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**Between Exit and Voice:
Informality and the Spaces of Popular Agency**

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Between Exit and Voice: Informality and the Spaces of Popular Agency¹

ILDA LINDELL

Abstract: Recent decades have witnessed deepening processes of informalization and casualization as growing numbers of Africans rely on economic activities outside state regulation, something widely evident in urban areas. Converging multiple dynamics have resulted in new floods of entrants into the informal economy, including a great expansion in self-employment. Juxtaposed to this are the more long-standing informal activities through which popular groups have coped with the lack of formal work opportunities and basic services. Paralleling these trends is, in some contexts, a resurgence of attempts to bring segments of the informal economy under some form of state regulation. This may be interpreted as selective drives towards some kind of formalization, a development that has also gained impetus in international development discourse. These developments confirm that the boundary between what is and is not to be regulated by the state (or between what is and is not considered legitimate economic activity) is a shifting one and constitutes a contested process that involves social struggles and a variety of actors, encompassing both powerful interests and popular forces, including informal and casual workers themselves. This special issue's contributors address the politics involved in and ensuing from processes of informalization/formalization in particular contexts and discuss some of the resulting contradictions, tensions, and conflicts. The authors deviate from the common victimizing views of informal actors by examining varied spaces and forms of popular agency in relation to those processes. The introduction first highlights these issues through a selective discussion of the topics addressed by the papers and then reflects upon the varied forms that agency among informal actors can take along a spectrum that encompasses both strategies of invisibility and visibility, of exit and voice.

Introduction

The last decades have witnessed deepening processes of informalization and casualization in Africa and beyond. Growing numbers of people rely on economic activities occurring beyond state regulation, something that is widely evident in urban areas. Multiple dynamics are converging to drive these trends. The emergence of global production networks and the deregulation of labor conditions are conducive to the casualization and precarization of work in many contexts.² Large firms increasingly make use of casual labor and externalize employment as part of corporate strategies of flexible production. Neoliberal policies of economic liberalization being promoted by international financial institutions across many

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v11/v11i2-3a1.pdf>

countries in the South have often led to large-scale retrenchments and to a decline in formal employment opportunities. This has resulted in new floods of entrants into the informal economy, including a great expansion in self-employment.³ These dynamics have often been juxtaposed to the more long-standing informal activities through which popular groups in many places have coped with the lack of formal work opportunities and basic services.

Parallel to the widespread trends of informalization and casualization, one can discern in some contexts a resurgence of attempts to bring segments of the informal economy under some form of state regulation, which may be interpreted as selective drives towards some kind of formalization. For example, governments devise new ways of taxing supposedly “untaxed” workers in the informal economy; in some places, they also establish partnerships with informal service providers.⁴ The drive for formalization has also gained impetus in international development discourse. For example, Hernando de Soto’s influential book *The Mystery of Capital* argues for the legalization of the assets of the poor and informal workers as the key to prosperity. These developments confirm that the boundary between what is and is not to be regulated by the state (or between what is and is not considered legitimate economic activity) is a shifting one.⁵ The drawing and re-drawing of this boundary is a contested process that involves social struggles and a variety of actors, encompassing both powerful interests and popular forces, including informal and casual workers themselves.⁶

The contributions in this special issue of the *African Studies Quarterly* address the politics involved in and ensuing from processes of informalization/formalization in particular contexts. They discuss some of the contradictions, tensions and conflicts that have emerged in the context of such processes. The papers deviate from the common victimizing views of informal actors by examining varied spaces and forms of popular agency in relation to those processes. The remainder of this short introduction comprises two parts. The first provides some highlights on these issues on the basis of the contributions—this is a selective discussion of the topics addressed by the papers, whose discussions and arguments are much richer and more diverse than what is presented here. The second part reflects upon the varied forms that agency among informal actors can take. It argues that these range between the individual and the collective, along a spectrum that encompasses both strategies of invisibility and visibility, of exit and voice.

The politics of informalization/formalization and popular agency

The growing number of people making a living in the city streets has intensified tensions between these workers and regulatory agents of the state in many places.⁷ Raids and evictions, while far from new, appear to be increasingly frequent in the context of neoliberal urbanization. Cities are further exposed to the pressures and imperatives of international competition while at the same time poverty deepens among large segments of urban populations. In this context, city governments often have become more diligent in their efforts to uphold a modern city image, often through interventions that have a direct impact on the livelihoods of the poor. City beautification measures and clearance exercises multiply across cities in Africa and beyond.⁸ The hosting of an international event may trigger such interventions, as is currently happening in South African cities in preparation for the 2010 World Football Cup. In some cases, such events provide the discursive justification for the implementation of forceful measures, masking other underlying motives.⁹ The large crowds of urban informal workers are often perceived as a source of political instability, and state actors may use various means in an attempt to circumscribe and contain this “threat,” for

example by relocating the self-employed to locations far away from the city center or into restricted areas more amenable to control.

Karen Tranberg Hansen's article well illustrates these mounting tensions and contradictions through her analysis of self-employed youth in Lusaka. She describes how the intersection "between externally driven agendas and local political dynamics" has resulted in "new regimes of spatial regulation and new strategies of urban management" that have exacerbated antagonism between urban authorities and vendors. She shows how access to and control over public space is often at the heart of recurrent conflicts. Local authorities resort to evictions and relocations of vendors into designated markets. But vendors gradually and discretely reoccupy the streets and adapt their sale strategies to the harsher regulatory environment. They also use narratives that serve to "subvert the state's lackluster control efforts." Parallel processes of privatization of the management of city markets, driven by both state and donors, have also triggered violent clashes and riots among marketers. Such privatization processes are not unique to Lusaka and have also caused unrest in some other cities, as has happened in Kampala in recent years.¹⁰ They appear to be part of a strategy to increase local government revenues and to more effectively tax the self-employed.

Relations with regulatory powers are not always or simply antagonistic.¹¹ In the process of implementing some version of New Public Management principles by devolving responsibilities to a range of non-state actors, local governments have in some places come to develop close relations with informal service providers. Local government outsources some of its functions by establishing relationships with such providers.¹² The article by Axel Baudouin and his colleagues discusses such dynamics at work in the waste sector of Addis Ababa. After a long period of having neglected informal waste collectors and regarded them as clandestine, the city authorities decided to establish a "partnership" with a share of the small-scale providers. While the stated aim was to improve the severe waste problem in the city, the authors suggest that more was at stake. Set up in a top-down and authoritarian manner, the "partnership" would also serve to facilitate "political dominance and surveillance" of the activities of formerly independent waste collectors. In the process, non-incorporated informal actors were evicted from their areas of operation and in many cases effectively dispossessed. They adjusted their activities and used informal networks to strategize about how to respond to the government's intervention. Unfair competition from state sponsored actors would give rise to clashes between sponsored and non-sponsored groups. Persistent mistrust would lead many to avoid, rather than collaborate with, the authorities.

A lengthier time perspective further exposes the complex and shifting nature of the relations between informal actors and regulatory powers. In her article, Gracia Clark discusses how the relations between rulers and women marketers have evolved in a West African context, from a remote past to the present. She argues that these relations have shifted through time "between alliance and repression," reflecting economic and political shifts. The attitudes of political elites have oscillated between protecting traders and treating them as scapegoats for national economic problems, where the latter have sometimes justified market demolitions and other hostile measures. Women traders and their market organizations, in turn, have either played the role of political supporters or fiercely resisted rulers' attempts at regulating trade and at intervening in their activities, at different points in history. Such shifts in attitudes and relations have been noticed elsewhere.¹³ They remind us that relations between informal actors and the state are complex, varied, and temporal. The

political subjectivities of informal workers are not fixed, nor are the attitudes of state actors towards them.¹⁴

The remaining articles further widen the view of how informal and casual workers deal with changes in livelihood opportunities and conditions by bringing to light yet other dimensions of their agency. Franco Barchiesi discusses informalization, casualization, and outsourcing in the industries of the East Rand, South Africa. On the basis of the rising unemployment and growing job precariousness, he challenges mainstream understandings of wage labor as the vehicle through which social citizenship and emancipation are to be attained. The common binary opposition between “formal” and “informal” sectors that associate the former with social inclusion and the latter with social exclusion is questioned. Barchiesi advocates the consideration of “forms of social emancipation that transcend an exclusive focus on wage employment.” He argues that “The disarticulation of the working class, in fact, is not merely weakening work-based identities, but also creates new spaces for social agency and contestation.” His focus is on workers’ strategies and discourses and the meanings they attribute to formal and informal kinds of work. He describes the way they aspire to self-employment as a means for emancipation from deplorable work conditions in the industrial sector. In this way, he resonates with existing critiques of “capitalocentric” academic discourses, advanced for example in the work of Gibson-Graham, who also stress the importance of “re-subjectivation”, i.e. transformations in people’s subjectivities of an empowering kind.¹⁵

Jan Theron and Jill Wells and Arthur Jason explicitly address the scope for and forms of collective agency in relation to the casualization and informalization of work. Theron discusses the emergence of a variety of organisations among groups of the self-employed in South Africa. He discusses the prospects and limitations of these organizations through the presentation of a number of empirical cases. He is particularly hopeful about the current upsurge of cooperatives. While not necessarily exercising “political voice,” they are seen as holding potential for the economic empowerment of the self-employed and for instantiating a social economy based on principles of “self-reliance and community solidarity.” Theron’s interpretation stands close to an emerging strand of work that advocates a politics centred on “community economies,” i.e. “economic spaces or networks in which relations of interdependence are democratically negotiated.”¹⁶ The focus in this work is to make visible a variety of alternative economic practices that are not necessarily subservient to the logics of capitalism.

Wells and Jason discuss the increasing informalization and casualization in the construction sector across several cities in Africa and beyond and the implications for collective organizing in the sector. They show how these trends have resulted in a growing complexity of employment relations, which includes the increasing incidence of recruitment through labor agencies. In spite of the work precariousness that these developments involve, the authors see new possibilities for alliance and collaboration between the workers and the labor agencies in pressing large contractors for more advantageous deals and government agencies for public sector contracts. Wells and Jason also document how groups of informal construction workers have come together in Tanzania to form an umbrella organization that lobbies state actors for the interests of these workers. This development can be situated in a wider contemporary trend whereby organizations of informal workers increasingly represent the concerns of their constituencies in the public sphere.¹⁷ A scaling up of organizing, as manifested in the formation of the umbrella organization in Tanzania, is also

occurring elsewhere, with the emergence of federated bodies at the national as well as at the international level.¹⁸

The latter three articles thus identify new spaces for agency as well as emerging possibilities for collaboration, in the context of processes of informalization and casualization – namely, changes in workers’ subjectivities, the resurgence of cooperatives and the social economy, and possibilities for new kinds of alliances. The three articles also discuss the prospects for traditional trade unions to organize workers in the informal economy.¹⁹ A number of activists and researchers advocate for the role of trade unions’ role in this respect. They speak for a “social movement unionism,” whereby trade unions should organize beyond formal wage labor and reach out to informal workers. The articles here express reservations about such a role for trade unions. Wells and Jason suggest that labor recruitment through intermediary agencies makes it difficult for trade unions to reach out to workers in the sub-contracting system. Theron argues that trade unions in South Africa have been slack in responding to casualization and that the self-employed should organize on their own. Barchiesi is very sceptical of a prominent role for trade unions, given the marked weakening of workplace-based identities. In other contexts however, organizing across formal and informal work spheres is already occurring, a situation which thus warrants continued debate on this issue.

The multiple spaces and forms of popular agency

The agency of people in the informal economy has been interpreted in contrasting ways. One long-standing set of interpretations has emphasized individual agency and conceived of the politics of informality in terms of “exit,” invisibility, and avoidance of the state. In the 1980s, a group of political scientists saw the growth of economic informality in Africa as representing a broad societal disengagement from the state.²⁰ In this view, in response to declining state performance in a context of statist economic models, individual economic actors avoided the state and circumvented official channels and state regulations. This “exit option,” Azarya and Chazan stated, supersedes the “voice option” in contexts where the latter is ineffective or impossible.²¹ The consequences of this disengagement, it was argued, were far-reaching in terms of the reach of the state. Across the Atlantic, a similar line of argument was being advanced by de Soto, who celebrated the individual informal entrepreneur for his ability to undermine state regulations.²² Through their informal practices, he argued, people were resisting legal exclusion and instantiating an “invisible revolution.”

