the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial state' (p. 5) and instead posit a continuity in the process of state-building, a perspective clearly influenced by Ethiopia's unique political history.

The result is an uneven collection of essays that survey a vast geographical and chronological terrain. Perhaps it is due to constrictions of length (most essays average 4,000 words), but many of these studies seem incomplete, very much 'works in progress' that suggest future publications or research opportunities. Jay Spaulding's study on the question of matrilineal dynastic succession in document-poor medieval Nubia offers a convincing methodology – examining succession practices of the later Funj kingdom of Sinnar rather than relying on generic models of matrilineality – but offers only a cursory outline of material to link the two kingdoms. James McCann contributes an essay about a written court register of twentieth-century Ethiopian governor Ras Kassa which demonstrates both the parallel development of statecraft literacy in uncolonised Africa and the fragility of historical sources even within this century. Irma Taddia offers the unsurprising observation that Africans collaborated with as well as resisted colonial rule in Italian Eritrea. Despite uncovering valuable and hitherto unused written sources from Italy and Eritrea, the author does little more than describe this documentation. Laird Jones' study of inter-war urban Tanganyika focuses on the African muslim traders of Mwanza who, the author argues, spearheaded African nationalism in the region. This argument rests on the author's examination of Muslim traders' petitions against government land and marketing reforms and political appointments. Although this group certainly deserves more attention



than previous studies have afforded it, Jones' teleological understanding of 'mass nationalism' constricts the interpretive possibilities of this essay. Fikru Gebrekidan offers a clear if uncritical narrative of Ethiopia's relations with pan-African and diasporic movements, deviating from the volume's useful focus on political continuity in favour of a predictable nationalist perspective.

Limitations of space prevent me from addressing each essay here, but the strongest are the more self-contained biographical studies. Donald Crumme revisits the life of Emperor Tewodros to examine his personality and manipulation of Solomonic ideology and history. Together these elements constitute important aspects of Ethiopia's historic political culture which today is being severely tested by the rise of the EPRDF and its Kenya-style emphasis on region and ethnicity. Regarding the emergence of ethnicity, Charles McClellan's study of two Gedeo men who came of age during the Italo-Ethiopian war critiques the nationalist narrative of mass resistance to European intrusion. Italian occupation meant a brief reprieve from Qawa domination of the Gedeo, which promptly resumed with support of the Ethiopian state following the Italian expulsion. David Robinson examines the careers of three important French imperialists in West Africa – Faidherbe, Louis Archinard and Xavier Coppolani of Senegal, Soudan and Mauritania respectively – to argue for a more subtle approach to French imperialism for historians of Africa. All three succeeded because of their pragmatism, fabrication and manipulation of information, and the brief availability of opportunities 'for ambitious men to establish agendas, boundaries, and institutions' (p. 106) without serious government reprimand. The other biographical studies in this volume are similarly brief and useful.

This volume serves two functions. It gives more established scholars the opportunity to publish short but useful biographical studies of important figures in African history, and younger scholars the opportunity to publish results of their emerging projects, updating the reader on the state of historical research on eastern Africa. The contributors deliver on the editors' promise of empirically driven arguments grounded firmly on primary sources. Perhaps more generous length restrictions would have allowed for more substantial evidence to be incorporated and more sustained investigations to be carried out in many of these essays.

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**Twice Humanity** edited by AMELIE BERGER  
Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1998. Pp. 187. £16.95 (pbk.).

This book comprises a collection of papers presented at the 1995 international conference, 'Twice Humanity – Implications for Local and Global Resource Use' organised by the Forum for Development Studies in Uppsala, Sweden. By navigating a middle ground between a highly specialised, technical conference report and a generalised, propagandist rendition, *Twice Humanity* manages to be accessible without compromising the complexity of the subject matter and, because it succeeds in its aim of multidisciplinary analysis, it appeals to a diverse cross section of scholars.

