

likely in light of the examples Nast gives of non-Muslim kingdoms, such as Buganda and Dahomey, where the Islamic legal distinction between wives and concubines did not operate. If Nast is correct about the relation between royal women and grain taxation in early Kano, this raises questions about the antiquity of natalist ideology in Africa, and whether the extremes of polygyny often seen immediately preceding colonialism were effects of the slave trade, or part of an earlier culture complex involving female and agricultural fertility.

The claim that grain fertility and human, especially female, sexual fertility were linked in Kano ideology will not surprise anyone familiar with ancient Near Eastern mythology and the history of fertility cults there. That Chadic language cultures in general are grain subsistence societies suggests that the extension of this paradigm to other African societies, especially those whose subsistence is based on tuber crops such as yams, is problematic and cannot be done uncritically. It is well to remember the extent to which our concepts of 'Africa' and 'black Africa' are our mental constructs and not necessarily based on actual reality.

The importance of interiority in the analysis used here also suggests that the author could have benefited from some of the insights of George Lakoff into how humans in general conceptualize interiority. Such insights are only slowly finding their way around the social sciences, and will inform analysis by others of the important data in Nast's book in the future.

The production of the book could also have been better. In particular there should have been a list of maps and diagrams, and a kinship diagram of the various royal dynasties of Kano. In short, despite a few flaws and shortcomings, this is an important and useful little book that should be of interest to scholars in many fields, both for the data contained in it and for its theoretical analysis.

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JAMES MCDUGALL (ed.), *Nation, Society and Culture in North Africa*. London: Frank Cass (pb – 0 7146 8337 X). 2003, 192 pp.

This collection contains nine diverse essays on aspects of nationhood and culture in countries of the Maghrib – namely, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya – and offers an animated contribution to the study of African society. McDougall's aim is to bring together a 'highly varied array of new research by multinational scholars working on the region', through which the 'lived realities' of North Africans' immediate historical experiences can be independently and collectively understood. Consequently, the chapters are bound primarily by geographical empiricism rather than by a common theoretical or methodological thread. The concepts of 'nation' and 'identity' are posited as tools through which to understand the empirical: readers are encouraged to consider not *what* these concepts are but *how they work* in each of the nine cases presented. The editor, quoting from a paper delivered at a 2001 workshop on the region, directs us to 'abandon the nation as a category of analysis and treat it, instead, as a category of practice' (p. 3).

Nevertheless, each of the nine substantive chapters (six of which are authored by women) provokes wider theorizing on African nationalism. In the first, Stora draws on forty years of political wrestling between Algeria and Morocco in order to pin down the structural tensions between two states that share the same language, religion and mythologized past. This close analysis of state-driven nationalism is a valuable complement to Gershovich's chapter, which describes

the experiences of Moroccan veterans recruited to the French colonial army and highlights the complex nature of the construction of national loyalties. Baldinetti provides a variation on this theme, suggesting that Libya's sense of nationhood was negotiated in part by informal networks of Libyans in exile; and Silverstein also looks at absentee nationals, arguing that the role of the diaspora is crucial to positive representations of an Algerian nation. Shifting the angle, Moreau discusses North African attitudes towards Turkey during the Maghrib's 'hollow years' (*les années creuses*), the 1920s. Although a significant portion deals with Turkish history, this well-referenced chapter traces the attitude of North Africans to changing power relations, and stresses the importance of wider world politics in the negotiation of national identities.

Kchir-Bendana looks at the role of popular culture in this negotiation, examining how cinematography has contributed to nation building in Tunisia. The author is keen to interrogate the relevant terminology, insisting that *nationalism* is only one expression of a wider national ideology. The concept of *Tunisianité* is explained through analysis of nostalgic and revisionist cinematic representations of language, rural tradition, and members of society. This theme of cultural production returns later in the book when Pieprzak addresses the corporate dimension of national imaging. In her example of a Moroccan art gallery housed within a large private-sector bank, she points to the way in which ideas of the nation can be functional (in this case for a global firm). Reinforcing this conclusion in a very different study, Kozma explains that feminists in Morocco used the liberation struggle in their own fight for equality, resulting in a marked change in the historiography of the Moroccan nation at the end of the twentieth century. In the closing chapter, a historiography of subaltern studies in Algeria, Colonna asserts that core texts on nationhood offer competing representations of Algerian culture and history, and that this reflects a continuing struggle for political unity in the country.

For Franz Fanon, culture after colonialism in Algeria was, 'a set of automatic habits, some traditions of dress and a few broken-down institutions'. This collection reassures us that present-day culture in the region is neither so skeletal nor so static. This is an excellent introduction to this part of Africa, aimed at a wide audience and with interdisciplinary appeal. Although each chapter stands alone, reading the collection as a whole is a good heuristic exercise. A chapter on Mauritania would have been welcome, as would a chapter examining the persistence of pan-Islamic identity, which transcends and is yet secondary to the nation. Further, given the volume of North African poetry and novels, it is intriguing that the emphasis here was on oral narratives. That said, in this worthy contribution to Anglophone studies of North Africa, the editor provokes readers to go looking for more.

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RIK CEYSSSENS, *Le Roi Kanyok au milieu de quatre coins (Mwin Kányòk, màkóók' mànàày)*. Fribourg: Editions Universitaires (pb 0 226 30501 5). 2003, 576 pp.

The sociologist Rik Ceyssens, who has taught and conducted research in the Congo for 30 years, has published a massive and meticulous study of Kanyok society. A Central African people occupying a culturally and historically significant niche in Kasai, the Kanyok link the Luba, Lunda, Songye and Kete