Albeit on a different ideological terrain, other scholars have also emphasized individual and “quiet” forms of resistance. James Scott argued that, in the absence of open protest and direct confrontation, political struggle takes the form of a myriad daily practices of resistance, characterized by small-scale individual actions.²³ Such practices constitute disguised and deliberately concealed resistance, rather than public claims and overt resistance. Asef Bayat’s similar approach to “the politics of informal people” in the South stresses how they, through their individual everyday actions, not only resist but also gradually conquer new space from dominant groups and undermine the capacity of the state to exercise surveillance.²⁴ He calls it a “quiet encroachment of the ordinary,” to refer to “the silent, protracted, but pervasive advancement of ordinary people in relation to the propertied and the powerful.”²⁵ This is “not a politics of protest”, he claims, “but of redress,” that is, one that avoids overt collective demands and large-scale mobilization.²⁶ Informal

actors proceed discretely and unnoticed to address immediate material needs; they seek invisibility and autonomy from state discipline and regulations. This quiet and atomized action is depicted as being the form of politics characteristic of people in the informal economy, who are said to lack the capacity to sustain their own organizations with a clear leadership and ideology. This long-standing emphasis on everyday and individual forms of resistance has inspired empirical work on informality.²⁷ Notions of invisibility and everyday forms of social agency are also central in more recent work. AbdouMaliq Simone stresses the importance of “new forms of livelihood and sociality” in urban Africa, whereby people and resources are “assembled in ways that deflect publicity, scrutiny, and comparison.”²⁸ From this point of view, people handle the deepening uncertainty of urban living through ephemeral actions and diffuse forms of social collaboration that take place outside of formal associations. “Africans must operate through forms of the spectral to proffer some counter-reality,” it is argued.²⁹ Everyday social practices and networks are deliberately masked, dissimulated and made opaque, in ways that render them illegible to and ungovernable by the state. Thus, people may resist government decisions by collaborating “in ‘silent’ but powerful ways.”³⁰

A different and emerging body of work has emphasized the presence and significance of collective forms of struggle among people in the informal economy and disadvantaged groups. Chen et al. (2007) discuss various kinds of membership-based organizations among the poor across many different contexts in the South and how such organizations often play a role both in improving conditions among poor workers and in claiming rights.³¹ Fernández-Kelly (2006) and her associates, in a collection with the suggestive title *Out of the Shadows*, contest the idea that informal workers strive for keeping a low profile or refrain from overt complaint and from negotiation with the state.³² Drawing on cases from Latin America, they examine a range of collective mobilizations and the complex and varied forms in which informals engage with state actors—rather than disengaging from or avoiding it—ranging from confrontation, negotiation and alliance. A forthcoming anthology, *Africa’s Informal Workers: Collective Agency, Alliances and Transnational Organizing in Urban Africa*, addresses the politics of informality in sub-Saharan Africa from the vantage point of collective organizing in the informal economy.³³ It discusses the growing number of associations through which informal workers develop collective visions and sometimes challenge state discourses and become visible as political actors. The book also addresses how some of these associations relate to other organized actors (particularly trade unions) as well as participate in international networks of organizations of informal workers. The contributions reveal both the achievements and the limitations of these initiatives. As Kate Meagher, one of the contributors, expresses, even if manifestations of “voice” are multiplying, for many informal workers, “informal political voice has not yet replaced the politics of exit.”³⁴

On the basis of the above discussion, it can be said that interpretations of the politics and agency of informal people have either tended to focus on individual everyday practices and invisible or quiet forms of resistance, or conversely, to emphasize collective mobilization and organizing initiatives among informal workers.³⁵ It is thus worth making the point that agency among informal and casual workers can assume multiple and varied forms. “Resistance” more generally has occasionally been conceived in such a broad manner, as ranging from small acts to larger forms of social organisation such as social movements; as encompassing both subtle moves and open confrontation.³⁶ In a similar vein, in Edgar Pieterse’s conceptualization of urban politics in the South, “insurgent citizenship”

can manifest itself through a varied range of transgressive practices.³⁷ He stresses the existence of “multiple ... and overlapping spaces of political practices in the city,” ranging from individual everyday practices of circumvention to collectively organized forms.³⁸ This is a good starting point for a broader approach to the agency of informal workers.

While the contributions in this special issue interpret the agency of informal workers in diverse and contrasting ways, taken together they provide a broader picture and illustrations of the diverse forms that such agency can take, in relation to processes of informalization/formalization. The articles by Hansen and by Baudouin and his associates illustrate how the urban self-employed have gradually taken over public space or come to dominate the waste sector, mainly on the basis of their individual daily practices—including tactics of avoidance of the state in the latter case. In both cases, while the authors see few signs of stable collective organization, they report how these actors occasionally resort to vehement collective manifestations in the form of riots and clashes, in response to various state interventions that threatened their livelihoods. Barchiesi also sees little scope for collective organization on the basis of work related identities in the context of processes of casualization. Rather, he focuses his attention on the subjectivities and discourses of individual workers and the ways in which they perceive self-employment as an opportunity “exit” the from capitalist production process. The other articles illustrate various kinds of collective organization in the informal economy. Clark analyzes market women organizations in a West African setting and the critical role played by their leaders in recurrent negotiations and interactions with regulatory authorities through history. Both strategies of engagement and disengagement are part of this history. Theron and Wells and Jason discuss the possibilities for collective organization—in the first case, the emergence of worker cooperatives, and in the second, the creation of an umbrella worker organization who engages with the state and various other actors.

An open and embracing approach to the multiple forms of agency of informal workers can bring to light the complexity and diversity of their political practices. It moves away from polarized views that restrict the field of vision to either manifestations of voice or of exit. Indeed, individual and collective forms of agency need not be seen as opposed or exclusive of each other. Rather, one can see them in the context of a broader spectrum, a continuum: at one end, individual circumventing practices dominate; at the other end, one finds collective interest groups with articulate visions; in between, there is a vast field of intermediate forms (the diffuse social networks, different forms of collaboration and cooperative work, etc). In this continuum there are no clear-cut divisions or fixed positions, as individuals and groups move along it, in no predetermined direction. Their insurgent practices may evolve from one form into another, from the individual to the collective and back again. They may seek engagement with regulatory powers only to later withdraw into the shadows and vice versa. Different modes of agency may dominate at different points in time, as political practices are temporal and influenced (though not determined) by the particular societal and political contexts in which they occur. But there is no reason to assume a linear progression, for example from individual atomized practices towards collective ones, given the inherent indeterminacy of such practices.

One should consider the possible coexistence of different modes of social agency, as individual informal workers may engage in both individual and collective forms of action. In their relations to the regulatory powers of the state, informal workers may ally or engage with specific state actors while avoiding and disengaging from others.³⁹ This broadened perspective allows for new kinds of questions to emerge that are of potential political

relevance. For example, one may inquire into whether different kinds of social action/political practices can have complementary political effects. Pieterse's relational perspective on diverse urban political domains is useful here. He calls attention to the interfaces between different domains of political practice, the ways in which they relate to each other, and may combine and reinforce each other. In this context, he proposes a politics that is attentive to "the intersections of the individual and the collective."⁴⁰ This is a more fruitful way of looking at the agency of informal workers than assuming that they prefer, or are consigned to, one particular kind of political practice or another. The challenge is to inquire into the shifting and situational strategies of invisibility and visibility and into the dynamics operating between exit and voice, for a fuller understanding of the politics of informality.

Notes

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1. The articles in this special issue were initially presented at a conference on "Informalizing Economies and New Organizing Strategies in Africa", held in 2007 under the auspices of the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala, Sweden. Other contributions to the conference are forthcoming in an anthology: I. Lindell, ed., *Africa's Informal Workers: Collective Agency, Alliances and Transnational Organizing in Urban Africa*. London and Uppsala: Zed Books and The Nordic Africa Institute, 2010).
 2. Cross and Morales, 2007; Bayat, 2004.
 3. Bryceson, 2006; Hansen and Vaa, 2004.
 4. Jordhus-Lier, 2010; see also article by Baudouin et al. in this issue.
 5. This was earlier suggested by Castells and Portes (1989). This understanding of boundary does not deny the interlinked nature of formal and informal economies.
 6. For a thorough discussion and analysis of how the state, capital and popular groups have been involved in the production of informality in a West African city, see Lourenço-Lindell (2002).
 7. Brown, 2006; Amis, 2004.
 8. Potts, 2008; Roy, 2004; Hansen, 2004; Lindell and Kamete, forthcoming. See also Hansen's article in this issue.
 9. Lindell and Kamete, forthcoming.
 10. Lindell and Appelblad, 2009.
 11. Lindell, 2010a and 2008.
 12. Jordhus-Lier, 2010.
 13. Potts, 2008; Hansen, 2004; Cross, 1998.
 14. For a lengthier discussion on the varied and complex relations between informal workers and the state, see Lindell (2010a).
 15. Gibson-Graham, 2002.
 16. Gibson-Graham, 2008, p. 15.
 17. Lindell, 2010.
 18. Lindell, 2010.
 19. See Lindell (2010a) for a discussion as well as several chapters in the same book.
 20. See for example, Azarya and Chazan (1987); MacGaffey (1988).
 21. Azarya and Chazan (1987), drawing on A. Hirschman (1970), *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms and States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

22. de Soto, 1989.
23. Scott, 1985 and 1990.
24. Bayat, 2004.
25. Bayat, 2004, p. 90.
26. Bayat, 2004, p. 93.
27. See for example Tripp (1997).
28. Simone, 2004, p. 14.
29. Simone, 2004, p. 9.
30. Simone, 2004, p. 13.
31. Chen et al., 2007.
32. Fernández-Kelly, 2006, p. 1.
33. Lindell (2010). The anthology results from the same conference as this issue.
34. Meagher, 2010.
35. A third strand of work that is not discussed here sees the politics of informality mainly in terms of elite capture or vertical clientelist relations. See for a discussion, Meagher (2010) and Lindell (2010a).
36. Sharp et al., 2000, p. 3. See also Cross (1998) for a similar position.
37. Pieterse, 2008.
38. Pieterse, 2008, p. 89.
39. See Cross (1998) and Lindell (2010a).
40. Pieterse, 2008, p. 119.

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Changing Youth Dynamics in Lusaka's Informal Economy in the Context of Economic Liberalization

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Abstract: The paper examines the consequences of changes in economic regime on the self-employed in Lusaka and attendant political dynamics. The focus is on urban vendors, particularly youth. The paper discusses how economic restructuring involves new regimes of spatial regulation and new strategies of urban management that have resulted in intensified political tensions and struggles. These struggles arise from the interaction between externally driven agendas and local political dynamics. The paper argues that the relationships between the state and vendors, while long-standing, are today more antagonistic than ever before, in the context of economic liberalization, structural adjustment programs (SAP), poverty strategy reduction programs (PSRP), and highly indebted poor countries initiative (HIPC). This is demonstrated, firstly, with reference to recurrent controversies between urban regulatory authorities and vendors over access to, control over, and use of market and public space. Occurrences of state imposed removals and relocations of vendors and their responses are discussed. Secondly, political tensions have also emerged from shifts in (state and donor driven) strategies for market management. Tracing the history of market management forms in Lusaka and the legacy of political party influence in the markets, the paper describes how the decentralization of market management has increased conflicts between different interests within the markets and reinforced the role of political interest groups, rather than democratizing social relations in the markets. Such top-down shifts in forms of market management have sometimes triggered major clashes in the markets.

Introduction

Focusing on the contested space of streets and markets while asking questions about the role of youth in claiming urban space, this paper explores whether and if so, how, young people's interests are attended to in the economic sphere in Zambia.¹ My backdrop is the streets and markets in the capital, Lusaka, that for the past two decades have been an important economic resource for urban livelihoods and the center of a storm of controversy. This is because the vast majority of Lusaka's residents, including ever more young people, create a living from a range of extra-legal activities that are most visible in public space. It is not surprising that the intermittent eviction of vendors from sidewalks and streets and their removal from market places to create room for redevelopments have received varied responses. On the one hand, vendors have appropriated these sites, customers frequent them to satisfy their daily needs

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v11/v11i2-3a2.pdf>

because of their convenient location in public space, and politicians curry their patronage intermittently. And on the other hand, the public abhors street vendors for spreading dirt and disease, investors blame them for adversely affecting business, and local government and representatives of the state consider them to be unruly and difficult to regulate. Yet at the same time and according to recent development orthodoxy, such activities are examples of micro-entrepreneurship and hold the solution to urban poverty.

Controversies over the use of public space and access to markets in Lusaka's city center are by no means unique. They are not recent phenomena but date back to the colonial period. Such dramas have also taken place in many other urban settings, for example the 1997 eviction of Calcutta street hawkers, referred to euphemistically as Operation Sunshine, or the 2005 eradication in Zimbabwe of informal stands and housing, known as Operation Murambatsvina ("clean out dirt" or "restore order").² Each case reflects the operation of distinct local politics of space. In Lusaka the dynamics have changed since the past, with age, or rather generation, constituting the most conspicuous fault line today.³ This has to do in part with the recent conjuncture of neo-liberal politics with a new demography, that is, the rapid growth of youth into a very large proportion of the overall urban population. I suggest for the case of Zambia that economic liberalization since 1991 coupled with structural adjustment programs, the highly indebted poor countries initiative, and the poverty reduction strategy program, are producing a relationship between the state and the urban informal economy that is more antagonistic than ever and in ways that severely circumscribe young people's options. That is to say, economic restructuring involves new regimes of spatial regulation.

Some of the key issues in confrontations over public space are epitomized in the demolition of *tuntembas*, a Bemba word for self-constructed stalls, that mushroomed in Lusaka in the wake of the introduction of free market policies in the early 1990s. I suggest that that ongoing struggles over access to, use of, and control over trading space are fuelled in part by externally derived planning agendas. What is more, we need to understand that these agendas interact with local dynamics of differentiation, including generational access, in complicated ways. In effect, externally driven efforts to regulate marketing that invoke a governance rhetoric of participation ignore the politics of everyday urban life, including generational issues, by detaching the marketing process from the social and cultural practices that organize it. As this paper demonstrates, the result is a politics of urban space in which young people are particularly constrained.

Briefly, to situate the social biography of this project, it was in the 1990s, when I worked in and around Lusaka's city center markets during my research on the secondhand clothing trade, that I was struck by the number of youth, especially young men, who were active economically in public space. As the 1990s went on, I became convinced that a variety of new forces were restructuring public retail space and in the process, bringing potential new actors to the fore, among them youth, at an unprecedented scale. While my research since the beginning of the new millennium has focused on youth issues across class in Lusaka in a very general way, I also continue to keep track of developments on the market front.