*Twice Humanity* offers thirteen short essays by researchers representing the fields of archeology, agriculture and forestry sciences, botany, anthropology, theology, economy and philosophy. Under the aegis of sustainable development, the major issues of population growth, climate change, resource use and biodiversity, are analysed primarily in African contexts, by primarily non-African researchers.

Although the contributions are written in individual styles and address diverse environmental and social concerns, they are united by the acknowledgement that the rapidly growing world population is the defining variable of sustainable development initiatives. The central theme of the book is that population growth, combined with the present imbalance of overconsumption and resource misutilisation, if not mediated, pose serious threats to human survival. While questions are raised as often as solutions are offered there is an underlying conviction that with cross disciplinary research and evolving scientific methodologies, effective solutions to the myriad of global environmental problems can be found.

Taken as a whole, the book is clear and well organised. A collaborative introduction presents its aims and a synopsis of all contributions and chapters. The introductory addresses and keynote speeches, of which there are perhaps a few too many, fit nicely into the overall body of work and the papers are neatly arranged into subject areas, adeptly complementing ideas presented in previous papers. The addresses and speeches are woefully short and frustrating in their tendency to superficially graze the surface of such important topics as the feasibility of an African Green Revolution, the socioeconomic determinants of fertility rates, and the necessity of bottom-up population policy, achievable through changing gender relations and the empowerment of women. The remaining papers address these issues more thoroughly and concretely.

The chapters begin with an archaeological analysis of urbanisation in Africa. Paul Sinclair writes, 'at each stage in human history it has been possible through improvements of technology or cultural reorganisation and changes in the relationship to plants and animals to raise the carrying capacity of African environments to accommodate population increases' (p. 36). Yet, Sinclair concedes that it is unknown to what extent this adaptation is sustainable under present conditions of land scarcity and a weakened ecosystem.

Furthering the population analysis, Craig Dilworth offers the 'vicious circle principle' based on the interplay of population growth, technological innovation and economic development leading to ever increasing resource consumption. He advocates a controversial, if idealistic, hard-line solution of top down population control combined with a fundamentally different world economic system wherein the idea of economic growth is replaced by that of economic conservation. In rebuttal, Gurli Hansson's case study of women in the Mberengwa district of Zimbabwe effectively adds a human dimension to the population quandary. With her anthropologically detailed exploration of the religious, cultural and practical importance of motherhood, she indirectly questions the efficacy of enforced population control in the absence of informed contextuality.

Amelie Berger questions the worth of agricultural research in Africa in her

provocative exploration of the failures of modern science to improve agricultural output in the face of growing populations, poor governance, soil quality and climatic factors. Notwithstanding her doubts of their applicability, her prescriptions include a 'double-green revolution' based on new paradigms of biotechnology and participatory research. In yet another call for joint action between scientists, Inga Hedberg documents the imbalance of research on biodiversity between the North and South and invites an immediate documentation of local traditional knowledge about the use of plants.

In the first of two chapters on sustainable mixed farming systems, Brian Ogle argues convincingly that low external input systems based on renewable resources in which livestock are integrated with crop production, and possibly also with agroforestry and aquaculture, are sustainable, efficient and productive. Monika Omri-Pack's anthropological case study of the changing circumstances and problematic adaptations of the traditionally pastoralist Maasi of Tanzania reveals that their newly adopted agricultural practices are neither productive nor sustainable in the absence of effective extension services and improved technologies. She concludes by posing the question 'How can pastoralism and agriculture be combined in a sustainable way?' (p. 99). Together, these two papers represent most effectively the merits of cross-disciplinary research by welding the cultural knowledge of anthropology with agronomic analysis to address the problems of the rural poor.

Minh Ha Fagerström offers a scientific study of the uses of and alternatives to shifting cultivation in Vietnam, while back in West Africa, Johan Rockstrom and Ylva Tilander's discussion of traditional rainfed agriculture in semi-arid Niger concludes the decreasing yields are the results of failures in the area of soil and water management. Both papers outline a number of innovative techniques aimed at higher productivity to meet the food demands of growing populations.

