

indigeneity claims. But he is unaware that the judgment applies only to the specific litigants and not Kua as a whole; furthermore, paragraph 169.1 states that ‘this judgment does not finally resolve the dispute between the parties but merely refers them back to the negotiating table’. Despite Tomaselli’s approval of intervention by Survival International, the High Court opined that this had damaged Kua credibility, while a Kua author, Kuela Kiema, reports that SI’s involvement led to the collapse of the legal team, leaving the Kua without qualified representation in court. The case is in fact a cautionary tale about the limits of autoethnography when peoples’ lives and livelihoods take precedence over the enactment of self.

The book is poorly edited with many incorrect or omitted citations and references. There are also many misspellings (Berdenkamp rather than Bredekamp, p. 80) and errors, among the more egregious of which is attributing the Herero place name, Otjozondjupa, to Jhul’hoansi (p. 20).

EDWARD WILMSEN
University of Edinburgh

THE RISE OF A GOLD COAST KINGDOM

Power and State Formation in West Africa: Appolonia from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century. By Pierluigi Valsecchi, trans. Allan Cameron.

New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Pp. xi+317. £55, hardback (ISBN: 9780230117761).

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Key Words: Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, kingdoms and states, kinship, precolonial.

As historians of Africa have focused their attentions on the colonial period in recent decades, monographs dealing with precolonial societies have become rare. It is uncommon these days to find a historian who is willing and able to tackle the challenges of precolonial research which often requires an interdisciplinary toolkit for managing unconventional sources. Recent scholarship has developed a much more nuanced understanding of the relationship between colonizer and colonized, but we have drifted away from trying to explain the equally complex nuances of culture and power in the precolonial period. Pierluigi Valsecchi’s book defies this trend and reminds us of the rich work that remains to be done on precolonial African societies and the ways in which they changed over time prior to the modern period. *Power and State Formation in West Africa*, first published in Italian in 2002 under the title *I signori di Appolonia*, provides the first fine-grained analysis of how the polity that came to be known as the Kingdom of Appolonia developed out of a complex set of local, regional, and global processes of change. It is a major contribution to the history of the south-western region of the Akan-speaking area (modern Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire) during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, and to the precolonial history of state formation in Africa in general.

Valsecchi draws on an impressive array of archival sources in France, Portugal, the Netherlands, the UK, Italy, Ghana, and Cote d’Ivoire, as well as oral traditions

and oral interviews among Nzema communities, to construct a comprehensive portrait of social, political, cultural, and economic life in this region over three centuries. The book consists of an introduction and eight short chapters plus seventy pages of detailed endnotes. Valsecchi's thorough analysis of the available sources for the study of this time and place is a major contribution of the book. The first three chapters present a detailed analysis of what the available sources tell – and what they do not tell – about the African population of the Nzema area during the sixteenth century. Chapters Four and Five describe local and regional changes during the seventeenth century and expand upon Ray Kea's 1992 study of the changing settlement patterns and commercial systems on the seventeenth century Gold Coast, the argument of which Valsecchi generally seems to support. Chapters Six through Eight introduce and develop the argument about the eighteenth-century emergence of the Kingdom of Appolonia itself. These chapters engage with the histories of the Nzema's neighbors, particularly Sanwi, Aowin, Wassa, and Asante, and show how European trade and political changes in the hinterland contributed to social and political changes in the Nzema area.

When Valsecchi tells the story of the actual founding of the Kingdom of Appolonia by the four sons of Ano Bile (*Annubbrie*, *Annubrue*) in Chapters Seven and Eight, he draws on a rich description of the many layers and sinews of interconnection that made up Nzema society that he has laid out in the previous chapters. He is therefore able to show how the emergence of a new class of big men and the *Maanle* (state/kingdom) they created were the result of a complex amalgam of both internal and external processes of change. The rise of Appolonia followed the regional trend of militarization and centralization of political and economic power that coincided with the expansion of the transatlantic slave trade, as typified by Asante. The expansion of credit and lending practices in eighteenth-century Nzema and its importance to the emergence of new big men is also a familiar feature of state formation in Africa during the era of the slave trade. But the Kingdom of Appolonia also embodied a unique set of local circumstances and innovations that have never before been explained. Valsecchi shows how the kingdom evolved out of changes in kinship networks such as the *mbusua* (matriclan) and patrilineal filiations, as well as changes in spiritual practices like oath-taking, and new or expanded patron-client relationships. These local cultural aspects of eighteenth-century Appolonia can only be understood within the longer historical framework of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with which Valsecchi begins the book.