Urban Transformations

The specific context for this paper's observations are the succession of structural adjustment programs (SAP) by a World Bank initiated Poverty Strategy Reduction Program (PSRP) in 2002, the compliance with which in April 2005 qualified Zambia for debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. While this new pro-poor policy approach aims to reduce some of the many adverse effects of SAP programs, including growing poverty, PRSP stresses that poverty reduction needs to take place in a democratic society with open markets and a competitive business environment. With PRSP, the previous development agenda's focus on growth and distribution has yielded to concerns with governance and capacity building. Spending policy under PRSP targets agriculture, tourism, and the social sector (health and education). Zambia's 2002-2004 PRSP document leaves out major issues, among them, employment, housing, and markets, thus ignoring the livelihoods of the urban poor.⁴ School leavers, school drop outs, and graduates are all pressing on a shrinking formal labor market in Zambia. Between 1992 and 1999, formal employment declined from 17 to 11 percent of the labor force.⁵ According to 2004 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) projections, young people below 25 years of age comprise 64 percent of Zambia's total population of around 11 million. Close to half of the total population is urban. Lusaka, the capital has an estimated population of 2.5 million. Young urban people in Zambia face serious odds because of the country's striking decline. The two decades during which Zambia has been a target for IMF/World Bank initiated SAP programs were marked by growing inequality, rising unemployment, deteriorating health (including a high HIV/AIDS prevalence rate), declining access to education, and an infrastructure that has not kept pace with urban population growth. Zambia's 2003 ranking on the Human Development Index slid to a low of 164 (of 177 countries), making it the only country on the list for which the index was lower than in 1975.⁶

SAP and recent neo-liberal reforms have spatial ramifications that affect the livelihoods of different population segments in disparate ways, sharpen social and spatial inequalities, and extend them in new ways. Two decades of SAP and neo-liberal reforms since the early 1990s have altered the nature and availability of urban space in Lusaka, including land and infrastructure, and access to markets. In the wake of these reforms, changes in land values have adversely affected access to housing and its location as well as the place and nature of commercial activity. Because housing markets have been privatized and no low-cost government housing constructed since the 1970s, the vast majority of Lusaka's population lives in informal housing in the peri-urban areas.⁷ Inadequate provision of electricity, water, and transport reduces the exploitation of service and small-scale manufacturing activities by residents in such areas. In their efforts to earn an income, many peri-urban residents have turned to the markets and streets in Lusaka's city-center.

In popular representations in Zambia, "freeing the market" has almost come to mean opening it up to external rather than local participation. Globally promoted development policy since 1991 has encouraged foreign investment which in Lusaka by and large has been directed toward the retail sector. Urban retail space has been reconfigured as investments, especially by South African and Chinese firms, resulting in selective urban upgrading and new patterns of spatial segregation. One of the highly visible results has been the opening of four up-scale shopping malls since 1999, financed by British and South African capital, as well as by local business interests. Additional malls and upgrading of long-existing markets, some with

Chinese financing, are also under way. These processes reach markets and streets as well, with Chinese shopkeepers selling low-priced imported goods, introducing a competitive wedge at the very lowest level of the urban trading system.

Gender and Age in Lusaka's Informal Economy

Past and present, Zambia's informal economy has been dominated by trade and retail, followed by services and small-scale manufacturing.⁸ From small beginnings during the colonial period, these activities became more widespread in the early 1970s as the economy set on a downward slide.⁹ A common research finding from the 1980s and 1990s concerns the gender and age division of informal actors.¹⁰ Contributing the survival margin to many urban household economies, women's work stimulated the growth of the informal economy, especially in trade, but mostly at much lower returns than men. The majority of traders of both sexes tended to be middle aged (25-40 years of age), and women dominated in petty trading, older men in carpentry and tin smithing, while younger men worked in auto repair, electrics, and mechanics.¹¹ But research findings since the mid-1990s have begun to reveal changes in the gender and age composition of the urban informal economy. First, the majority of street vendors are young, in the 20 to 30 year age category; and second, the majority of street vendors are male.¹² Because vending in the streets entails more risks and dangers than in designated markets, this gender and age profile is not surprising. What is striking is that only a minority of the young male vendors were married.¹³ They earn so little that they cannot establish their own household, as I noted in city center and township markets since 1992, when I met many more young unmarried male vendors than I did in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁴

Lusaka's streets and markets are among the most important sources for non-formal employment. But the mere reference to the enormous growth of the informal economy since the 1970s glosses over the many inequalities that are embedded within it, in terms of gender and age, and, depending on activity, location and organization. During the 1990s, privatization of the economy and retrenchment of the civil service pushed many adults into the informal economy. The presence of adults in the more lucrative jobs limits young people's entry to low-level jobs that offer few prospects for upward mobility and provide few skills that might lead to the acquisition of higher qualifications. As a consequence, young women and men from poor backgrounds have fewer economic options in today's transformed urban space than their parents' generation enjoyed. Adult stand-holders hire young women and men as "workers" for a pittance. Plenty of young men work on the streets, selling anything from foodstuffs and hardware to copycat tapes and videos. Much of this work involves subcontracting, which is most visibly evident in the young *Zamcab* drivers who hire wheelbarrows to transport the purchases of customers.

***Tuntembas* and Youth**

The term *tuntemba* came into use in the early 1990s when traders and aspiring vendors left the designated markets in the city and the townships, descending on the city center and setting up stands they put together from wood, plastic sheeting, and cardboard. These makeshift

structures became known as *tuntembas*, which in the Bemba language translates approximately into "area of operation." The term graphically captured what in fact the traders were doing: staking claims on space for their own activities. The 1991 change of regime from a one-party command economy to a multi-party democracy had not helped formal employment to expand but rather fuelled the growth of informalization. In fact, the removal of controls on foreign exchange, imports, and prices attracted more people to trade than ever before. And vending became particularly visible and dynamic on the streets.

The Chiluba Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) government had come into power with the promise of improving housing, social welfare, health, and education, yet rapid privatization of the para-statal companies did not benefit the general population.¹⁵ Because of the strained economy, state intervention in marketing and street vending became a very contentious matter. In the first MMD government in 1991, the minister of Local Government and Housing, Michael Sata, ordered city councils to allow street vending.¹⁶ This decision prompted many traders to desert designated markets for streets and sidewalks. When in 1993 the Lusaka City Council (LCC) assisted by police and military undertook one of many sweeps of street vendors, it clashed with the vendors and a riot ensued. An angry President Chiluba intervened strongly on the vendors' behalf, blaming the city council for not finding alternative places before forcing them off the streets. Extending this vendor friendly atmosphere, the president in December 1996 established a Vendors' Desk with a deputy minister at State House, a decision that was interpreted to mean that anyone could trade and erect a stand anywhere. And this is exactly what they did. By Christmas 1998, street vending in Lusaka had achieved anarchic proportions. Main streets, alleyways, and shop corridors in the city center, and many other places, had turned into one huge outdoor shopping mall with thousands of street vendors selling all manner of goods.

Designated Markets

The term designated, or authorized, market refers to areas where urban retail is permitted under the Market Act. In the late 1990s Lusaka had about 40 designated city markets and 54 designated township markets.¹⁷ Proliferating and growing in size, these markets diversified their commodity base, service activities, and participants, including as I have already indicated, more adult persons retrenched from formal jobs and young people out of school, especially young men. Among these markets was Lusaka's largest, Soweto, that developed in the late 1970s at the edge of the light industrial area on privately owned land as a center of the produce trade for peri-urban farmers. Beginning informally and illegally, it soon featured the capital's largest auto part section plus the standard trades in small-scale manufacture, repair, and services. Over the years, the market grew rapidly. Toward the end of 1994, traders in Soweto's outside section and part of the built-up interior market were relocated to yield space for the construction of a new market. In return, the city council promised them stands in the new market. Some traders went farther out on the open field, establishing stands underneath tall pylons carrying power cables. Others moved on to Kamwala, Lusaka's oldest market built during the colonial period, where many set themselves up on the open field outside the built-up market, next to the railway tracks.

But above all, traders spilled into the streets. The 1997 opening of a new market at Soweto, called City Market, did little to halt these processes. Many stand-holders who had fought to be allotted space in the new market soon gave up their stands, complaining of lack of customers and high fees. A few days after the market's opening, the city council burned the *tuntembas* on its outskirts. Yet stand-holders continued to leave the new market for the streets resulting in ongoing conflicts between inside and outside traders, police, the LCC, management, and political cadres.

In the pre-dawn hours of 28 April 1999, city council staff, police, and paramilitary in riot gear razed the *tuntembas* in Lusaka's city center, extending the demolition the following night and weeks across the city, into the townships and, in June, to the Copperbelt and all the towns along the line-of-rail. This time, and unlike in 1993 when he supported the vendors, the president, who had approved this costly removal, kept quiet. Although it is illegal, political parties use designated markets to collect funds through market fees and levies. But street vendors come and go and do not even pay such fees. According to a well-informed source, the majority of street vendors were not registered voters. That is, they were entirely dispensable from the point of view of the reigning party, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy, who did not need their electoral support. The deputy minister of the Vendors Desk took the flak for the evictions, arguing that the move to designated markets would place vendors in enabling environments and enhance their security. For a while, Lusaka's main streets remained almost clear of the mass of street vendors who were such a common sight throughout the 1990s. Yet the vendors soon returned to trading in public in a variety of disguises, among them car boot sales, sales from containers, and business during early morning and late afternoon rush hours.

Market Management, Decentralization, and Participation

Markets in Zambia are state property. The Market Act empowers the minister of Local Government and Housing to delegate development and management of markets to local authorities (district, municipal, and city councils). In the past, markets were managed either by councils or authorized co-operative societies. Stand-holders paid levy to the council, rent to the co-operative society, and daily market fees. Many also paid fees to funeral societies, football associations, and security guards. Because markets are strategic places for party recruitment, their management has been a target of political maneuver. During the Kaunda regime, the ruling party UNIP (United National Independence Party) usurped power under the Market Act, often through the co-operative societies, in this way controlling, or taking control through its Youth Wing, of the allocation of stands in many markets.¹⁸ UNIP membership became a prerequisite for access to a stand, with stand-holders paying fees or levies to the party. In those days stand-holders, especially women, were rounded up to line the streets or cheer at the airport on the occasion of formal state visits.

The Local Government Act of 1991 uncoupled the party structure and operations from district councils in a move toward establishing autonomous local authorities with elected councilors and mayors. The majority of LCC members belong to the Patriotic Front (PF). The central government still reshuffles senior officers and controls finances.¹⁹ In the open economy era, local authorities have begun to contract private firms to manage designated markets. Yet

the political legacy, with its "cadre mentality," is still evident in many markets today. The MMD has kept a visible presence with an office and a staff in many markets, as do some opposition parties. Today the term "cadre" continues to be used for political involvement in a discourse that takes us back to the days of the one-party state and the disciplinary, vigilante functions of its youth wing. Politics in markets has complicated the Ministry of Local Government's efforts to implement donor required decentralization of the urban administration, an example of which is the management of markets by private firms.

City Market, opened in August 1997, was the first market to be managed by a private company. This arrangement did not last much longer than a couple of years. In 1999, when I conducted research there, the MMD maintained an office in the very center of the inside section. Lusaka's largest market, Soweto, has offices not only of the council, the MMD, and other parties, but also of the Soweto Marketeers Co-operative, and ZANAMA (Zambia National Marketeers Association), an association that has managed markets on the Copperbelt for some years. Within markets, different groups quarrel over who is in charge in a process that pits marketeers' associations, the LCC, the ministry, and political party branches against one another.²⁰

When things get rough in markets, party cadres are blamed. In efforts to lessen political involvement, the Minister of Local Government and Housing in 2004 removed the control of bus stations from organized groups of transporters with political affiliation. Similar plans were announced for the markets. With the ministry in charge, the door is wide open for private sector participation in the administration of markets. When President Mwanawasa introduced such an approach in 2005, he suggested that it would hasten the "development in Local Authorities and help ... them control street vending."²¹ The idea of establishing boards was not new but had already been introduced in the late 1990s in the management model that was part of an EU's market rehabilitation project in Lusaka and the Copperbelt.²² In line with the externally mandated government policy on decentralization, such boards are expected to represent marketeers, consumer organizations, local government, commuters' associations, and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.²³ Aimed at including a variety of stakeholders and empowering them through market governance, the establishment of boards might serve to depoliticize the management of markets, and perhaps lessen the persistent wrangles between councils, co-operatives and marketeers' associations, the ministry, and parties.

But this was not the outcome. The decentralized reform strategy of governance through stakeholder participation in fact reinforced the role of political interest groups and powerbrokers rather than democratizing social relations in the management of markets. In November 2006, Local Government Minister Sylvia Masebo dissolved the management boards in markets and bus stations.²⁴ Toward the end of 2008, the new Markets and Bus Stations Act (No 7) of 2007 went into effect. Board membership was based on party allegiance and special interests with cadres, political factions, committees, and associations collecting or soliciting levies (the PF at City Market and the MMD at Kamwala). Once again, the local authority, that is the ministry, took charge of the management of markets in its usual top-down manner. No doubt, the backdrop for this particular action included major clashes at several Lusaka markets between political cadres of different parties in the wake of the 2006 elections. A major promise of the populist campaign of opposition candidate, Michael Sata (PF), was jobs and housing.

Much like in 1991, when he was MMD minister of local government and housing, this time Sata also addressed the problem of street vending. But while he attracted the majority vote in all of Zambia's urban areas, Mr. Sata lost the election to the sitting president, Levy Mwanawasa. Although President Mwanawasa and Sylvia Masebo launched the "Keep Zambia Clean and Healthy" campaign that included ridding streets and corridors of vendors and removing *tuntembas* from the city center, street vending persisted.

Displacements

Because different segments of the state view street vending differently, interventions lack coordination and have been ad hoc. The market management approach dealt with street vendors in passing, pertaining to them only by way of control rather than of assistance. Efforts to renovate old market structures, upgrade, or entirely replace them have not effectively contained the problem of street vending. And the construction since the late 1990s of ultra-modern markets to enable street vendors to move to designated markets has been slow, or has stalled. In fact, some of the market upgrading, including the redevelopment project in Lusaka launched in the late 1990s by the European Union, were unfinished for several years and only completed in 2008. The project involved the demolition of old market structures that pushed many traders away from the old markets. Market redevelopments, for example the Chinese financed upgrading of Lusaka's oldest market, Luburma (Kamwala) built during the colonial period, charged high rental fees that forced existing traders away. Similarly, the redevelopment of the Town Center market financed by a local consortium forced traders onto the streets because of the limited number of stalls and the high rental fees. Taken together, these developments threaten the earnings potential and livelihoods of the thousands of people whom investment-driven market liberalization has displaced. No wonder that vendors keep returning to the streets and that the council's admonition that they should work from designated markets has had, at most, temporary effects.

