

an institution or system of rule, this masks the heated debates over how this authority is practiced or exercised within rural communities. Simply put, when chiefly authority is reduced to public good provision, the *politics* surrounding African chieftaincy drops out of the analysis. Nonetheless, *The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs in Democratic Africa* represents an important contribution to debates surrounding political behavior, traditional authority, and democracy in Africa.

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Mattia Fumanti. *The Politics of Distinction: African Elites From Colonialism to Liberation in a Namibian Frontier Town*. Canon Pyon, U.K.: Sean Kingston Publishing, 2016. vii + 311 pp. Maps. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$115.00. Cloth. ISBN: 978-1-907774-46-1.

In *The Politics of Distinction*, Mattia Fumanti analyzes the intergenerational dialogue among three groups of black elites in Rundu, a booming mid-sized town on northeastern Namibia's border with Angola. With great ethnographic and theoretical gusto, Fumanti argues that the politics of leadership in northeastern Namibia is based not just on who is wealthy or on the linear passing down of power from seniors to juniors. It also involves the reflections of youthful strivers on the morality and comportment of older generations of leaders in their communities and their scripting of their own lives to meet communally mandated requirements of *nomukaro do nongwa* (exemplarity), *nondunge* (wisdom), *unongo* (goodness), and *efumano* (respect). Imagining oneself as an elite, and then becoming an elite, is thus an act of intersubjectivity—of putting oneself in the shoes of former and current elite groups and working to act with distinction.

The “present” of Fumanti's study is around the turn of the twenty-first century, but because he is interested in the way elite status is contested and transferred between generations, the first half of the book delves into the politics and subjectivities of the apartheid colonial period. During the 1970s and '80s, the older “colonial” elite—traditional and religious authorities, teachers, and businessmen who served on the bantustan Kavango Legislative Council—coexisted uneasily with the younger elite “intelligentsia”—students and teachers, often from privileged backgrounds, who saw education and the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) as the key to regional advancement and Namibian liberation from South African rule. Fumanti rightly eschews characterizations of the former as “sellouts” in contrast to the latter. He sees the two groups as unified around a dedication to education and the local concept of *usimbi*—leadership and power

rooted in achievement, goodness, and respect. But while the liberation intelligentsia rose to its current position of authority in postindependence, SWAPO-dominated Namibia, the older elite of the apartheid period receded from the public eye.

Still, the memory of this older elite has remained important to Rundu's contemporary youth elite: the entry-level civil servants, NGO workers, and part-time entrepreneurs who see the practices of liberation-generation civil servants as corrupt, nepotistic, and ineffective. From this perspective, the SWAPO elite claims a self-evident right to rule based on sacrifices it made during the liberation struggle, but it fails to deliver good governance. On the other hand, the colonial-era generation that served on the Kavango Legislative Council used its connections to the South African regime for local development, opening businesses and establishing bursaries for bright students to study in the capital, Windhoek, or South Africa. In what is perhaps the heart of the book, Fumanti argues that as Rundu's youth elite prepare to someday take the mantle of the liberation elite's authority, they look not to the liberation elite in power, but to members of the colonial Kavango "homeland" administration as exemplary leaders. Becoming an elite is thus not simply a matter of imagining oneself in the role of elites currently in power. The gaze of the young men Fumanti befriended in Rundu sweeps back across generations and the divides within those generations. The "moral reasoning" of youth elites thus "create[s] a complex hybrid incorporating the values of liberal democracy, the recognition of skills and accomplishment and the local concept of leadership, *usimbi*" (28).

Fumanti does not discuss a crucial factor contributing to these "values of liberal democracy," however—the experiences of northern Namibians in exile, their interactions with SWAPO elites in exile, and the intense international focus before independence on preparing SWAPO to rule Namibia. This omission is significant, since elite Namibians in exile were major participants in the conversations about education, hard work, and the fruits of liberation that have spilled over into contemporary Namibian discussions of the SWAPO state's effectiveness.

Another omission concerns gender. Fumanti writes that he focuses on young elite males because of his position as a male field researcher and the kinds of critiques that male youths in contemporary Kavango apply to the liberation elite. One wonders, though, how the subjectivities of young elite women differ from their male counterparts', especially in the Kavango regions, with their examples of colonial-era female traditional leaders and teachers and the prominent current role of women from the liberation-era intelligentsia in education and government.

Nonetheless, the lively moral terrain of Rundu's postcolonial politics provides arguments against Afro-pessimism in Namibia. Fumanti also advances Africanist conversations on African moralities and elite succession by showing that ascendant elites form their moralities by gazing back across generations and intragenerational divides. Fumanti demonstrates

the complex moral agency of elites old and new in northeastern Namibia with a thorough, energetic analysis that is a joy to read.

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Brent McCusker, William G. Moseley, and Maano Ramutsindela. *Land Reform in South Africa: An Uneven Transformation*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. ix + 214 pp. References. Index. \$78.00. Cloth. ISBN: 9781442207165.

Land reform in South Africa has been something of a puzzle for analysts since the heady days when the Restitution of Land Rights Act was passed to a standing ovation in the country's first democratic Parliament in November 1994. In part this is because of the dispiriting gaps between popular expectations and state promises, on the one hand, and implementation and outcomes on the other. Most commentators agree that some form of land reform is required and that current state programs falling under this heading are, at best, stalled, but there is little consensus on the scope of land reform, why current efforts are falling short, and perhaps more fundamentally, what weight to assign to rural land redistribution in a country where almost two-thirds of the population is urban and the primary demands are for jobs, housing, and services, rather than farmland.

Thus any new book that promises fresh insights on the "uneven transformation" signaled in the title is to be welcomed. The volume under review is a collaborative effort by three geographers who stress the importance of a spatial understanding of the land question as it has unfolded historically in South Africa, and propose two concepts as key for advancing the analysis: "hegemony" and "uneven development" (5). The latter took a particular form in twentieth-century South Africa as a result of the race-based spatial engineering that resulted in the native reserves of the segregationist era, followed by the forced population removals and consolidation of the bantustans in the apartheid era.

The authors are right to emphasize the significance of this racist spatial legacy in both animating and constraining postapartheid land reform. Also welcome is their emphasis on the need to address urban and rural land issues as interrelated and their inclusion of urbanizing dynamics within the former bantustans in their frame (although they are not the first to make these points). Less clear, however, is what the struggles for "political, economic, cultural and . . . spatial hegemonies" (54) that they emphasize have been about, or how "hegemony" is operating in and through (or despite?) land reform in the present, and to what end. The authors claim that they are "fill[ing] the gap" in existing analyses, and they criticize other scholarship for its "insufficient historical and theoretical reference," with "debates