Addressing the need for fair land distribution for improved agricultural production, Lisbeth Larsson Lidén employs the theory of food entitlement and the role of civil society in her comparative study of the necessary preconditions for achieving land reform in Zimbabwe and Kerala, India. Although dated, she contributes a none the less important analysis of the impact of civil society and the media on policy and the political process.

The final two chapters discuss very different approaches to mitigating carbon dioxide emissions to countereffect climate change. The paper by Folke Bohlin and Bo Hektor beautifully compliments Sten Hagbergs's case study of local forest value in Burkina Faso, and additionally analyses the use of fuel wood as an environmentally and economically viable bioenergy alternative to fossil fuels in the developing world. Moving from a local to a global perspective, Basim Safi offers the most ambitious paper in the collection. Arguing that climate change is the result of three interrelated factors – increasing carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels, population growth and land degradation – he advocates for globally administered permits and taxes on carbon fuels and emissions which would serve to both reduce emissions and provide financial resources for environmental investment. He optimistically states: 'The success of this process may largely depend on cooperation between nations, which should replace the dominant attitudes of competition, national

interest, and exploitation of strong economic and political positions' (p. 182). As with all efforts towards sustainable development, a healthy dose of idealism is required.

This collection is a plea for optimism in the face of uncertainty. There is an almost evangelical belief that, led by a battalion of enlightened scientists and researchers waving the banner of value-laden interdisciplinarianism, science will ultimately overcome the great evils of human greed and resource destruction and create a new world of peace, equality and environmental sustainability. While no contributor can offer a coherent battle plan, they are united in their conviction that their quest is one of utmost importance and urgency. This collection of African oriented research on some of the most pressing environmental concerns of our time is a welcome addition to the existing body of knowledge. If *Twice Humanity* succeeds in engendering dialogue and debate amongst the disciplines, all the better.

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**Aid to Africa: so much to do, so little done** by CAROL LANCASTER  
Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1999. Pp. 272, £43.95, £17.50 (pbk.).

The inclusion of weighty encomiums on the cover of a book can easily be off-putting. No reviewer likes to be advised what to think about a new book in advance, just as readers of this review will want to sample the book for themselves. And so they should, for Lancaster's study merits the praise, by and large.

Drawing on a very considerable grounding in the literature, her own empirical research and time spent as a senior administrator with the United States Agency for International Development, the author provides a rich diet of hypotheses and arguments, all clearly expressed and free of jargon. Some of the findings will look familiar to students of African affairs and aid to Africa specifically, such as the call for improved coordination among donors. But there are other observations that command attention, such as the conclusion that in terms of developmental effectiveness recipient-driven programmes have fared no better than donor-driven programmes.

In contrast to recent, well-publicised calls for blanket cancellation of developing countries' foreign debt, Lancaster argues that donors should become more selective in giving aid to Africa. And contrary to the usual dismay expressed by aid-watchers over the falling aid budgets of the rich countries, she argues that the amounts are much less important than the developmental effectiveness – and hence less important than much-needed efforts to improve that performance. Donors are advised to decentralise their agencies and improve their managerial capacity to mount appropriate programmes (shortcomings there are found to be a greater cause of the past limitations of aid than the wilful distortion of aid by non-developmental objectives). Also, donor agencies should allow, indeed require, greater participation in project and programme design and implementation and the

sharing of responsibility of Africans, so combining their own development expertise and technical knowledge with the Africans' sense of local priorities, needs and conditions. It is perhaps surprising to find, then, that the book's extensive bibliography cites very few items by Africans, and the various sources of advice acknowledged by the author are very largely northern.