Collaboration and Scope for Organizing

In response to the call of external advisors, new market associations have emerged that relate to the powers that be in the language of governance, demanding a place in decision making, including membership in new governance structures such as market boards. Aside from ZANAMA, which manages several markets in the Copperbelt towns and parts of some markets in Lusaka (Chawama, Soweto), most of these associations are trade specific groups, such as the secondhand clothes traders association, the fish traders associations, and the cross-border traders association. Adopting the language of free agents and entrepreneurship, such groups engage planning authority with a good deal of cynicism because experience has made them doubt the outcome.

Although young vendors are highly visible in markets and on streets everywhere in Lusaka, they rarely assume an organized presence. The dissolved market boards, for example, did not include any specific youth representation. The situation in which most young people find themselves in Lusaka casts serious doubt on the organizational ability the governance

agenda attributes to civil society groups. To be sure, such groups do not arise automatically out of altruistic sensibilities or pre-existing cultural templates called "tradition." They are not primordial but have to be created in order to emerge.

There are many factors that operate against the development of wider self-help groups and networks of solidarity among youth. They include the fragmented nature of young people's activities in streets and markets and the need for flexibility in the competition for economic space. Such young workers need street knowledge, stamina, and capital. The work of many is subcontracted, including the sale at the traffic lights of major intersections of toys, cosmetics, and household goods as well as of fruit and vegetables and newspapers. The earnings of many young workers include little more than bus fare, a mid-day snack, and some spending money that do not enable them to accumulate start-up capital for future ventures of their own. Many young workers wish to get out of, rather than hang onto, such fragile and insecure informal economic employment. While a few young workers live alone or share rented rooms with friends, the status of most young people as dependent members of households vests part of their earnings in the household pot. That is why young people's individual interests in getting by economically in order to get on to establish adult lives do not easily coalesce into urban social movements. The types of collaboration I have seen involve a couple of friends who help each other watching out for the police or the sharing of costs for renting overnight storage space for their goods.

The struggles of Lusaka's street vendors and market traders have been episodic and disjointed, yet they keep reoccurring. The market scene is so fragmented that the ruling party in 1999 had no qualms about launching the largest exercise to remove vendors from urban space ever to be conducted in Zambia. This action was possible in part because of the striking fluidity of the market scene where traders come and go, change commodities, and move between indoor and outdoor spaces, and at times handle other jobs as well. And it also reflected that what is at the heart of the informal economy and keeps fueling its activities are first and foremost the survival needs of individuals and households.

Micro-Entrepreneurship as a Solution?

Employment reaches the core of the urban youth predicament in Zambia. The scale of that predicament is massive, as a recent event demonstrates. In the summer of 2005, more than 3,500 young job seekers turned up in response to a job fair in Lusaka held by Celtel, Zambia's largest mobile phone service provider. By late afternoon, Celtel staff had attended to more than 3,500 while 800 additional job seekers, mainly graduates from the University of Zambia, the Copperbelt University, and other tertiary institutions, were still waiting in a long queue. According to a news release, Celtel planned to employ 200 of the persons who were interviewed. When labor minister Bates Namuyamba commented on the event, he noted that the high unemployment levels among youth and women were now affecting college and university graduates. The situation, he said, has caused "formal employment to decline, forcing more people to seek refuge in the informal sector as more and more people are ending up on the streets."²⁵

Political rhetoric acknowledges the employment ramifications of the urban youth bulge, yet

few policy measures are in place. Take Zambia's PRSP document, for example, that demonstrates an almost total disconnect with the situation on the ground. It makes absolutely no reference to young people even though, for the purposes of strategy development, they constitute an extraordinarily relevant category because their livelihoods cut across the specific sectors on which Zambia's PRSP focuses: agriculture, tourism, and health and education. Zambia's PRSP does not engage with the issues of rapid urban growth or the future of urban livelihoods. It does not recognize housing as an urgent urban issue, and most strikingly, it does not single out unemployment as a problem in its own right. Even the 2005 Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) report recognizes this when it notes tersely that "the employment content of PRSPs in Africa remains weak."²⁶

Zambia's PRSP introduces issues related to earnings and income through a focus on investment, trade promotion, and the development of small and medium enterprises.²⁷ Such enterprises are hailed as development strategies and solutions to the unemployment problem in the new Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) policy, a program to support technical training (2001-2005) passed by an act of parliament in 1998 under pressure from the World Bank and international donors. This is an example of a youth oriented policy, specifically revolving around micro-enterprise with clearly targeted beneficiaries: young women and men from Grades 7 through 12 who are no longer in school, for a "demand driven culture of entrepreneurship."²⁸ While this policy shift is a reaction to the lack of fit between the skills taught in formal institutions and the needs of the labor market, it does not reckon with the workings and organization of Zambia's informal economy, nor does it engage with the structural barriers of the labor market in the era of late capitalism.

For a number of reasons, entrepreneurship and micro-enterprises in the informal economy are not grassroots solutions to unemployment. A focus on such activities implies that the informal economy can absorb ever-increasing numbers of newcomers. This view is flawed for many reasons, one of which is its tendency to lump all workers together. In the case of Lusaka, age- and gender-based employment hierarchies of the informal economy that I have alluded to restrict young people's access, propelling them into casual work and low-grade jobs that curtail upward mobility and the acquisition of the skills and qualifications required for job promotion.

A policy focus for youth employment that centers on training for small-scale enterprise and entrepreneurship draws attention away from the vulnerable position of young people in the labor market. The technical and vocational training approach does not acknowledge that today's competitive and technological job market is likely to leave growing numbers of young trainees without formal jobs or at best underemployed and performing casual labor. Such programs are not likely to make massive changes in the employability of the many young people in Lusaka, some of whom turned up at Celtel's job fair and the many others who will, as the minister of labor said, seek refuge in the informal sector and end up on the streets. Unlike the TEVET act that approaches the informal economy as a site of development, the minister saw Zambia's informal economy as proof of the country's economic problems, doubting that it can serve as a development strategy on young people's treacherous journey toward adulthood.

Routine allusions to youth empowerment in political rhetoric in recent years have been slow to produce results. In 2003, the Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development began preparations for a new National Youth Policy to replace the previous policy from 1994. The

policy proposal was presented to the cabinet in 2005 and adopted by the government in April 2006. It contains some astonishing elements, among them the definition of youth as young people up to the age of 35 (unlike the previous policy that used the United Nations definition: up to 25 years of age). While the document gathers dust on the shelves, so far one proposal related to street children has been implemented. This proposal recycles a policy from the days of the one-party state with slight innovations to reckon with the present. At issue is a rehabilitation program launched in 2005 that places urban street children in two former Zambia National Service (ZNS) training camps near Kitwe and Katete. The target group is young people between 15 and 18 years who are taught carpentry, bricklaying, agriculture, animal husbandry, and poultry management. There are courses in shoe making and tailoring as well.

In the wake of the adoption of the new youth policy, the government established a Youth Empowerment Fund. Much like the program to rehabilitate street children, this project recycles previous approaches to youth projects and innovations, in this case by creating a youth investors' fund to provide seed money. Outmoded notions of vocational training and micro-enterprises are at the heart of both the revived ZNS training program and the Youth Empowerment Fund. These projects will not solve the massive employment problem of young urban people. The Minister of Science and Industry put this plainly when commenting on the budgetary marginalization of the Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development: "The future of youth should not lie in *tuntembas* but proper education."²⁹

Conclusion: The Battle over Regulation

Vendors have returned to the Lusaka's streets, in new disguises, with new sales strategies, at specific times of the day, and in strategic spots in the city even though police and paramilitary kept a visible presence in the city center since the massive clean-up exercise of street vendors in 1999. In 2009, ten years after that exercise, a New Soweto Market with stands for 5000 traders, financed by the European Union, was ready to be formally commissioned by Rupiah Banda, who assumed the presidency on Mwanawasa's death in 2008. Informal vendors had occupied the space where the new market was constructed and were promised stands within it. But a lack of transparency in the allocation of stands and allegations of political interference delayed the market's opening, and the initial allocation was nullified. As a result, street vendors crowded the nearby streets. Rumors of a major removal by the LCC of street vendors abounded in spite of an injunction filed in court by the opposition PF party against the government's plan to remove the vendors.³⁰ Meanwhile, rival political cadres from the MMD and PF took over sections of the Soweto market, collecting fees.³¹ The new minister of local government and housing, Benny Tetamashimba, lacked the action of the former tough-talking minister, Sylvia Masebo. In effect, new wrangles and clashes keep rising in conflicts over space for trading and will no doubt continue to do so. To be sure, the government's lack of political will or power to regulate the management of the designated markets makes taking a stand on street vending highly problematic.

Exercises to remove vendors from public space have a lot to do with the introduction of "free market" practices, as well as many other matters that contribute to make street vendors a problem, among them sanitation, public health, and safety. Using the rhetoric of free markets

and entrepreneurship, the government's approach to markets and vending produces new hierarchies of access and extends inequalities across space. In this new regime of power, the lines of access circumscribe space, and they hit young people disproportionately. The contradictions inherent in this approach to development are visibly evident on Lusaka's streets and in its overcrowded designated markets. When vendors speak about their *tuntembas*, they make unprecedented claims on ownership and self-employment, that is, filling the employment gap that results from the state's inability to grow the economy. The meanings of *tuntemba*, we recall, revolve around notions of "area of operation/ influence," that is to say, of being in charge, as a part of a larger whole. What the irony of the *tuntemba* narrative achieves is to subvert the state's lackluster control efforts and challenge its neglect/lack of support in the very rhetoric of entitlement and aspirations that democracy has promoted since the early 1990s.

Notes

1. This paper is informed by observations from field research I conducted in Lusaka since the early 1990s, and it draws as well on public debate about markets, their regulation, and youth policy. Maurice Pengele assisted me with interviews of specific categories of street vendors in 2002. Northwestern University's Research Grant Committee, the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, and the Council for Development Research of the Danish Agency for International Cooperation have supported these research activities over the years. I am grateful to them. I have written about some of these processes elsewhere (Hansen 2000, 2004, 2008), but not with focus on youth matters.
2. Brown, 2006; Roy, 2003, pp. 173-174; Potts, 2006.
3. Cole and Durham, 2007.
4. Republic of Zambia, 2002.
5. Central Statistical Office, 2000.
6. United Nations Development Program, 2004.
7. Mulenga, 2001.
8. Central Statistical Office, 1991, pp. 24-25.
9. Hansen, 2008.
10. Bardouille, 1981; Hansen, 1980; 1982; 1989; Jules-Rosette, 1979.
11. Hahn, 1982, pp. 6-9; Peters-Berries 1993, p. 3
12. Lusaka City Council, 1995.
13. Imboela, 1997, pp. 11, 27.
14. Hansen, 2005.
15. Myers, 2005, pp. 114-115.
16. Peters-Berries, 1993, p. 3; p. 15; p. 18.
17. Hansen, 2004, p. 68.
18. Beveridge and Oberschall, 1979, pp. 84-86.
19. Mutale, 2004, pp. 41-42.
20. *Times of Zambia*, 28 August 2003.

21. *Zambia Daily Mail*, 18 April 2000.
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23. *Post*, 18 April 2005.
24. *Times of Zambia*, 23 October 2006.
25. *Post*, 19 July 2005.
26. Economic Commission for Africa, 2004, p. 14.
27. Republic of Zambia, 2002.
28. Republic of Zambia, 1998.
29. *Post*, 12 March 2006.
30. *Times of Zambia*, 4 June 2009.
31. *Times of Zambia*, 24 July 2009.

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Between Neglect and Control: Questioning Partnerships and the Integration of Informal Actors in Public Solid Waste Management in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Abstract: The paper addresses the long-standing role of informal actors in solid waste management in Addis Ababa. Large numbers of people make a living through scavenging, waste collection and recycling. The varied and shifting relations between these actors and the local authorities are examined. For the most part, the authorities have largely neglected informal waste collectors. Recently, however, the role of informal actors was recognized and the authorities attempted to establish a “partnership” with informal actors in the waste sector. The paper discusses the consequences and problems involved in this partnership and how it facilitated political dominance and surveillance in a context of authoritarian governance. Informal actors have frequently resisted attempts at taxation and have avoided any collaboration with and control by the authorities. More generally, the paper concludes that political manipulation, poor accountability, lack of opportunities for participation, and the ensuing mistrust among informal actors towards local authorities prevent any successful integration of the actors and their interests in the public management of waste in the studied setting.

