

and Charlotte Walker-Said analyze the work of homophobia and forced marriage in African asylum claims; and Mariane Ferme investigates how arguments made in the Special Court for Sierra Leone following the civil war of 1991–2002 had the paradoxical effect of enshrining some forced practices as ‘crimes against humanity’, while categorizing others as ‘customary’, and therefore noncriminal. Like many of the authors, Ferme raises the question of how contested practices that fall under the label of forced marriage interact with other problematic practices that are not so designated. How do the spectacular legal debates and decisions regarding consent and coercion in marriage reify or otherwise impact other contestations and conflicts that never make it to court?

In each of the chapters, scholars grapple primarily with the question of marriage — what defines it; what it encompasses and masks, as well as what sorts of social practices and domestic arrangements it produces; and the ways that these issues have been structured by law-making bodies like colonial courts or international courts. The forms of marriage that are covered in the book are chiefly traumatic forms, such as early marriage for girls, marrying of kinless slave wives, bush marriages of captive women in warzones, or marriage by abduction. One thread that runs through the chapters is the pervasiveness of a masculine sense of entitlement to possessing women. A question that the volume brings up for me is how forced marriages and the objectification of women within them have impacted men and ideas of masculinity. That is, how have transformations in forced marriage, either via their introduction, modification, or abolition, shaped gender relations and ideas of hegemonic masculinity, historically and in the present? Forced marriages, or what some call conjugal slavery, blur or even wholly erase the lines between marriage and slavery, wife, and property. They also create conflicts that produce the written records through which scholars attempt to understand the history and persistence of such strategies of filiation (11). Based on this work of social justice scholarship, as Emily Burrill rightly notes in her afterword, can we ask how scholarship interacts with legal and activist discourses to produce or challenge the normalization of forced marriage? In other words, and to come back to Roberts, what do debates about forced marriage make imaginable?

ABOSEDE GEORGE

Columbia University-Barnard College

THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF AFRICA

The Democratization of Africa: Dynamics and Trends.

Edited by Alexius Amtaika.

Austin, TX and Ibadan: Pan-African University Press, 2017. Pp. xxix + 401. \$20.00, paperback (ISBN 978-1-943533-13-8).

doi:10.1017/S0021853718000877

Key Words: regional, democracy, politics, development, political culture.

The preface of this edited collection explains that it is one of three books intended to ‘furnish leaders with a selection of recent literature’ (xi). I am not sure what kind of leaders will be reading this book, but the collection will present them with some challenges. The

multiple authorial voices here are discordant: a radical critique of ‘liberal democracy’ (not entirely defined, but apparently meaning multi-partyism and competitive elections) and denunciations of the imposition of ‘western’ forms vie with bland prose about the importance of civil society to strengthening democracy. That discordance — apparent within some of the contributions, as much as between them — is fascinating. There will likely be little in this volume to interest most historians (Obi Emeka Anthony’s chapter is the only really historical contribution). Yet Alexius Amtaika has — possibly unintentionally — captured rather well both the ambivalence of contemporary attitudes towards electoral democracy and the extraordinary colonizing success of the rhetoric and forms that have come to be associated with it. The radical critique is foregrounded in Amtaika’s introduction (and in one of the several chapters which he contributes to the volume) in which the arguments of Claude Ake and Seymour Martin Lipset contend for prominence. ‘Development’, Amtaika declares, ‘is a precondition for democracy and not the other way round’ (xv). The implication seems clear: what he calls the ‘transplantation of western European values’ to Africa cannot propel development and has instead undermined the pursuit of development (xvi). Amtaika expresses both regret over the loss of ‘indigenous institutions’ and a degree of wistful longing for what he variously calls ‘stable dictatorship’ or the rule of ‘patriotic despots’ (xx, xviii, 14). In another chapter Nathaniel Oluwaseyi Shogunle avers that ‘[i]n terms of its origin, election is totally alien to African political systems, as election to royal thrones in Africa from time immemorial has been through the royal blood’ (308). Two lines of argument entangle here: is liberal democracy inappropriate because Africa is too poor, or because other forms of political participation and legitimacy are better suited to a distinct African political genius?