Readers interested in contextualizing Nzema within the broader framework of the Atlantic World, or in comparing Nzema with other precolonial African states may be frustrated by the relatively narrow geographical scope of this study. The frame of analysis only occasionally broadens beyond Nzema to include the greater Akan world. The early chapters introduce dozens of place names that will be unfamiliar to all but a very few readers who have experience with the places and peoples of south-western Ghana and south-eastern Cote d'Ivoire. The absence of any discussion of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the book's introduction signals that the author views that aspect of Gold Coast history as peripheral to the story he wants to tell. The presence of European traders and their interests in the Gold Coast is discussed only to the extent that it is necessary to the central narrative about change in the Nzema area.

Nevertheless, this study fills an important gap in the historiography of Akan-speaking people, of the Gold Coast and Ghana, and of precolonial Africa in general. It will be useful to scholars working in all of these fields and to historical anthropologists.

REBECCA SHUMWAY
Carnegie Mellon University

AN INTRIGUING MEDICAL COMPENDIUM

Livre de la guérison des maladies externes et internes affectant les corps. 3 vols. By Ahmad al-Raqqādi al-Kuntī. Edited by Floréal Sanaugustin.

Lyon, France: ENS Éditions, 2011. Pp. xiv+448. €15 each,

paperback (ISBN 978-2-84788-308-4; 978-2-84788-315-2; 978-2-84788-327-5).

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Key Words: West Africa, health, Islam, sexuality, text editions.

Al-Kuntī (d. 1096/1684 or 1116/1704) was an authority in the Qadariyya Sufi order who directed a *zawiya* in Arawan, north of Timbuktu, and a prominent representative of the Kunta family, which has continued to produce important scholars until today (v. 2, iv). The work, *The Book on Curing the External and Internal Illnesses to which the Body is Exposed*, is an intriguing combination of letter magic, prayers, Galenic humoral medicine, and relevant Prophetic traditions. As such it is not so much a work of Prophetic Medicine (v. 1, iv), as it is an encyclopedic compendium of medicine that offers a general audience a holistic approach to physical, mental, spiritual, and even political afflictions.

The structure of the text is somewhat unclear, as al-Kuntī states at the outset that he will divide it into four chapters – the first of which will deal with the medical benefits of plants, the second with those of metals. But he then proceeds without describing the remaining two, dealing with the curative benefits of the names of God, Qur’anic verses and prayers (v. 1, 13). One senses that the edition would have benefitted from consultation of another copy of the manuscript; the text is at times repetitive and some pages (including the conclusion) are missing.

Despite these minor frustrations, this is rich material. The first volume is largely composed of a discussion of the medical benefits of the recitation of specific Qur’anic *ayas* or *suras*. A good example of the types of cures proposed is the expansive description of how to expel a malevolent humor or *jinn* — the conflation is telling — by writing Surat al-Ra’d 8–9 on a copper basin, mixing honey, the juice of an onion, white grape pulp, and celery juice, taking the afflicted to a place with greenery, and at daybreak having them drink the mixture from the bowl after having cleaned it with rainwater (v. 1, 45). The benefits of writing go beyond Qur’anic quotations, as letters themselves have powerful properties when combined properly and linked to the elements. When an individual organ is afflicted, the scholar knowledgeable in spiritual medicine can separate the letters that spell the organ’s name, identify the elements with which they are affiliated, mix these together and make a remedy out of them. Strikingly, letter magic and prayers can protect