Introduction

Informal forms of work are the dominant income activities in many cities in developing countries, providing livelihoods for millions of people.¹ A proportion of these people make a living through activities in the informal waste sector as waste pickers or scavengers, itinerant buyers, and small-scale recyclers. They are often stigmatized and many are poor. In some cases, though, people working in this sector earn non-negligible incomes.² Scavenging also stimulates other economic activities by producing raw materials for industry and artisans. Informal waste recycling also has value from an environmental point of view. More generally, the informal waste sector plays an important role in the context of fast growing cities experiencing inadequate formal service provision. In spite of these various benefits, the attitudes of local governments are often characterized by neglect, lack of recognition, harassment, or even attempts to eradicate informal activities.³

A growing number of scholars advocate proper recognition and support of the informal sector in solid waste management (SWM).⁴ Rouse, for example, states: “There is a need for a

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paradigm shift in the way informal sector service providers are viewed ... these enterprises are vital parts of the urban services simply responding to and effectively meeting customers needs.”⁵ There are also calls, in both the academic and donor literature, for policies aimed at integrating informal actors into municipal SWM strategies.⁶ Such calls are often underlined by the view that an efficient SWM cannot be achieved by municipalities alone but rather in association with several partners, including private, formal and informal as well as community-based organizations (CBOs). On the ground, however, we have witnessed in the course of our research in Ethiopia serious conflicts in the concrete relationships between authorities and informal operators in the solid waste sector. In some cases, as this paper will show, the conflicts are so serious that informal actors, far from seeking recognition, prefer to “escape” by refusing any contact with the municipality. Alternatively, local authorities totally ignore the contribution of the informal sector. In this paper, we explore the troubled and changing relationships between informal actors and local government in the solid waste sector in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Categorizing relationships between informal actors and the state

The attitudes of authorities towards informal waste actors reflect cultural perceptions, including those relating to caste, ethnicity, and social class. Social stigmatization is particularly pronounced when it comes to workers in the waste sector.⁷ Although governments often view informal waste actors in a negative way, their attitudes and relationships with these actors can vary. Medina classifies these attitudes and relationships, with reference to the waste sector, into four categories:

Repression – Many governments and social groups consider scavengers as backward and a source of shame for “modern” cities. These hostile attitudes lead to repressive policies, punishments, harassment, and attempts at eradication, even to the extent of organized murder: “Approximately 2000 ‘disposable’ individuals have been killed by the end of 1994 as a result of [the] ‘social cleansing’ campaign in Columbia.”⁸

Neglect – In many cases, authorities simply ignore scavengers. They do not take their contribution to waste management into account. In addition, authorities often ignore aspects of sustainable waste management, such as waste reduction, separation, and recycling that are dealt with by informal actors. This lack of recognition or neglect can have quite negative consequences on the lives of individuals in the informal sector. For the informal transport sector, Rouse described how the banning of rickshaw drivers from main roads in Dhaka threatened their activity, yet without solving the city’s transport problems.⁹ Not taking into account the consequences of actions affecting the informal sector is also a form of neglect. In Addis Ababa, a “successful” policy for replacing fuel wood with kerosene, gas and electricity, which are supplied by the formal sector, led to a reduction in the use of fuel wood from 80 percent to 13 percent but also to widespread unemployment among informal suppliers of fuel, including transporters and retailers.¹⁰

Collusion – Collusion is a form of partnership between local authorities and the informal sector, but it is a “criminal partnership.” Political clientelism, corruption, and bribery can flourish between authorities and scavengers, as has happened in Mexico between the ruling party and the *caciques* (the local bosses of scavengers’

cooperatives).¹¹ Scavengers have even been used as musclemen by the party during election campaigns. The term “collusion” suggests that participation or partnership are not necessarily positive.

Stimulation – Stimulation ranges from tolerance (slightly better than neglect) to active integration or partnership. Most researchers and even planners agree that the informal sector is a resource. According to Medina, in some countries, such as Indonesia, China (in particular, Shanghai), Egypt, and Brazil, recognizing the economic, social, and environmental benefits of scavenging and recycling has led governments to change their previously negative attitudes towards scavenging.¹² Scavenger cooperatives receive recognition and financial support (Indonesia), scavengers become more or less integrated into the municipal collection system (Shanghai), and they are provided with infrastructure and municipal services (Cairo, Egypt and Korea). In such cases, one could speak of a form of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) with informal actors. Nevertheless, these examples are still relatively few.

There have been other attempts to categorize the relationships between local authorities and informal actors. For instance, DiGregorio uses the categories of eradication, incorporation, accommodation, and collaboration. By introducing “accommodation,” he brings in a more positive relationship than neglect.¹³ Incorporation and collaboration correspond to Medina’s stimulation concept. DiGregorio’s notion of incorporation includes both instances where the municipality controls and restricts scavenging to delimited areas, as well as cases of near integration of scavengers, where they become “quasi-public servants.” We consider “integration” too strong a word and prefer to use the term “partnerships,” as it introduces more variability and does not necessarily imply a high degree of formality.

Current international models for urban development place great emphasis on public-private partnerships, as a means of capitalizing on the strengths of different actors in the pursuit of common goals.¹⁴ Such models advocate the involvement of, and collaboration with, the private and community sector in order to solve waste management and other problems. And indeed, it has been noted that the informal private sector and community groups are also gradually being seen as partners by municipalities in developing countries.¹⁵ Official recognition of informal service providers may be seen as a means for supporting employment and combating poverty and social inequality. It may also be a means of avoiding public expenditure for services, a strategy currently pursued by many governments in the neoliberal age. Partnerships may also be driven by political agendas and may constitute a way for the state to extend its influence into the informal sector.

Partnerships can exist between private and informal sector operators, as is the case in Bangkok, Thailand, where the latter engage in informal alliances with both public collectors and construction entrepreneurs, behind the back of an inefficient administration.¹⁶ In other kinds of partnership, such as those between a municipality and the private sector, one can observe unintended but quite common consequences. In Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, when analyzing public private partnerships, Mkwela showed a “classic” consequence of the collaboration of municipalities with the private sector.¹⁷ Proper services are provided to high status areas where customers are able to pay the required fees for waste collection, while low status areas are more or less left to themselves with an improper waste collection. This is quite a common problem with private sector-municipality partnerships in other countries,

such as those where municipalities are unable or unwilling to properly monitor their partners.¹⁸

This paper examines how the relations between informal actors and the local authorities in the waste sector in Addis Ababa have changed through time. It shows how they have evolved from total neglect towards authoritarian partnerships for waste collection or continuous neglect for recycling. The paper discusses the consequences of and problems involved in this partnership and how it has facilitated political dominance and surveillance. The responses of informal actors are also presented. With “informal activities” we use the following definition: “... unregistered, unregulated or casual activities carried out by individuals and/or family or community enterprises that engage in value-adding activities on a small scale with minimum capital input, using local materials and labor intensive techniques.”¹⁹ Such activities differ from authorized and registered small enterprises—such as the micro and small-scale enterprises which are also referred to in this paper—in that informal activities occur outside existing legal frames. The notion of “informal sector” is problematic and should be viewed as a common-sense notion rather than a concept with analytical value. Among other problems, it is difficult and inadequate to draw a clear separation between a formal and an informal sector given the linkages that often exist between them. Instead, one should think in terms of fuzzy boundaries, the shifting contours of which are a key concern in this paper.

The researchers conducted two to three months of fieldwork and used a range of research methods. They conducted semi-structured open-ended interviews with a wide range of involved actors, including members of private enterprises, NGOs, informal enterprises, government-sponsored enterprises, and administrators at different levels of the city administration (at *kebele*, sub-city and city levels).²⁰ They complemented their sources with their own observations, including observing scavengers at work and recording the frequency of container collection by municipality trucks. Participant observation was practiced when participating in garbage collection with NGOs, in city cleaning campaigns, or events such as the annual Cleaning Day. Whenever possible, the researchers undertook informal discussions with the people involved. The use of secondary literature was somewhat limited due to the scarcity of publications. A quantitative survey of plastics delivery to the largest market place in the city was also conducted.²¹ In her research on plastics recycling, Bjerkli interviewed 63 waste collectors across the city and 150 households in the sub-city of Addis Ketema (*kebeles* 6, 13 and 15). She also conducted interviews with two owners of plastics factories, five municipality employees in charge of solid waste management and the staff of two relevant NGOs: ENDA Ethiopia and GTZ. Zelalem interviewed both formal and informal actors, as well as operators in government-induced micro and small-scale Enterprises (a total of 23 interviews). He also carried out interviews with a few households and with the relevant officials at several administrative levels.²² Yirgalem interviewed forty scavengers operating at the Repi landfill site, as well as employees in small-scale informal industries located in proximity to the landfill site.²³

The next section describes the solid waste situation in Addis Ababa and discusses the important role of the informal sector. The different categories of informal actors conducting waste-related activities are presented, followed by a discussion of the relations between them and the local government prior to 2003 and also the ways in which informal actors attempt to avoid the authorities. The paper then analyses the change in governmental strategy towards the informal waste sector between 2003 and 2005, the official justifications, and the hidden

agendas behind its intervention, as well as the outcomes and responses of informal actors to it. The paper ends with a summary of the findings and concluding remarks.

The informalizing waste sector: neglect, distrust, and avoidance

Addis Ababa is a fast growing city with a population of over three million. Among other problems associated with rapid urbanization, the management of solid waste poses a serious challenge. The management approaches and techniques employed by the municipality of Addis Ababa to manage solid waste have been largely inadequate. Compared to other sectors, solid waste management has been given too little attention in terms of resource allocation and establishing effective institutional arrangements. It has been estimated that geographical coverage and frequency of disposal by the public collection system has been by far below the existing needs, ranging between 40–70 percent of the total generated waste.²⁴ Thus, a considerable portion of the city and its population is not adequately serviced by the public collection system. In addition, the city is still awaiting the establishment of new and properly built sanitary dumping sites. The current system for waste disposal is unsafe, with high social and environmental costs. The existing solid waste disposal site, the Repi landfill site, is an open landfill site, devoid of any infrastructure. The Repi landfill site does not meet the necessary criteria, not least in terms of minimum buffer distances required for safe waste disposal, between the site and other land use activities, such as settlements, schools and recreation. Communities settled around the landfill are exposed to great health risks due to the high levels of environmental contamination, including ground and surface water contamination.

Informal actors play a critical role in the solid waste sector in Addis Ababa. Activities related to the sector are a source of income for many urban poor. Such activities include waste picking and door-to-door collection, recycling, composting, and reprocessing. The sub-studies conducted on activities at the landfill site and within the plastic waste sub-sector revealed that diverse actors are involved.²⁵ Interviews carried out with a variety of actors involved in these activities make it possible to identify some of the key actors and the relations between them.

Foragers collect materials from municipal containers and from the streets while scavengers collect items at the municipal landfill site. It is estimated that the Repi landfill site supports up to 500 on-site scavengers, including both temporary and permanent ones.²⁶ On the basis of the interviews conducted with individuals in this group, it can be stated that permanent scavengers are mainly young people from the nearby settlements. They are organized into gangs which control the resources collected on the site and whose power is based on seniority and local residency. Newcomers are forced to pay a certain amount of cash or share the collected items with local bullies. Scavengers then sell the recovered items for reuse or deliver the materials to small-scale industry owners and farmers with whom they have arrangements. Some municipal employees are also involved in scavenging.

The *qorales*—the local term for small-scale unregistered waste collectors—collect or buy items such as plastic materials, tin cans, bottles, scrap metal, and paper directly from the households and to a limited extent from the foragers and small-scale enterprises.²⁷ They deliver these items to the traders, locally called “wholesalers,” operating at Merkato, the largest market place in Addis Ababa. These wholesalers do not comply with governmental regulations, such as those relating to the payment of taxes. *Qorales* and wholesalers are linked through tightly drawn networks based on ethnic affinities, as both groups tend to

identify themselves as belonging to the Gurage ethnic group. Considerable differences in the income levels were found between the various categories of operators described above, with wholesalers being definitely better off and in an advantaged position in relation to the other groups.²⁸

The above operators are vertically linked, directly or indirectly, to the local recycling industry. Firstly, close to the landfill site, there is a small-scale industry which re-processes waste from the tanneries and carcasses to produce glue, locally called *colla*. There are two private “clandestine” *colla* producers in the area, each with approximately five employees. Five of them were interviewed informally by Yirgalem. The *colla* producers buy carcasses from on-site scavengers and/or gather the waste that tannery factories dump at the landfill site. Secondly, in the plastics sector, wholesalers supply the materials directly to factories located in Addis Ababa.²⁹ Solid waste collection is also performed by a few private registered enterprises and NGOs, whose role is relatively limited.

The informal system for the collection, trade and transformation of plastic and other waste materials appears to be highly organized. The informal plastics recovery system is particularly efficient, in that an estimated high volume of plastic materials (23 tons) is informally collected on a daily basis in the city and recycled.³⁰ This is related to the high local demand for plastic products manufactured from plastic waste, which in turn is related to the low purchasing power of a large part of the urban population. With regard to recycling in of plastics, as of other materials, the municipality has never developed any systematic efforts. Hence, recycling activities are mainly carried out by informal operators.

Despite the important role of informal operators in the handling of solid waste in Addis Ababa, the dominant attitude of the authorities was, until the early 2000s, one of disregard. Although the existence of informal operators in the sector was acknowledged at different levels of the city administration, their significant contribution to waste reduction, reuse and recycling was either unrecognized or ignored. No sound policy or incentives were directed at supporting and developing their activities, nor were there any attempts to integrate them into the formal waste management system.

Informal operators, on the other hand, tried to avoid any contact with the city officials, opting to operate clandestinely due to lack of trust and confidence in the authorities. For example, the small-scale *colla* producers by the landfill site occupy rather inaccessible and hidden locations, mainly to avoid being discovered by government officials.³¹ The business owners try to avoid any discussion with unfamiliar persons regarding *colla* production and hide from outsiders, instructing their employees not to talk about their activities. Any stranger coming to the site is perceived either as a potential business competitor or as a government agent who is seeking to enforce legal measures against their activities.³² Among the major reasons for these informal operators to work clandestinely are fear of eviction from their location and of unfair, unaffordable taxes.³³

In the plastics recovery system, similar secrecy and distrust were found on the basis of interviews with the various kinds of actors involved.³⁴ During fieldwork, Bjerkli found it very hard to talk to people operating in the informal recovery system and obtain information about their activities. Outsiders to the system are not trusted; only those having social relations with others within the system and knowing the rules and norms operating within it can be trusted. For example, it was almost impossible to find out which factories the “wholesalers” sold their plastics to and from whom the factories bought their plastic waste. During interviews, it surfaced that a major reason for this secrecy was that those involved feared that the government would find out about their “illegal” activities. They perceived

that this would result in increased taxes or even in the closing down of their businesses. Their lack of confidence in the government also stemmed from the fact that the authorities do not recognize their contribution and make decisions without consulting the people concerned. Respondents feared that the government would make decisions that would force them out of business. For example, at the time of fieldwork, the government had plans to relocate Menalish Terra (the area within Merkato market where “wholesalers” operate) to a site located far away on the periphery of the city. Since the informal operators could not count on any governmental support and were not consulted about decisions affecting them, many of them felt that they were better off without the government’s involvement. A new strategy by the municipality to introduce micro and small-scale enterprises (MSSEs) into the sector would only deepen these feelings and make informal actors wary of the government’s intentions, as will be further discussed below.

