

Margaret Thatcher had an outsized impact on the economic and political discourse coming from the West during the 1980s. But for Burkina Faso, France's socialist President François Mitterand embodied Western intervention in Africa. When Mitterand was elected in 1981, Peterson explains, there was much overlap between his and Sankara's political positions. Yet by 1983, 'the Mitterand government was forced into an abrupt change of course, embracing Thatcherite austerity measures that seemed to disavow Mitterand's entire program' (82). On the opposite end of the spectrum of political engagement, Sankara's relationship with Libya's Muammar Qaddafi unsettled Western powers and served as a source of military support for Burkina Faso against threats from neighboring countries, a basis for Sankara to claim political independence in foreign affairs, and he hoped, economic assistance. 'Libya would support Sankara's seizure of power through the provisioning of arms, but Sankara would also denounce Libyan intervention in Chad and rebuff Qaddafi's efforts to expand Libyan influence in Burkina Faso' (96).

I found Peterson's narrative of Sankara's efforts to forge a radical foreign policy and strengthen diplomatic ties with nations of the Global South fascinating, but Peterson's rapid tour through these events lacked clarity at times. It would have been more productive if he had widened his analytical aperture to position Sankara as a window into the decade's changing political landscape, in order better to display for his readers how unique and tenuous the final bursts of revolutionary politics in the Global South were, from Grenada, to Nicaragua, Jamaica, and Burkina Faso, during the last decade of the Cold War. I wanted to know more about Sankara's relationships with the leaders of these countries, particularly Grenada's Maurice Bishop and Ghana's Rawlings. They and Sankara were together part of the last generation of truly revolutionary anti-imperialists.

That said, Peterson's impressive book will be a foundational text for future studies of Africa during the late Cold War and the promise and perils of revolutionary change. Peterson has made a welcome and overdue contribution to the limited scholarship on Sankara and Burkina Faso, with a text that is in equal parts biography of Sankara and of Burkina Faso during the 1970s and 1980s. *Thomas Sankara: A Revolutionary in Cold War Africa* is an outstanding example of how a skilled historian can explore a region's history through the biography of one remarkable individual.

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Epistemology and History in Central Ghana

Our Own Way in this Part of the World: Biography of an African Community, Culture and Nation

By Kwasi Konadu. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020. Pp. 328. \$104.95, hardcover (ISBN: 9781478004165); \$27.95, paperback (ISBN: 9781478004783); \$27.95, e-book (ISBN: 9781478005363).

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Kwasi Konadu's rich and challenging work begins with a grainy VHS recording of a funeral. Funeral videos are common in Ghana, but are usually reserved for prominent business persons or

politicians. This one was different. It was the wakekeeping for Kofi Dɔ̀nkɔ (b. approx. 1914, d. 1995), a pillar of the community of Takyiman, in the Bono-speaking region of central Ghana. Dɔ̀nkɔ was a polymath: a blacksmith who harnessed the magical powers of fire and steel, a farmer who grew cocoa as a cash crop, and a healer with an encyclopedic knowledge of the local herbaria. The surprising reverence given to Dɔ̀nkɔ inspired Konadu to conduct years of research on his place within the ritual complex of the Takyiman, the cocoa economy, the imposition of Asante rule, the colonial era, and the rise of Islam and Christianity in the region, and so much else. The result is a book that Konadu deems a ‘communography’ (8), an effort to decenter ethnicity, colony, and nation in favor of local notions of place and time. Dɔ̀nkɔ’s voice is at the center of the story, telling us how he, and the people around him: ‘go about things in our own way in this part of the world’ (26).

Konadu begins the book with a discussion of the “parcels” of cosmic life’ (deities, water spirits, witches, mysterious dwarves, and more) that influence life around the Tano Valley, where speakers of the Bono Akan dialect founded their polity (27). Kofi Dɔ̀nkɔ was a descendent of the priestly order that harnessed these forces through ritual, forging Takyiman together as an urban unit. With this starting point, Konadu’s analysis expresses much more than the formation of a political entity: he sets out to excavate the generations of hard work that established Bono place and identity, in a religious, social, and cultural sense.

Over centuries, the Bono polity and the Tano religious complex developed into a robust kingdom, but due to succession disputes, Takyiman and its outlying villages were weakened militarily. By the mid-eighteenth century, Bono was divided and occupied by the Asante kingdom, though Konadu contends that Tano as a spiritual entity was never conquered. As such, a distinct Bono identity survived, spurring a rebellion against Asante in the late nineteenth century, and a rebirth for the kingdom.