Neither of those arguments is novel, of course. A more interesting aspect of the collection is a pervasive uncertainty over where the immediate problem now lies. Amtaika offers a routine denunciation of ‘elite’ politicians, and this is echoed by a number of other contributors, particularly in the chapters on Nigeria, which all say more or less the same thing: that a corrupt political elite effortlessly manipulate electoral forms to enrich themselves and exploit the population (26). Clear enough, then: the bad guys have taken charge, and work the system to stay in power, with the connivance of those international players who claim to promote democracy but whose real interests are economic. But Amtaika moves on from that point to a rather more unexpected argument, which then becomes the theme of two of his other chapters, both dealing with South African case studies. He suggests that Africa suffers from ‘social indiscipline’ and that people are refusing to ‘undertake their responsibilities’ as citizens (23, 137). Instead, they refuse to pay for government services, or they even destroy public property. This argument is implicitly challenged by that of Ndwakhulu Tshishanga — the only upbeat contribution to this collection — which advances the classic argument in favour of universal suffrage and the secret ballot, arguing that this practice draws South Africa’s youth into citizenship despite their economic exclusion.

Where the various contributors — which are very largely concerned with either South Africa or Nigeria — are in agreement, somewhat unexpectedly, is on the remedy. Unexpectedly, because their suggested measures seem banal in comparison with the radicalism of the critique that most suggest, while they also tend to advance a donor-friendly rhetoric of ‘deepening democracy’ (261). If liberal democracy has been imposed as part

of a universalizing western project, and willingly seized upon by an entrenched elite determined to stay in power, then improved vote counting, or an autonomous electoral management body (suggested by Ukertor Gabriel Moti and Aondowase Nyam) seem unlikely to bring radical change. If Nigeria's elections have been subverted through violence organized by the political elite, a civil society programme for the 'reorientation' of endemically corrupt security forces (as recommended by Obi Emeka Anthony) looks a little hopeful (257). The only really radical idea here is the passing suggestion that Nigeria could avoid the manipulation of results by adopting 'Option A4' — abandoning the secret ballot in favour of public queue-voting, as it is often called (219). In every other way, the language and tone of the contributions seem unable to articulate a coherent alternative to current forms of liberal democracy, despite their sense that multi-party electoral systems are failing. Amtaika's principal essay here concludes with a degree of bathos, and affirms a cultural extraversion embracing both luxury consumption and radical rhetoric: 'We will keep on moving forward, as Johnny Walker puts it: 'keep on walking'. *A luta continua* — the struggle continues' (27). Yes; but which way is forward?

JUSTIN WILLIS
Durham University

THE ALMORAVID AND ALMOHAD EMPIRES

The Almoravid and Almohad Empires.

By Amira K. Bennison.

The Edinburgh History of Islamic Empires. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016. Pp. xiv + 382. £29.99/\$49.95, paperback (ISBN 9780748646807).

doi:10.1017/S0021853718000889

Key Words: Islam, politics, imperialism, kingdoms, states.

In the middle of the eleventh century, an ethno-religious movement rose up in the western Sahara and conquered the Maghrib and much of the Iberian peninsula. It created a single Berber-Islamic realm in an area that stretched from the Niger and Senegal river valleys in the south to the Duero River in the north. The dynasty ruled for a century, but its new-founded capital would give the modern state of Morocco its name. A second empire followed. It reached further east to what is today Tunisia, outlived its predecessor, and survived into the second half of the thirteenth century. These first two Berber-Islamic empires of the western Maghrib created major cities (Marrakesh and Rabat) and brought about the region's most important political evolution of the medieval period, which exercised lasting influence on cultural, religious, and political forms and structures.

No single work in English has ventured a history of these empires, and studies on the individual dynasties are likewise scarce (until recently, scholars have long relied on the Arabic, French, and Spanish historiography). Bennison commandingly fills this void with the first English-language history of these two imperial domains, which appeared as the region came into its own as a major political and cultural player in the Mediterranean