A tentative partnership between the municipality and the informal operators

In the early 2000s, there were increasing concerns about the image of Addis Ababa. When visiting the city, President Khadafi stated that Addis Ababa was too dirty to be the headquarters of the newly created African Union. This and other pressures apparently had an impact on the city administration. The strategy of the municipal government to tackle the waste problem took an important turn in 2003, when a provisional city government and a new mayor, Arkebe Oqubay, were appointed.

Prior to 2003, the municipality placed small containers in particular locations for waste collection at the housing block level. The municipal trucks emptied the containers irregularly and transported the waste to the Repi landfill. The collection of waste from the households to the containers was either done directly by the households themselves or by informal collectors paid by the households. This system was based on informal and oral arrangements between the informal waste collectors and the municipality. Having formerly ignored the role of informal waste collectors, the city authorities in 2003 initially appeared interested in recognizing and facilitating their work. Government officials apparently recognized that informal waste collectors were capable of collecting more waste than the municipal trucks operators. They realized that they could reduce the cost of waste collection by leaving the door-to-door collection to the informal waste collectors (i.e. the pre-collection stage). The city government withdrew from waste collection at the housing block level practiced earlier by the municipal truck fleets, as reported by Zelalem.³⁵ It restricted its operations to the transportation of waste from fewer and bigger containers that were placed at readily accessible locations. Informal waste collectors started to organize themselves into small-scale informal enterprises and were to some extent recognized or supported by the municipality.

In a second phase a few months later, however, the new city administration gradually developed an interest in fully controlling the pre-collection component of solid waste management. By the end of 2003, it started to advocate the need for further formalizing the pre-existing informal solid waste collecting enterprises. The government intervened in the sector by institutionalizing it and introducing new actors in the form of micro and small-scale enterprises (MSSEs). These enterprises were organized under an agency, the Micro and Small-Scale Enterprises Development Agency (MSSEDA), with offices at all levels of the city administration (city, sub-city, and *kebele*). According to Zelalem, this intervention was made without any kind of preliminary consultation and consensus with the pre-existing actors. The newly introduced actors, whose members were selected from among the unemployed by

the local authorities, therefore appeared as rivals to the pre-existing informal enterprises (and even to established formal private waste enterprises). Semi-structured interviews conducted by Zelalem with pre-existing formal private and informal actors, with the new MSSEs, and with *kebele*, sub-city, and city officials, elicited insights into this intervention and the responses to it.³⁶

The *kebele* authorities, played an important role in implementing the new strategy. Experiences varied across different *kebeles* in the city. The MSSEDA officials operating at *kebele* and sub-city levels adopted three different approaches. The first approach was to dispossess and evict the pre-existing solid waste collection enterprises from their service areas. Secondly, government officials adopted another mechanism by which the pre-existing enterprises were forced to be reorganized under the umbrella of MSSEDA, which in turn meant denying their rights and interests in organizing themselves as independent enterprises. In some cases the pre-existing enterprises were forced to merge with the newly organized MSSEs. Thirdly, in other cases the government officials avoided conflicts and evictions by deliberately organizing and deploying the MSSEs only in areas that were not served by any other enterprise.

The authorities employed various overt and covert means of intervention in areas where pre-existing enterprises were to be evicted. According to informants from private formal and informal enterprises, one of the overt interventions involved issuing official letters signed and stamped by *kebele* authorities and distributed to each household. The letters gave the impression that the MSSEs were the only legitimate enterprises and urged the households to terminate their contract with the former collectors and to enter into a new contract with the newly institutionalized MSSEs. This led to a systematic eviction of pre-existing enterprises from their established service areas. In other cases, the pre-existing enterprises were directly ordered to leave part or the whole of their service area for the newly established MSSEs. Due to such harsh interventions by the *kebele* officials, even the private formal enterprises were expelled from their service areas in favor of government-sponsored MSSEs. Similarly, the informal operators were offered few alternatives: at best, to share part of their service area with the MSSEs, or, in the worst case, to leave.³⁷ Another form of intervention used by the government officials to capture clients from pre-existing enterprises was to reduce the service charges to a lower level than those set by the pre-existing enterprises. According to Zelalem, the *kebele* officials along with the MSSEs promised to deliver their service at lower fees, often below a workable minimum price.

The pre-existing solid waste collectors, particularly the informal ones, responded in different ways to the newly introduced government-sponsored MSSEs, as revealed by interviews with formal and informal operators. They increased the frequency of collection, reduced collection fees, and rendered free supplementary services to improve their competitiveness.³⁸ They used informal networks to gather information, discuss current developments, and strategize how to react to government interventions. Most importantly, almost all of the interviewed pre-existing solid waste collectors, formal and informal, were strongly negative towards the newly integrated MSSEs. Hence, conflicts and hostilities developed as the dominant kinds of relationships between government-sponsored MSSEs and other formal or informal operators. Conflicts became sometimes serious and triggered clashes. One of the interviewed informal operators told how one man was killed in such a fight. There were also instances where in order to be heard the pre-existing actors used conflicts as a strategy to attract the attention of the *kebele* authorities and other government officials.

Justifications and outcomes of governmental intervention

From the interviews with officials at city and sub-city level it became apparent that the city government justified the need for the above-mentioned interventions in solid waste collection on the basis of two objectives. One objective was to ensure a more efficient and cost-effective solid waste collection by discouraging the more random waste collection activities carried out by the informal sector. The second objective was to generate employment opportunities in the sector through sponsoring MSSEs. These stated objectives were far from achieved and the intervention appeared to be more of a political exercise. The intervention was instrumental in recruiting new party members and ensuring political dominance and local surveillance. In this regard, Bjerkli underlined that the city administration of Addis Ababa was “highly politicized.”³⁹ Consequently, the result of the interventions was almost entirely to marginalize the pre-existing solid waste collecting enterprises and to disrupt the existing system, even though it was thriving in terms of both the volume of waste collected and the service catchment areas. Some areas were left without any door-to-door collection. Garbage piled up in the streets and along the streams of Addis Ababa. The number of illegal dump sites also increased.

The integration of MSSEs into the pre-existing solid waste collection system has contributed to the emergence of three predominant patterns of change in different city areas. The first is that the MSSEs have expanded at the expense of pre-existing informal and formal enterprises, as the latter were displaced or absorbed into the MSSEs. The second pattern is that both pre-existing and newly integrated actors have been functioning together in the same area with little conflict. A third pattern indicates that the pre-existing actors are on the recovery and reconquering collection areas as most of the MSSEs were dissolved shortly after they were established, as discussed below.

From the interviews, it became clear that the MSSEs faced serious challenges and intense conflicts involving the pre-existing informal and private formal actors. The informal and private enterprises were forced to spend their time, resources, and efforts engaging in a series of conflicts rather than focusing on their actual work. Moreover, the levels of income in both informal enterprises and MSSEs – that is, of the individuals engaged in waste collection across all enterprises – appear not to have increased to a reasonable level. Rather, judging from the interviews it seems that incomes have deteriorated further, mainly due to the prevailing “unhealthy competition” implemented simply for the sake of pushing some enterprises out of business. Most of the enterprises, and particularly those organized under MSSEs, had become weaker in terms of finances, material capacity, and employment stability.

The MSSEs were introduced mainly by the entrenched interests of the *kebele* authorities. Each *kebele* had its own target quota and officials were responsible and accountable for ensuring the realization of the intended targets. Their aim was to establish as many enterprises as possible so as to appear as loyal champions in implementing the city government’s program for creating “new employment.” To this end, putting pre-existing enterprises out of operation by offering lower service fees resulted in reducing employment in the pre-existing informal sector. It was a belief held among the interviewed officials that more than 10,000 new job opportunities were created in solid waste collection, but this seems far from having been achieved. In real terms, what the city government did was to institutionalize new enterprises under its auspices while simultaneously evicting the pre-existing actors. It created “new job opportunities” for those organized under the MSSEs,

while individuals working in the informal enterprises lost their jobs. This can only be described as “fake employment creation.”

Imbalances developed in the spatial distribution of enterprises operating across different *kebeles*, as some *kebeles* were oversupplied with solid waste collection enterprises, while others suffered from inadequacies in waste collection. MSSEs were mainly deployed in areas that were already served by the pre-existing enterprises, further contributing to the geographical imbalance in coverage. According to the interviews, MSSEs usually failed to sustain service delivery at the newly introduced collection rates and often dissolved after a short period of operation. This appeared to provide an opportunity for pre-existing informal actors to re-conquer their spaces of operation. But, the earlier slushing of fees by the MSSEs has complicated the situation, as households may refuse to accept newly adjusted collection fees.

Caricatures of partnerships and unresolved problems

The authors’ studies of the waste sector in Addis Ababa have shown varied and shifting relationships between the municipal authorities and small-scale operators in the sector. The attitudes of the local authorities towards small-scale operators have ranged from total neglect to authoritarian forms of partnerships that could be characterized as a form of control. The latter kind of relations are absent from DiGregorio’s and Medina’s categorization of relationships between informal actors and the state presented earlier in this article. These forms of control, however, should thus be included as a separate category within such categorizations.

Barriers or resistance to institutionalized relations have been expressed by both governmental actors and informal operators. In the studied setting, the nature of these relationships has reached the stage where, for the most part, informal operators (particularly in recycling) try to avoid any contact with the municipality. The local government is perceived as only interested in trying to impose new or increased taxes on people. In plastics recycling, the activities are run completely by informal actors and carried out totally outside the control of the municipality, which is unaware of and unconcerned about recycling. Many municipal employees were not aware of the magnitude or even existence of the activity.⁴⁰ Informal actors have also shown a remarkable level of agency. They have demonstrated an ability to negotiate, a flexibility to adapt to changes, and willingness when necessary to fight for their interests. This was evidently the case when informal collectors had to cope with the threat posed to their activities by the introduction of MSSEs.

The period 2003–2006 under Mayor Arkebe represented a new trend, as for the first time there was an attempt to support and collaborate with groups in the informal sector, which had traditionally been ignored by the authorities. This support was, however, short-lived as the local government soon proceeded to support competing actors, i.e. authorized small enterprises in the sector. This marginalized and threatened the livelihoods of pre-existing local scavengers and waste collectors and disrupted the informal waste collection system.⁴¹ The authorities employed authoritarian methods in order to impose their own political agenda, one driven by social control and opportunities for clientelism. The whole process was dictated by political motives of merely boosting employment figures and aimed at extending local political control. This finding is in accordance with what Bjerkli mentioned as the presence of a “highly politicized” government structure which was dominated by a high degree of upward accountability. The findings show that the authoritarian top-down

approach failed because it did not consider existing informal operators in the sector as possible partners. In planning and implementing development projects it is vital to understand and appreciate the existing service delivery mechanisms by informal entrepreneurs and seek ways of working with, rather than against, existing individuals, businesses, and structures.⁴² Ignoring and even undermining the existing informal system, and creating a clientele among another group of unemployed which was supposed to replace the former operators, can thus be described as a caricature of a partnership.

Undoubtedly, problems of competence and capacity in the local government have also hindered appropriate responses to the waste challenge. Among many problems, there is a high turnover of staff in charge of waste management due to politicization and frequent reforms of the administrative structures. Government officials have poor knowledge of the real situation of the informal solid waste sector and the resources for conducting studies on the sector may be lacking. While the difficulties faced by the local administration are important, however, the problem cannot be reduced to one of lack of competence, or lack of the appropriate technology, or of the “right” organizational set-up. The political and governance context is far more important. The outcomes of particular attempts at establishing collaboration with informal actors depend to a great extent on the nature of relationships between the state and/or local administration and other actors in particular contexts. In a way, what we have shown is a municipality temporarily adopting a strategy of collaboration and partnership with informal actors, in accordance with the calls of both donor agencies and some scholars, yet doing it within the framework of an authoritarian political culture that has dominated the history of Ethiopian administration. It is therefore doomed to fail.

According to UN-HABITAT, good governance involves the adoption of an “enabling approach” that allows all actors to be involved in all matters and decisions that affect their activity.⁴³ In contrast, as Onibokun remarks, in a number of African countries, “lack of good governance is at the root of most of their urban problems, particularly in waste management.”⁴⁴ In his view, “Both central and local governments lack democracy, transparency, accountability and cooperation with the public in their operations and processes and in their relationships with civil society.”⁴⁵ Others have also pointed to the central importance of the issue of governance in relation to service provision.⁴⁶

In the study setting, the authoritarian methods and the hidden agenda of the local authorities deepened the general mistrust of informal actors. The only realistic possibility for collaboration requires democratic accountability and participatory governance, more precisely a genuine recognition of informal actors and willingness to involve all actors in decision-making. In addition, it requires the provision of support in the form of access to credit, vocational training, and the provision of equipment and social and health services. Only then will informal actors trust the government and achieve some form of “social contract.” Participative governance also requires the strengthening of collective organizations among informal operators in order to facilitate collective representation of their interests when negotiating with other partners.