The application of a common analytical framework to studies of aid from US, Britain, France, Sweden, Japan, Italy, the World Bank and European Development Fund, which take up more than half of the text, is a strength. While Britain's aid agency is compared favourably in terms of autonomy and capacity its performance is not judged to be exceptional. In contrast, Japan scores low in terms of autonomy and capacity but is not found to be among the more ineffective. Italy takes the wooden spoon. Britain is judged to be not one of the most influential leaders in development discourse in Africa, which is odd given that 'some of the best work on development in Africa produced by the scholarly community comes from Britain, some with public support' (p. 138).

*Aid to Africa* is generally supportive to the idea of aid to Africa but critical of the way projects and programmes have been designed and implemented. It offers seven principal lessons for improving future performance. The onus is placed largely on the donors, which seems right for, after all, they have largely been in the driving seat in the aid relationship. But the book's declared objective to answer the question, why with so much aid has there been so little development in Africa?, can only be convincingly answered by detailed reference to a much larger canvas of considerations internal to Africa. That would of course require a different and very much larger study. It might even throw up more positive stories about aid and development in Africa than Lancaster has space for. Her recommendations for improving the developmental effectiveness of aid appear eminently reasonable and well balanced. The critique she provides of past performance indicates that while her suggestions might look simple, putting them into practice is likely to be more difficult and even then, the results are not guaranteed.

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**Cultural Universals and Particulars: an African perspective** by  
KWASI WIREDU  
Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997. Pp. 237. £29.59, £13.99  
(pbk.).

The question of appropriate models of cultural exchange between Africa and her former colonisers has often dominated the recent practice of African philosophy and Professor Wiredu in this provocative study centres this discussion on the relationship between universalisable truths and norms (ideas and values that hold for all peoples in all cultures) and the particularity of truths and norms (ideas and value that hold for a specific culture and/or time period). Writing as a professional philosopher and as someone raised in the Akan culture of Ghana, he attempts to navigate a middle path between a hard

doctrine of universals and a hare doctrine of relativism: 'Human beings cannot live by particulars or universals alone, but by some combination of both' (p. 9).

Wiredu argues for a universal characteristic by which all human beings, regardless of their particularities, are human beings. It is the case that *all* human beings communicate and that communication is grounded in a shared human biology. Despite the enormous difficulties of intercultural exchange, communication is, at least in principle, always possible: 'Nevertheless, the fundamental biological similarity of all human beings assures the possibility of resolving all such disparities, for the foundation of communication is biological' (p. 20).

None the less, intercultural communication often runs into the notoriously thorny problem of ethical relativism. Although cultural exchange encounters heterogeneous normative practices, Wiredu finds it dangerous to conclude from this that there can be no impartial moral position to resolve competing moral claims. Following Kant, Wiredu searches for a moral precept that is not the unjustifiable universalisation of a particular custom. He injects 'a dose of compassion' into Kant's stern formalism and derives a kinder and gentler categorical imperative that he calls 'sympathetic impartiality'. Dedicated to the 'harmonization of interests in society', this moral precept, akin to the Golden Rule, holds that one has 'manifest due concern for the interest of others if in contemplating the impact of his actions on their interests, she puts herself imaginatively in their position, and having done so, is able to welcome the impact' (p. 29).

Having established the possibility of universals, Wiredu turns to his most provocative set of arguments. It has been historically the case that cultures often coercively present particular customs and philosophical concepts *as if they were universals* and this was amply evident in colonialism. Using both the Akan language and Akan customs, Wiredu argues that certain philosophical problems are 'tongue dependent' and that certain Western normative practices confused morality (the universal condition for the possibility of ethical behaviour) with custom (particular cultural practices that were falsely universalised).

Such claims lead Wiredu to argue for the conceptual decolonisation of African thinking. Hence, for instance, when an Akan attempts to understand their own 'tongue dependent' philosophical assumptions, but does so in English, they are falsely assuming that all philosophical terms are interchangeable. This is not to say that English and Akan speakers cannot learn each other's terminology (Professor Wiredu himself is proof that such an exchange is possible), but that philosophical terms come with deeply imbedded assumptions and, to understand them, one has to understand the communicative context within which they are intelligible.

