

HISTORY

Maria Grosz-Ngate, John H. Hanson, and Patrick O'Meara, eds. *Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014. 4th edition. viii + 376 pp. Illustrations. Maps. Contributors. Index. \$35.00. Paper and E-book. ISBN: 978-0253012920.

A mainstay in many introductory courses in African studies since its original publication in 1977, *Africa*, in this fourth edition, reflects a visible break from the focus of the previous versions. Twenty years after the publication of the third edition, much has changed on the continent, and the editors have responded to these changes with an increased focus on contemporary Africa and its global connections. This new edition offers a condensed yet thematically broad text suitable for both the undergraduate classroom and a popular audience. Abridged from twenty-one to fifteen chapters, *Africa* retains its tradition of interdisciplinary breadth by incorporating a range of accessible, thematically organized perspectives informed by the latest scholarship.

The 1995 edition of *Africa* used a broad historical approach to tell a story of the changing political landscape of the continent. From examining the end of the Cold War and the onset of democratization to detailed chapters on the struggle against apartheid, the previous edition emphasized a 1990s focus on political transitions and conflict. However, as Stephen Ellis noted, many of the classic textbooks and popular literature on Africa in the 1990s overemphasized both “triumphalist and defeatist histories,” with the latter stories of tragic failure offering a pessimistic portrayal of contemporary Africa (*Journal of African History* 43 [2002]). The latest edition of *Africa* has moved on from this scholarly pessimism to discuss African economic and political development in the language of “tempered hope,” a welcomed perspective for those teaching introductory courses in African studies.

Beginning with an introduction that discusses these dual representations of Africa, as well as its geographic size and environmental diversity, *Africa* contains contributions from established and emerging scholars from the fields of anthropology, art history, comparative literature, geography, folklore/ethnomusicology, history, and political science. The fourth edition has removed much of the historical depth of previous versions. A single historical chapter introduces students to major themes in African history with an emphasis on the connection of the past to the present and the historical legacy is addressed mostly in the context of other topics such as African notions of family and kinship and economic strategies. The strength of this approach is that it emphasizes the social significance and interconnectedness of these concepts. A chapter on religion covers indigenous beliefs and local adaptations of Islam and Christianity in a historical perspective. Two new chapters discuss the subject of health and healing and the growing demographic and cultural significance of African urban life. The volume, however, tends to neglect history as such.

Africa pays particular attention to popular culture as an analytical lens for examining contemporary life. Separate chapters on the visual arts, music, literature, and film provide ample opportunities for instructors to incorporate a range of sources and perspectives into the classroom. Unlike many introductory texts that focus mostly on electoral politics and economic development, this book devotes only two of the fifteen chapters to these issues, with a new chapter shifting the traditional language of democratization and social change to concepts of human rights in a historical framework. The concluding chapter provides a broad bibliographic introduction to further resources for both students and teachers. Particularly helpful here is the addition of digital resources, which will help readers navigate the unreliable world of web-based research. However, this bibliographic resource would be even more useful if it evolved into a Web-based companion to the text in future editions. Few texts provide this kind of introduction to the growing body of primary and secondary source materials available digitally, a resource that students, scholars, and teachers of African studies need desperately.

It is easy to criticize any attempt to introduce contemporary Africa in a single edited volume. While *Africa's* interdisciplinary breadth makes it an ideal text for courses defined broadly as an "introduction to African studies," the limited direct attention to history will likely relegate this to a supplementary text in historical survey courses. The focus of the text is also limited mainly to sub-Saharan Africa, though the editors do not privilege any one region. And, since it is organized thematically, there is little space for in-depth coverage of issues such as rapid technological change, the evolving role of the diaspora, and China's relatively recent involvement in African affairs, all of which are important enough to deserve stand-alone chapters. However, no one text could be comprehensive in its approach to the ever-changing social, economic, and political landscape of contemporary Africa. For students of African studies broadly defined, the fourth edition of *Africa* will continue to spark important discussions in the classroom and likely inspire a fifth edition of this influential introductory text.

Matt Carotenuto

St. Lawrence University

Canton, New York

mcarotenuto@stlawu.edu

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Raymond E. Dumett. *Imperialism, Economic Development and Social Change in West Africa*. Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2013. xviii + 538 pp. List of Raymond Dumett's publications. Index. \$61.00. Paper. ISBN: 978-1594609763.

Toyin Falola, editor of Carolina's African World series, has single-handedly revived the extremely useful practice of publishing collections of the major papers of a distinguished scholar. In this case it is Raymond Dumett, and