Notes

1. Demeke (2002) reported that according to the survey conducted by the CSA (the office of statistics in Ethiopia) up to 80 percent of the population in Addis Ababa was engaged in some form of informal income earning activity in 1997.
2. See for example Aagesen's study of Bangkok (2000), Medina (1997) on Cairo, and Bjerkli (2005) on Addis Ababa.
3. Naas and Rivke, 2004.
4. For example, Naas and Rivke (2004); Rouse (2004) as well as Asmamaw (2003), for Ethiopia.
5. Rouse, 2004, p. 9.
6. See for example, Azam and Mansoor, 2004.
7. For example, in Ethiopia, informal waste operators did not qualify for the Small Scale Income Generating Scheme which was intended to provide micro-credit facilities and training for poor urban dwellers (Demeke, 2002).
8. Medina, 1997, p. 14.
9. Rouse, 2004.
10. Rouse, 2004.
11. Medina, 1997.
12. Medina, 1997, pp. 16–17.
13. DiGregorio, 1994.
14. Azam and Mansoor, 2004, p. 471.
15. Van de Klundert and Lardinois, 1995, p. 16.
16. Aagesen, 2000.
17. Mkwela, 2001.
18. See for example Mugagga (2006) on Uganda.
19. Van de Klundert and Lardinois, 1995, p. 10.
20. The lowest administrative unit in Ethiopia.
21. Bjerkli, 2005.
22. Zelalem, 2006.
23. Yirgalem, 2001.
24. Yirgalem, 2001.
25. Yirgalem, 2001; Bjerkli, 2005.
26. Yirgalem, 2001.
27. The term *qorale* is the short form of the Amharic '*Korkoro yaleh*' (Have you any scrap metal?), which is what the young boys shout when out collecting.
28. The incomes of wholesalers were sometimes as high as 85 USD per day (Bjerkli, 2005).
29. Bjerkli, 2005.
30. Bjerkli, 2005.
31. Yirgalem, 2001.
32. Yirgalem, 2001.
33. Yirgalem, 2001.
34. Bjerkli, 2005.
35. Zelalem, 2006.
36. Zelalem, 2006.

37. Zelalem, 2006, p. 78
38. Zelalem, 2006.
39. Bjerkli, 2005, p. 89.
40. Bjerkli, 2005.
41. Zelalem, 2006.
42. Post et al., 2003.
43. UN-HABITAT, 2002, p. 8.
44. Onibokum, 1999b, p. 240.
45. Onibokum, 1999a, p. 231.
46. Nunan and Sattertwate, 2001.

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Gender Fictions and Gender Tensions Involving “Traditional” Asante Market Women

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Abstract: This paper analyses the changing relations between organised women market traders and rulers in a West African context, from a distant past to the present. It shows how political elites have used market traders as loyal supporters and as scapegoats for many centuries. These relations have taken a convoluted path that alternates between alliance and repression, in the context of shifts in the political and economic environment. Notorious episodes of price control and market demolitions from 1979 to 1984 are only the most dramatic moments in a long history of official intervention in trade and suspicion of prominent traders. Protecting traders as local citizens alternated with attacking traders as scapegoats for the ills and frustrations of national economic life. The paper focuses on “traditional” forms of organisation among market women, describing their political role, in terms of their interactions between their female leaders and the authorities. It shows how the constant need for negotiation reinforced group loyalty and how such forms of organisation have displayed resilience and adapted to various economic and political shifts.

Introduction

The West African market woman is one of the most prominent iconic figures in the ethnography and journalism of the whole region. From the earliest travelers’ accounts to modern popular culture, she appears as a figure who symbolizes both devoted maternity and irreconcilable difference.¹ Her public persona of aggressive, shameless persistence in the pursuit of profit was perhaps somewhat unsettling to European gender assumptions and to Europeanized African aspirations. Southern Ghanaian towns, including Accra (the capital) and Kumasi (the second largest city), reported in the most recent census figures that nearly 80 percent of the adult female population works as traders. Her continuing economic centrality at the heart of expanding West African economies was equally unsettling to abstract development models that assumed progress through stages to modernity.

Yet the same characteristics make women traders difficult to digest culturally in many other parts of the world.² Even more often, bitter and occasionally violent conflicts flare up between market and street traders and city governments over urban land use, profiteering and

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/pdfs/v11i2-3a4.pdf>

licensing issues.³ Newspaper reports from across Africa (Zimbabwe, Malawi, Cote d’Ivoire, and most recently Nairobi) put market and street traders at the center of many appalling incidents of violence, whether by rebellious youth or by a government acting against unruly economic sectors. The market and the street are global metaphors for public opinion, but they also operate as material venues for the contestation of central government policies that impact the daily fight by ordinary Africans for survival and political expression.

The longstanding dominance of marketplace systems in the West African regional economy challenges the assumption that today’s global informalization is a unique and recent process. For centuries, these systems managed international trade across the Sahara and through the Atlantic Coast, a trade that shaped the economic and cultural institutions of West Africa in so many ways. Governing leaders were expected to promote the prosperity of their constituencies by fostering trade, yet successive governments were often suspicious of traders’ wealth and influence. Besides gathering people and products destined for export, markets redistributed crops and other key resources across the ecological boundary between forest and grassland. Substantial continuities can be traced through today’s markets with the locations, connections, identities and trading practices of years past.

Yet these markets do not simply perpetuate a timeless tradition because it is all their people know or can imagine. Aspects of Ghana’s markets that are now firmly enthroned as traditional, such as the “market queens,” evolved into their present forms at specific historical moments, in response to concrete economic pressures. The gender and ethnic demography of trade, the credit and transport patterns in specific commodities, and markets can all be shown to have changed dramatically, even within living memory. In fact, the strong networks of traders, organized around shared commodity and locality interests, enable them to adapt more quickly and smoothly to abrupt shifts in commercial policy, food supply, consumer demand, and the labor market.

In Kumasi, consumers in the 1970s and 80s were not loyal customers of open markets because of cultural conservatism or unfamiliarity with more “modern” grocery and department stores. The more rigid relationships and procedures of the formal sector, inspired and to some degree enforced by Western business, proved less capable of dealing with the challenges of contemporary political and economic turbulence. Goods kept flowing through marketplace channels when store shelves were bare. The “informal” sector maintained its organizational integrity and continuity while “formal” institutions were falling apart. Market and street traders provided lifesaving supplements to the employment, income, food and consumer goods that more official or formal sectors of the economy could not supply, but at the same time they constituted highly visible evidence of the inadequate performance of these “modern” sectors. These paradoxes kept traders and successive governments at each others’ throats, because neither could do without the other entirely.

Research Methodology

Studying the membership organizations of Ghanaian market traders formed part of a larger enquiry into economic and other aspects of market life that began with dissertation research in 1978 and continues to the present. Details of leadership practices such as dispute settlement were documented most fully from 1978-80, during a period of full-time participant observation

and interviewing in Kumasi Central Market. I spent most days with traders in the market or accompanying them on buying trips to other rural supply areas or other regional markets. Three heads of state followed each other, with General Akuffo in 1978, including the first brief term in office of Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings from June to December 1979, and ending with elected President Hillal Limann in office in 1980. These regime changes enabled close observation of interactions between market leaders and both military and civilian officials. The effect of price controls and other commercial policy changes on ordinary traders was also evident in their personal accounts and a sample survey of the central portion of the market, conducted in 1979.⁴

Information on historical trends comes from combining ethnographic and archival sources. Dramatic enforcement strategies such as beatings, market demolitions, and confiscation of traders' goods stimulated much discussion of current and past market conditions. Older and more experienced traders commented on how these episodes intensified police practices seen intermittently over the past several decades since they had started trading. Likewise, further fieldwork with Kumasi traders on other subjects since 1980 indicates that the general outlines of group activity remain recognizable, although adapting to the changing political and economic environment. Searching archival collections at the Asantehene's Record Office in Kumasi and the National Archives branches in Accra and Kumasi turned up petitions from traders to colonial officers and the Asantehene over Kumasi market disputes, wartime price controls, and market construction and taxation policies during the colonial period.⁵

Additional periods of fieldwork in Ghana enabled me to monitor changing economic and political conditions and their effects on market trade. Subsequent projects related to rural crop processing and women traders brought me back to Kumasi during 1982-4, 1990-1, 1994-5, 1999, and 2006. An ILO consultancy kept me in Ghana during 1983, when the second government of Flight Lt. Jerry Rawlings brought the most intense attacks on traders and their national marketplace system. Life histories of older Asante women traders, recorded in 1994-5, gave especially rich information from market leaders and on the first half of the twentieth century. Some elderly women were able to recall stories from their mothers about times before the British came. Reorganization made archival collections more accessible and brought to light additional documents related to trade. The already rich historical scholarship on precolonial and colonial Asante continued to multiply, while over the years my ethnographic record itself became a kind of historical document in itself. These opportunities for long-term research and the relatively deep historical record allow the identification of trends in market organization and leadership throughout the long twentieth century.

Market Commodity Groups

The market woman has been an icon of West African trading traditions in ethnographers' and travelers' accounts since Europeans first began to visit the Guinea Coast.⁶ The self-confidence and group solidarity of women traders impressed them partly because it contradicted European gender stereotypes, although comparable enclaves were not unknown in the European informal

sector. The resilience and persistence of traders in the face of intermittently hostile colonial and national policy initiatives and other difficult conditions testified to their vital economic role. The same difficulties generated powerful loyalties among traders to their organizations based on local markets and long-distance networks. Leaders and elders provide valuable services on a daily basis which their members could not easily do without, and orchestrate responses to serious crises that preserve critical resources.

Markets throughout Ghana were organized along consistent lines when this research began in 1978.⁷ Each basic group was identified with a single local market, but only the smallest markets had one group for all traders. In any larger market (and certainly Kumasi Central Market, the largest single market in the country) the basic units were further specialized by the commodity or range of goods that its members sold. Market commodity group leaders were elected by each group’s council of elders from within their ranks. For smaller groups the elders comprise all mature traders over about forty years of age, while in larger groups this category of mature traders votes for representative elders who constitute their council. These same elders can remove a leader for malfeasance, but she normally serves for life.

Qualities considered positive in a potential candidate include her long experience in the market, her good reputation among her colleagues for reliability and honesty, and her demonstrated skill in settling minor disputes among her immediate neighbors as an elder. Any influential connections to the palace, the government, or a political party are legitimate assets because she may tap them later for group advantage as well as for getting elected. Daughters, nieces, and granddaughters of previous group queens gain valuable knowledge and connections by assisting them while in office. Such a descendant rarely succeeds directly, but often becomes a leader later in life.

The Kumasi Central Market commodity groups generally included the retailers who had stalls or tables in the market itself, the travelers, who brought goods in from various supply areas, and the wholesalers, who received shipments from travelers for resale to retailers. Integrating these three categories of traders into one group meant that most buying and selling transactions took place between traders answerable to the same leader. Primary competitors also would normally be members of the same group. Thus, the interactions most likely to motivate bad behavior or give rise to disputes took place between two group members. Instead of undermining group solidarity, this structured internal heterogeneity made it more useful to each subgroup of members and thus reinforced their loyalty.

Like wholesalers, the queens need to be constantly available in the market, so they are often drawn from the ranks of wholesalers. When homebound due to age and frailty, a commodity queen usually chooses a deputy to perform her duties until she actually dies. This deputy does not automatically replace her, nor does her daughter or granddaughter inherit the position, but the successor must be selected by the elders. A market queen should have some success as a trader, to demonstrate her competence and maintain a respectable public image, but the wealthiest wholesalers tend not to seek this office. Their time is too valuable for generating income to spend it on settling minor quarrels and attending meetings and funerals to represent the group. On the way up, they may well have suppressed the character traits of impartiality, calmness, and sympathy desired for group leadership.

Powerful group loyalties were clearly anchored in dispute settlement services, which were

consistently mentioned first in interviews with leaders, elders, and followers alike. Settling market disputes on-site was much quicker and cheaper than any available alternative, whether provided by a chief, policeman, or magistrate. One trader explained that it would cost her less to lose a case in the market than to win a case in court, considering the time lost, possible bribes, lawyers' pay, and other legal fees. Traders who were "known" to the commodity queen could expect fair treatment and a judge fully aware of their commercial realities. Many market conventions like bargaining procedures, steady customer privileges, and space allocation had no legal standing in national or chiefly courts. They could only be enforced among traders whose businesses depended on returning to trade in the same location regularly. Traders needed to remain in good standing with the commodity queen so that they could bring their own disputes to her in the future. Refusal to abide by a leader's decision was taken more seriously than the original offense, and punished by ostracism and/or fines paid to the market queen herself. In one such case, bystanders commented that the offending trader would be ashamed to show her face in the Kumasi Market again, and that others would hesitate to do business with her.

This peer pressure not only enforced commercial conventions but facilitated the extension of credit among members. Wholesalers could extend credit to retailers who were fellow group members with some degree of confidence that they would abide by the commodity queen's judgment if problems arose. Short term credit was a critical factor to maintaining a smooth flow of goods through the high-volume wholesale yards in Kumasi Central Market. The direction of credit changed seasonally for most foodstuffs, so that today's creditor might be asking for credit herself before the year's end. Outside trading partners, including farmers, would also extend credit more freely to Kumasi traders because they could also bring a bad debt case before the trader's group leader. One defaulting trader was excoriated in 1979 for trying to frighten her farmer creditor away; by saying the market queen would have him beaten. Traders observing the case commented that this was not only a personal insult to the queen's character but would also hurt fellow traders by making farmers in general more reluctant to give them goods on credit.

Market leadership institutions incorporate organizational features from a variety of models active within the local community, most notably ethnic traditions. The great majority of traders in Kumasi Central Market sell local foodstuffs. In most of these groups, Asante women predominate, and they draw on Asante chiefly traditions to legitimate their status. Their procedures of dispute settlement, election, and indirect speech on very formal occasions reflect values of consultation and mutual consent very central to the broader Akan culture. These market queens are titled (*ohemma*) like the renowned Queen Mother of Asante, but not linked explicitly to the chiefship hierarchy that pairs male and female chiefs at each level. Where Asante men predominate, mostly in craft groups, they seem more careful to avoid the equivalent male title (*ohene*) without palace precedent. Commodities sold mainly by men or women from Northern ethnic groups, including butcher meat, chickens, shea butter and kola, appropriate the Hausa terminology for male leaders (*sarkin*) and female leaders (*magazia*). Kola traders described the dispute settlement skills of their leader in terms linked to their Islamic modes of jurisprudence. He had the ability to tell who was lying, to see the truth, and decided cases based on firm, clear principles. Asante traders described a skillful leader as settling cases

so that they stayed settled, deciding on an outcome each side could live with. In times of public crisis, the male and/or Northern group leaders close ranks behind the yam queen. Though they have little interaction with the market queens in quiet times, they allow her to speak for them and represent the market as a whole.