Furthermore, colonialism fostered both the African acceptance of Western philosophical concepts often without an adequate understanding of their accompanying conceptual framework and, more distressingly, the misguided attempt to understand native African philosophical terms within a conceptual framework that is not sensitive to African 'tongue dependent' particulars. As an antidote to this, Wiredu proposes a rediscovery of one's native

communicative world: 'Try to think them through in your own African language and, on the basis of the results, review the intelligibility of the associated problems or the plausibility of the apparent solutions that have tempted you when you have pondered them in some metropolitan language' (p. 137).

This lucid and sensitive book eloquently teaches some important lessons about the heterogeneity of languages in particular and the heterogeneity of human goodness in general. Along the way, it is an important introduction to some of the heretofore-unappreciated philosophical treasures of Akan culture.

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**Privatizing Health Services in Africa** by MEREDITH TURSHEN  
New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999. Pp. 185. \$50, \$23 (pbk.).

The question implied by the title is whether the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights proviso establishing healthcare as a human right has relevance to Africa. While struggling with the most impoverished of systems, most African countries have none the less attempted to provide a modicum of health services in compliance with this human right. That is, until international pressures toward structural adjustment have compelled them to retract many of these services to conform to structural adjustment. One's view of this right to healthcare conditions the response to this volume. Turshen correctly observes that equating health care to other development activities, e.g. transportation, is fallacious. She points out that while Africa contains only 10 per cent of the world's population, it contains 30–40 per cent of the world's poor, a strong indication of the pressing need for healthcare services.

IGOs, i.e. the World Bank and IMF, have pressed for the elimination of state-provided healthcare and public medical facilities in the 1980s and 1990s as a major element in seeking privatised services, responding to the ideological preferences of major world powers and financial donors. However, at the same time, new and mutated viruses, economic malaise, environmental degradation, wars and migrations have bolstered the spread of disease and misery in much of sub-Saharan Africa. These, in turn, have resulted in declining life expectancy in most states, e.g. to under 30 in AIDS-riven Malawi.

Turshen argues that with restructured health services, the quality of public health has demonstrably declined, focusing her critique on Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Consequent to privatisation, fees were introduced to generate income for services previously provided free by the government. Turshen further argues that the 90 per cent of African workers who are in the informal sector, much less peasants, cannot afford health insurance, much less the fees associated with private medical service. She usefully observes that the collapse of health services coincided with the replacement of the WHO by the World Bank as the primary source of IGO health infrastructure advice.

This reviewer spent 1997 in Malawi, one of Turshen's case studies. From an anecdotal perspective, it appears that her pessimistic data actually overrate

access to healthcare, relying as they do upon government and IGO data. For example, our local district hospital's free service consisted of providing aspirins for virtually every malady. Of its four physicians, three were foreign, and hence short term. It was said that there were more Malawian physicians in Manchester, England, than in all of Malawi, a consequence of the brain drain. Privatisation would have no impact upon either that or upon the inability of virtually all Malawians to afford even the most rudimentary health services.

The volume contains a carefully developed argument giving all aspects of health care restructuring a hearing, but concluding the inevitable: healthcare in impoverished societies cannot be privatised with the expectation of improvement in the quality of life; it only enhances the government's 'bottom line'. The analysis applicable to other aspects of public policy, e.g. utilities or farm produce marketing, does not apply. This book provides a much-needed critique of widely accepted structural adjustment solutions to the problem of international debt and underdevelopment.

If there is a weakness, it is in reliance upon national data from states where data collection is unreliable at best, or propagandistic at worst. While anecdotal evidence counts for little, in these cases it might just be more pertinent. Funds are spent, services are announced, and some people doubtless benefit. But a combination of corruption, inefficiency and popular despair, coupled with the attraction of the good life abroad, in major urban centres or in private practice for medical professionals has resulted in a decimated healthcare system in much of sub-Saharan Africa. It is not the World Bank that will provide the key to its remediation, if Turshen is to be believed. This observer is persuaded by her arguments.