As Konadu moves into the twentieth century and Gold Coast colonial period, the pace of the book quickens. Takyiman changed rapidly from an agrarian rainforest economy to a cash crop economy, producing gold, rubber, and cocoa for the colonial market, as well as foodstuffs for a growing Gold Coast population. The result was increasing environmental damage from mining, and a new era of endemic malaria caused by the felling of the rainforest for cash crops. Konadu demonstrates how, under British rule, traditional sanitary controls were wrested away from chiefs and priests, leading to spiritual, health, and social disorder in the city. Colonial interventions were followed by religious upheaval. Konadu again disrupts traditional narratives here, challenging Margaret Field’s 1950s exoticization of witch-fighting migrant deities (*aobsommerafɔ̀*) as the result of rising wealth from cocoa farming, by demonstrating how new gods were a symptom of the ‘malignant virus’ of indirect rule and the social dislocation caused by land redistribution (126).¹ He also describes how, in the early twentieth century, Takyiman ritualists and political leaders recognized the threat of Christianity and joined together to scare catechists away with rituals involving the burial of charms, the pouring of libation, and the firing of guns at the mission station (177). The balance of power between church worship and local religion changed by the 1970s, when, Konadu suggests, a new type of Pentecostalism began to ravage the ‘psychic landscape of the populace’ (174). Meanwhile, Kofi Dɔ̀nkɔ remained engaged in local struggles for power, getting involved in the cocoa economy for profit, and building medical practices to deal with the rise in illnesses in the city. The result was a transformation of the process of ritual healing from beyond the blacksmith complex into an era of community clinical care. All of these local events, as Konadu demonstrates, were as significant as any metanarrative imposed from beyond.

One major twentieth century event that challenges Konadu’s otherwise locally generated narrative was the arrival of Dennis Warren, a white American graduate student from the University of Indiana. Warren came to the region in the 1970s, seeking out the ‘venerated Bono priest-healer’ (167) Kofi Dɔ̀nkɔ at his clinic in Tunsuase. At this point in Konadu’s book, the reading gets a

¹M. J. Field, *Search for Security: An Ethno-Psychiatric Study of Rural Ghana* (London, 1960), 112 and 117.

bit awkward. The author snaps that Warren was able to ‘profit from Kofi Dɔ̀nkɔ̀’s accrued knowledge and reputation’ (14) by writing several books based on Dɔ̀nkɔ̀’s lexica of herbal remedies. Konadu’s language then becomes checkered with commentary about Warren’s ‘interracial’ marriage (166), and the implication that some of the records of Dɔ̀nkɔ̀’s interaction with Warren went purposely missing (172). There is evident bitterness here, as Konadu uses Warren’s work to argue that Dɔ̀nkɔ̀, like other citizens of the newly independent nation of Ghana, was ‘still exposed to the exploits of capitalists, neocolonialists, and the coming-of-age-of African Studies’ (165). Such complications aside, the section on Warren appropriately problematizes the harvesting of anthropological knowledge in the postcolony. It is also worth noting that the Dɔ̀nkɔ̀/Warren encounter, despite what might have been waylaid, did leave a trove of field notes that enabled Konadu to provide a beautiful reflection on Kofi Dɔ̀nkɔ̀’s daily healing activities. The Dɔ̀nkɔ̀/Warren records bear witness to the modest blacksmith as someone in full control of his clinical practice and spiritual world, healing a wide array of illnesses in patients from Takyiman and abroad.

There is no getting around the intellectual intensity that the author has invested into *Our Own Way in this Part of the World*. There are some side arguments going on that I can’t cover here, and perhaps wouldn’t be able to even if I tried. And at times, the book gets dense, making it a tough ethnographic slog in parts, especially when the author drags the reader a bit too far into the weeds of everyday Bono life. But there are also some lovely passages too, such as when Konadu thoughtfully suggests that the caricature of ‘fetishism’ might be reframed as a ‘broader agreement between the spiritual forces of nature and the world created by human culture’ (92). The most important thing is that Konadu’s thesis holds. Kofi Dɔ̀nkɔ̀ represents the type of bounded personhood that ‘stretched across two empires, national borders, ecologies, politics, and racial and religious ideologies, signaling a non-national decolonized possibility’ (232). By revealing Dɔ̀nkɔ̀’s story, Konadu has accomplished something innovative, a book worth reading for anyone who wants to challenge themselves to rethink the field of African Studies.

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African Art in an Imperial Center

Metropolitan Fetish: African Sculpture and the Imperial French Invention of Primitive Art

By John Warne Monroe. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019. Pp. 368. \$45.00, hardcover (ISBN: 9781501736353); \$29.99, e-book (ISBN: 9781501736377).

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Metropolitan Fetish tells the story of the circulation, study, display, and sale of African art in Paris. The book focuses on the interwar period during which, Monroe argues, ‘Paris was both an imperial capital and the center of the Western art world’ (15). Combining a history of the academic and intellectual interest in African art in France with the (overlapping) history of its commercial and