

continent, a point the author concedes when he notes that ‘Colonialism in Africa brought new religions with it, fundamentally changing the African ways of life. Islam and Christianity each affected African societies’ (p. 59). In neighbouring Ghana, where I originate, Iheanacho (2014) provides a fascinating account of the country’s first missionary, Theophilus Herman Kofi Opoku (1842–1913). The way in which he was introduced to Christianity, before colonialism by the way, and eventually became a missionary cannot be said to have been non-interventionist, popular and democratic and yet, here we are today, in a country that is overwhelmingly Christian. Indeed, Ghana is one of the only two countries in the world, in the company of Georgia, where its younger population is more religious than its older population (Pew Research Center 2018). In contemporary Ghana, being Christian is in many ways the norm. So, it may well be that the 2013 family bill in Ivory Coast was devoid of public – read Christian and Islamic – interventions, but that makes it no less interventionist, elitist and undemocratic as it would have been if the perspectives of religious organisations were taken into account. The fact is that the religious beliefs held by contemporary francophone West Africans were initially imposed on them in non-democratic ways. In that respect then, the origins of these religious beliefs are similar to the origins of contemporary ideas about family espoused in the 2013 bill; both were imposed as acts of hegemonic modernity. As my Francophone readers will well understand then, *plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose*.

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**Women and Power in Africa: aspiring, campaigning, and governing** by LEONARDO R. ARRIOLA, MARTHA C. JOHNSON, and MELANIE L. PHILLIPS  
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Executed in the framework of some of the foremost scholarship in the fields of comparative politics and women’s studies, *Women and Power in Africa* mobilizes empirical

case studies of eight African countries to illuminate the vital questions of how and why African women access political power, and what they do with it. The book transcends the much-celebrated statistics that (rightly) position many African nations at the top of the global league tables on women's political representation. Instead, this edited book spotlights and explains the sharp intra-regional variations in the numerical representation of women in politics, and the arduous journeys African women in different political contexts travel to gain political office and to substantively impact policy. Arriola, Johnson and Phillips bring to bear the tremendous intergenerational expertise of eleven competent scholars to proffer important comparative insights. They test several long-standing theories on women's political participation with empirical findings from Africa. The studies account for patterns of voting behaviour affecting women politicians, theorises the complex relationship between individual and institutional dynamics shaping African women's access to political power and interweaves specificities of the sociocultural contexts throughout, the latter an undersold achievement in the book. Scholars, graduate students and politicians will find this theoretically sophisticated, methodologically plural and expertly researched book of immense value for its broad effort at comparative analysis informed by case-study nuance and detail.

*Women and Power in Africa* centres democracy as both an explanatory variable and as a goal for women's political inclusion; it does not explicitly question the assumption that western liberal democracy is ideal for African women's pursuit of political power. It thereby situates this study within a long tradition of comparative politics and African Studies literature preoccupied (perhaps excessively so) with the mechanics and mechanisms of liberal democratic progress (and regress) in western and African nations. Thus, the nine-chapter book is organised around the electoral cycle, privileging the classic, minimalist and formalistic Schumpeterian conception of democracy as elections, granted that the book editors acknowledge the relevance of a fuller notion of democracy (see p. 2). Following the electoral cycle approach, part I addresses how women enter electoral politics and secure a spot on the ballot, and flags impostor syndrome, prohibitive financial cost of candidacy, gendered violence, 'the politics of insult' (p. 72) and true decentralization, as common deterrents to women's entry. Part II interrogates how women campaign and try to win elections, and wealth again emerges, along with 'ethnicized sexism' (p. 118), and media support as important in dis/favouring women. Part III explores how elected women fulfil expectations of substantive representation, showing the impact of the electoral system on women's legislative mobilization, and confirming the veracity of the critical mass theory. Theoretically rich introduction and conclusion chapters effectively frame the book's key arguments and unfinished work. Countries covered include Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Uganda and Zambia. The chapters are incredibly well-organised, engagingly narrated and uniformly structured, attesting to the skillfulness, rigor and meticulousness of the authors and the thoroughness of the book editors.

Summatively, the chapters empirically confirm what is known about women and power in Africa. The frequent conclusion throughout is that the factors influencing women's access to power in Africa diverge significantly from the European and American contexts. This signals to scholars the imperative to look beyond the predominant hegemonic literature to context-specific studies of African women that emancipates African women's studies from wholesale borrowing of concepts and theories from the global North. While most chapters in this book consciously

included studies by Africans on the continent, there is a sizeable library of unexplored work that exists at the very locations where fieldwork was conducted, and which could have tipped the anchoring literature further away from the predominantly western comparisons that were made. While outside the hegemonic western archives, methodological protocols and citation traditions, these African archives of knowledge are equally authoritative, and have even a lot more to teach us about African women and power.

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