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**The Dynamics of Economic and Political Relations Between Africa and Foreign Powers: a study in international relations** by TUKUMBI LUMUMBA-KASONGO

Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999. Pp. 133. £43.95.

This book purports to offer a structural explanation of Africa's relations with the industrial powers, i.e. the West. The author attempts this by looking at two levels of analysis: the continent's place in the world system, and through two individual case studies, namely Washington's relations with Liberia, and Brussels' linkages with Zaire/Democratic Republic of the Congo. There have been a rash of books recently claiming to examine Africa's international relations and the best of them have been very good (Clapham's book and Wright's edited volume being of particular note). Unfortunately, this book is not one of them.

One of the problems is the author's deployment of terms with little or no explanation of what they mean and/or minimal grounding in the literature. For example, although the book is predicted around a structuralist analysis which supposedly takes the world system as its theoretical framework, there is little discussion of the strengths or weaknesses of this approach, with only one



very old (1973!) reference to the work of Wallerstein and nothing of Chase-Dunn or any of the other more contemporary world systems scholars. The author also attempts to link Africa's predicament with the ongoing process of globalisation. This is a sound approach – the problem is that Lumumba-Kasongo shows no apparent in-depth understanding of what exactly globalisation entails. Like the rest of the book, there is no discussion, no awareness of the contested terrain surrounding the globalisation debates, with the author claiming that 'slow processes of global integration and transformation' occur simultaneously with 'the demand for economic accommodation by the states in the South' (p. 2). First, very few analysts would agree with the suggestion that globalisation is 'slow' – quite the opposite, in fact. Second, the demands for 'economic accommodation' are these days predicated around essential acceptance of the neo-liberalism order, whilst working within this discourse to attempt to ameliorate the worst excesses of this process. Reading the author, one would suspect that the call for a NIEO is back – not so.

Furthermore, the author seems to have little comprehension that globalisation is not some process 'out there', but is a societal construct engineered and channelled by powerful economic, technological and political processes in the service of an increasingly transnational bourgeoisie. Though based in the core, this class formation is increasingly replicating itself and incorporating leading elements in the South – Africa included. It is simply wrong (I would argue) to suggest, as Lumumba-Kasongo does – that there is a 'possible disappearance' of the bourgeoisie in Africa (p. 12). Sure, nationally oriented class fractions are being weakened, but a new globally oriented bourgeoisie is emerging that is taking advantage of the structural shift in the balance of class forces in favour of a transnational elite. Such elements from within Africa were to be seen at the recent World Economic Forum, for instance, yet the author is seemingly unaware of such important dynamics (the usage of old – frequently very old – literature by the author may account for this).

Turning to the choice of case studies, his selection is in itself confusing and contradictory. On the one hand, we are told that the case studies 'focus on Congo-Zaire and Liberia because of their unique histories' (p. 6). Yet in the next paragraph the author claims that 'Congo-Zaire and Liberia illustrate the general patterns of political and social implications of African relations with foreign powers.' How can the author reconcile what, to me at least, appear as contradictory statements? Unique cannot be generalised. And by deploying such case studies, can we honestly say that 'the African state is an expression *par excellence* of the state system the world over'? (p. 14). This is a very contentious statement to make, yet is backed up with no supporting argument whatsoever. The author is also wrong to claim that 'the Commonwealth [does] not promote economic relations' (p. 21).

The case studies themselves are of interest, if only because Americo-Liberian and Belgo-Congo linkages are rarely looked at these days. However, much of these two chapters are descriptive, with little analysis and virtually no linkage to the wider theoretical framework, *viz.* world systems, that the book is supposedly working within. It is this theoretical weakness, and the tendency by the author to use five falutin' words when one could do (which

becomes annoying as one advances through the book) that makes this work a disappointment to the reader expecting more from what appears to be a promising title.

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