

remember and others dance to forget. Music ‘becomes once more an object of philosophical speculation and a locus of exploration of the soul’s mysteries’ (p. 99). Even success in the west does not negate the hunger for community and for reconnection with tradition. Yet the frantic pace of contemporary life ensures that traditions themselves are in flux, hence the delicious irony of existential engagement with new traditions. Monga succeeds in capturing the humanity of Africans at home and abroad, deploying varieties of nihilistic strategies that simultaneously embody their psychology, language, religion, philosophy and culture. There is an ordinariness to these actions that would only seem exotic to the lazy.

Monga is clear-eyed in highlighting the incompetence, corruption, or civilian and official idiocy encountered in Africa as everywhere else. His analysis succeeds by walking a fine line between neither condoning nor fetishising these aspects of Africa. It is the ordinary responses to life’s absurdities that are instructive. An organic and implicit philosophy emerges, in essence a philosophy without philosophers since the practitioners feel no urge to offer any analysis. Monga’s insight is unlikely to win over the partisans of some of the best-known African philosophers, such as Kwasi Wiredu, Paulin Hountondji, H. Odera Oruka, Peter Bodunrin and D.A. Masolo who insist on systematic explication as a necessary condition for any philosophy. All factions should agree that the nihilistic postures invite reflection on the perennial philosophical question of what constitutes appearance and reality in Africa today.

Some readers may quibble about whether Monga oversells the talent of Lokua Kanza, or is unduly optimistic about African beauty standards being no longer tethered to western fashion capitals. Hyperbole and understatement are themselves tools for meaning-making. Any observers confounded by Africa may be looking in the wrong places for meaning. Monga’s vignettes and reflections should help shift the point of view. In the introduction he says about Kekem, a small town in Cameroon, ‘despite the beauty of the geography, the place is aggressively dreary. Amazing that everyone there isn’t depressed’ (p. 5). Making sense of Kekem is the key to making sense of Africa today.

SAM O. IMBO  
*Hamline University*

**Social Mobilisation and the Ebola Virus Disease in Liberia** by JOHN PERRY & T. DEBEY SAYNDEE

Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2017. Pp. 110. £37.95 (hbk).

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Rather than solely analysing how social mobilisation brought an end to the Liberian Ebola outbreak, this book gives an overview of Liberia’s (pre)war and Ebola history, Ebola’s legacies, lessons learnt, and the unintended consequences of efforts to halt the virus. The outbreak was aggravated by inadequate health facilities, Ebola hoax rumours, widespread political distrust, cultural practices and a global top-down response that disrespected people’s wishes

and knowledge. The authors go on to contextualise Ebola in Liberia's wider historic context of war and underdevelopment and mention its global connections to natural resource exploitation and pressures from international financial institutions. Yet while Liberia's settler and war years are extensively explored, the post-war years are only briefly touched upon and a discussion of historic social mobilisation efforts – meaningful for the book's intended purpose – remain unexplored. Chapter 4 provides the book's most extensive account of social mobilisation: community's self-quarantining, surveillance efforts, and acceptance of safe burials were efficient while government-imposed quarantines were detrimental. The rapid spread of Ebola in slum areas revealed Liberia's poor infrastructure and socioeconomic inequalities. The authors conclude that local behaviours were rational rather than 'exotic' and that international responses will not be able to halt viral spreads unless they integrate communities and their contexts. Ebola's legacies include thousands of 'Ebola orphans,' undocumented babies born during the outbreak, survivors' continued ostracism and health problems, and health workers' PTSD. Similarly, efforts to halt Ebola brought about numerous unintended consequences: flight bans caused increases in food prices and health equipment shortages which in turn caused health workers' deaths; disrupted health facilities made treatments and vaccines of other diseases unavailable causing malaria, HIV/AIDS and (pre)natal deaths and the potential spread of measles; prohibitions of large group gatherings collapsed Liberia's agricultural labour system (*kuu*), disrupted harvesting, and declined yield; teenage pregnancies rose as girls were forced into sexual exploitative labour due to losing their safety networks and government's closure of schools; and border closures led to female traders' financial losses. To achieve health security and improve responses to future epidemics, the authors assemble various existing suggestions: to improve local health facilities, surveillance, and educational technologies to build knowledge; to speed up vaccines' and treatments' trial processes; to ensure international support in overwhelmed affected countries; to increase political trust; and to reform the WHO and increase its funding to ensure rapid responses.

Since the book is largely based on secondary sources, UN and WHO reports, Liberian and global newspaper articles; many academics might crave academic theories, a more in-depth analysis of social mobilisation efforts, and rigorous academic referencing. As a political ethnographer, I would have liked to read more about the authors' personal social mobilisation experiences through their briefly mentioned Ebola response engagement in a Liberian community. In the emerging literature on Ebola, this is a convenient summary of the Ebola outbreak and its context, legacies and lessons learnt that will be useful for newcomers to Liberia and Ebola. Particularly policymakers, interested in learning about the far-reaching impacts of viral outbreaks and efforts to halt them, would benefit from this book's accessible style.

Theresa Ammann  
Aarhus University