Asante chiefship traditions also institutionalize specific forms of accountability that protect traders from arbitrary or autocratic leaders. No important case can be decided or policy decision made without consulting the elders extensively as part of the process. Disputes brought to the market queens are often appeals from a lower-level elder who has been unable to make a decision stick. Each party narrates their story of the events in question, fully and repeatedly, and consults their own sympathetic elders. The market queen, as in chiefly courts, only chimes in with her final pronouncement after all the elders present have proposed their own solutions in turn. The consensus emerging from increasingly senior elders becomes evident to the parties involved as well as the attentive leader. Whenever a market queen goes out on official business, even funeral attendance, she goes with two or more of her elders. They advise her, but they also keep her honest. They witness the course of events, potentially providing independent testimony that can report her underhanded actions or confirm the accuracy of her account. Two or three other commodity queens accompany the yam queen when she goes to represent the market as a whole.

Commodity groups also selectively incorporate elements of terminology and procedure from Christian church women’s fellowships, the co-operative movement, and trade unions. The council of elders is also referred to as the “committee,” with the market queen as president and other members appearing as vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and sergeant at arms or “police.”

Several of the larger groups had hired a male “secretary” who kept tactful minutes of meetings, issued membership cards, recorded dues payments in “passbooks,” and sometimes recorded credit transactions. With the increase in education levels among younger women, these men are now frequently replaced by one of the women traders when they retire. Drivers and butchers (virtually all male) registered as trade unions, although most of them were also self-employed. When government policies favored cooperatives for loans and other assistance, several commodity groups registered as cooperatives. By 2006, the neoliberal policy emphasis on entrepreneurship led a few of the more up-to-date traders to use the term “microenterprise.”

Deep Roots for Trade and Intervention

The long history of political manipulation of trade in West Africa lends legitimacy to contemporary government interventions and recent aggressive commercial policies. A ruler’s responsibility for promoting the prosperity of loyal countrymen finds familiar or expected expression in protecting their commercial interests. Although the Asante were only under British colonial rule from 1898 to 1957, they drew upon a very deep Akan heritage of intercontinental trade. Caravans had linked Akans to North Africa across the Sahara since before Roman times, and these carried Arab merchants and chroniclers throughout the open grasslands at least from the tenth century AD.⁸ Ivory, gold, kola nuts, and slaves from the forest region occupied by Akans were exchanged for cloth, blankets, leather, livestock, salt, metalware, and cowrie shell currency. Portuguese ships first reached the West African coast in

the fourteenth century, making regular trading voyages to Elmina, in present-day Ghana, and other port towns. Early Portuguese chroniclers noted that Akans supplied a large part of the gold, kola, and slaves available, using trading skills and capital developed in the caravan trade.⁹

Prominent early Africa traders in what is now Ghana included the Akanny, who organized a tight network of diaspora communities in towns throughout the area, with parallels to the Hanseatic League, still powerful then in Northern Europe, or the Aro-Chukwu financial network in Eastern Nigeria, organized around shrines.¹⁰ At least until 1700, African local authorities tightly regulated and taxed trade, protecting the trading position of their citizens and playing different European nationalities off against each other as these jostled for exclusive access.¹¹ Long after coastal chiefs lost the power to forbid direct trade between European and inland traders, wealthy local intermediaries still provided essential services as credit references, landlords, brokers, and negotiators. Periodic foodstuffs markets fed the growing non-farming population and reprovisioned departing ships (even with “ship’s bread” baked from local grain.) DeMarees’ description of reserved spaces and commodity specialization in these markets suggests their organization along the lines of contemporary market groups.

As Akans moved deeper into the forest, they founded Kumasi to control existing trade routes leading to important market towns on the northern edge of the forest, such as Salaga and Bonduku. By the eighteenth century, the Asante Confederacy had coalesced around Kumasi, becoming the dominant imperial power in the region.¹² Its chiefs actively manipulated markets by closing their borders to hostile neighbors, expelling competitive foreigners, and invading uncooperative rivals to force market access. The male *Asantehene* and female *Asantehemma*, along with their major subordinate chiefs, participated in trade directly, through designated royal treasury officials who assembled trading caravans, and indirectly, by loaning money from their official treasuries to prominent private citizens for trade. These chiefs appointed officials who kept order and collected taxes in markets inside Asante, although most chiefs received food for their families and entourages as tribute from farm villages peopled by their subjects or slaves. Kumasi, the royal capital, had a more substantial commoner population, which bought its food and consumer goods in several markets.¹³

The British colonial government promoted the commercial interests of its own citizens and officials just as openly as the Asante had. They established the Gold Coast Colony over the first half of the nineteenth century in response to the petitions and manipulations of British traders reluctant to operate within a nascent Fante Confederacy. The reorganization of import trading along lines more favorable to Europeans began on the coast, where the larger European firms pushed aside the wealthy Africans and independent European traders during the early nineteenth century.¹⁴ The passbook system replaced them with more reliably subordinate customers who deposited security with the firms and took that amount in goods for resale. Passbook holders were often illiterate women, while ambitious African men preferred the autonomy of the learned professions as lawyers, ministers, doctors, and bankers.¹⁵

Once they defeated the Asante in 1896, British colonial authorities dismantled the royal border controls and promised safe access for non-Asante traders and employees. The administration of trade through court officials and state loans collapsed, and British import and export firms now enjoyed privileged access to services and assets such as military protection, subsidized rail transport, credit, and prime downtown locations. Coastal ethnic groups and

Asante political exiles became the categories of African traders with the most capital and upward mobility. “Northerners” moved into Kumasi from Salaga and other grassland towns, extending their connections to trading networks for “Northern” commodities such as kola, livestock, and grain.¹⁶ Asante men moved in large numbers into the lucrative and rapidly expanding cocoa industry, as farmers and brokers outside the marketplace system. This left market trading within Ashanti Region increasingly to women and to immigrant men from the Northern Territories and further afield.¹⁷

With this demographic shift came a surge of organizational innovation, as women and immigrant men needed to renegotiate their relationships with both British colonial officials and the Asante chiefly hierarchy, which retained considerable power under indirect rule. The first official record of a commodity group came as early as 1915, when smoked fish sellers (mainly Fante) in the overcrowded main market downtown met with city officers about sanitation and congestion.¹⁸ Instead of rebuilding or expanding it, the city eventually moved the Central Market to a hastily filled swamp near the railway station with room for growth.¹⁹ Elderly traders recalling the relocation process in 1979 described their group leaders preparing lists of bona fide traders and collecting money to build communal sheds or stalls.

During the 1930s and 1940s, pressures to negotiate with colonial officials over site access and fee schedules led to the formalization of the present system of commodity group organizations. Once colonial officers realized how promptly traders would pay rent for market stalls or daily ticket fees for market access, revenues from rebuilt markets became the mainstay of local government finances across Ashanti Region.²⁰ In order to retain this income stream, local officials compromised with market leaders on the enforcement of legal regulations that could interfere with business and promoted local traders over traders based elsewhere (except Britain).²¹ In Kumasi, population growth brought a rapid expansion in the volume of foodstuffs traded, leading traders to found more commodity groups and organize new wholesale yards.

Once the British established colonial institutions like barracks, prisons, and schools they had a vested interest in keeping food prices low, so as to save money directly when buying food for them and indirectly by keeping wages low. During the First and Second World Wars, military recruitment and training raised market demand for food after siphoning off young men from the active farm labor force. The rising cost of living brought demands for wage increases in the military, civil service, and mines. British colonial authorities tried to enforce price controls in regional capitals and mining towns (including Kumasi and nearby Obuasi).²²

They also intervened openly in the 1940s to protect the market share of the leading British firms, when wartime conditions made shipping risky and costly. Import quotas for individual firms were based on their percentage of trade before the war. Lebanese, Indian, and United States firms had no success arguing for higher quotas to compensate for British wartime shortages of goods and transport or postwar rationing. British firms asked successfully for higher official prices that covered their rising costs.²³

Nationalist Alliances

The struggle for independence brought a solid and visible alliance between Gold Coast nationalists and market traders. Nationalist politicians defended market traders against British charges of causing price inflation and noted the much looser price control enforcement on

imports by European firms than by Lebanese and African importers. African economic resentment was directed towards the British authorities and firms, giving ordinary traders the position of fellow victims.

One of the first Gold Coast collective actions that attracted wide international attention was the cocoa boycott of 1936-7. After world cocoa prices fell sharply during the Great Depression, the few international firms buying cocoa for export agreed to divide up the cocoa producing areas to avoid direct competition between their agents. The nationalists blamed these arrangements for the continuing price collapse, and convinced farmers and brokers to refuse to sell their cocoa. The cocoa holdup was so complete partly because its organizers also boycotted consumer goods imported by the same large firms who bought cocoa.²⁴ Market traders who sold these goods publicized and enforced that side of the boycott among the cocoa farmers' wives and mothers, whose demands for new cloths might have undermined their resolve. Just such family pressures eventually led laborers and caretakers to sell their shares of the cocoa harvest, and not return empty-handed to their villages far to the north.²⁵

J. B. Danquah, the leading nationalist figure throughout the 1940s, praised market women as heroically devoted mothers, hardworking and underpaid.²⁶ Market women returned this support by collecting and contributing money for the nationalist parties, making speeches at their rallies and mobilizing their market colleagues and commercial contacts to support them.²⁷ Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) continued to draw on market women, among others, for financial and political support. Within a few years of independence in 1957, President Nkrumah had adopted not only colonial price controls but the colonial rhetoric that blamed selfish, parasitic traders for the high prices of food and consumer goods, with special condemnation of Lebanese and women traders.

Several of the market leaders interviewed during initial fieldwork (1978-80) had lived through this period of political party rivalry in the 1950s, just before and after independence, and most of them did not remember it as empowering. Each party tried to get their candidates elected as commodity group leaders when these offices came open, counting on them to deliver votes from their group members for the elections that began in 1951. Kumasi was a bastion of Danquah's Progress Party, which was associated with Asante chiefs and cocoa farmers. Less privileged urban residents more often supported the CPP. Each party maintained gangs of young men, who roamed through Kumasi intimidating supporters of the other by assaulting them, blowing up their houses, and the like.²⁸ These rival gangs rioted in Kumasi Central Market in January 1955, and market leaders made highly visible targets. Several of the older leaders mentioned they had had to leave town for their home villages and hide there for several years, until the violence died down. These memories discouraged several market leaders from declaring any party affiliation when elections were held again in 1979, and even as late as 1994. On the other hand, one elderly CPP loyalist cheerfully resumed her place as a commodity group leader when the election of President Limann returned the CPP network to power in October 1979 under its new name, the People's National Party (PNP).

Under Nkrumah's one-party banner of African Socialism in the 1960s, commercial policies turned increasingly hostile to independent traders. He nationalized an existing chain of department stores (Lebanese and not British-owned) to found the Ghana National Trading Corporation, which also had a food section. The most direct confrontation came from the Ghana

Food Distribution Corporation, which sold locally grown foodstuffs at its kiosks outside markets. The problems its male employees had securing supplies and avoiding spoilage of fresh produce still drew derisive comments from women traders in the 1980s. “They handled tomatoes like they were plantains. They had to ask their sisters how to trade.” While Nkrumah’s socialist initiatives never seriously challenged the commercial primacy of the marketplace organizations, they did monopolize public capital and policy support. Groups considered progressive or modern, including the state enterprises, trade unions, and professional associations, participated much more in what political or economic consultation remained under the one-party state.

Politicians meanwhile retained important patronage connections to the marketplace system. The sheer numbers of traders and their group cohesion made their backing valuable for collecting money and turning out crowds for rallies. Officials enjoying preferential access to imports or manufactures sold them for cash to the experienced traders willing to retail them openly. Market stalls, passbooks and “chits” (notes for allocations of factory goods and imports) made well-appreciated rewards for loyal political supporters, and also good severance gifts for ex-wives and girlfriends. Traders with long market careers complained about these inexperienced upstarts who made windfall profits, but they also cultivated their own relationships with store managers and police officers through kinship links or regular gifts.

Dr. Kofi Busia and his Progress Party won the election held after Nkrumah’s overthrow by a military coup in 1967, and remained in power from 1969 to 1972. President Busia was a champion of free-market policies, yet he still felt obligated to prove his good intentions immediately by enforcing price controls and arresting traders. His most famous initiative, the 1969 Aliens Compliance Order, could be interpreted as either attacking or supporting market traders.²⁹ Although it sparked an exodus of foreign cocoa laborers, Busia explained that the law was aimed at traders from Nigeria or Lebanon who had market stalls, or operated well below the level where foreign expertise or capital was arguably necessary. In Kumasi Central Market, a number of 1979 stallholders had acquired their stalls and other assets such as sewing machines very cheaply from foreigners leaving in a hurry in 1969. Although the expulsion made space for Ghanaian entrepreneurs in the short run, Nigeria later took its turn at expelling Ghanaians in 1983.

Military Rule (1972-79)

Despite the contradictions inherent in their situation, or perhaps because of them, government policy towards market traders stabilized into a cyclical pattern during a series of military regime changes through the 1970s. After overthrowing President Busia in 1972, General Acheampong led the National Redemption Council (1972-5) and the Supreme Military Council (1975-8). Raiding episodes followed each reorganization of the governing coalition, a pattern hard to predict. Attacks on the usual targets would be followed by a period of recovery, when little attention was paid to the prices and sources of goods. Traders with sufficient capital could ride out such oscillations by charging a high enough markup during quiet times to compensate for what had been confiscated the last time. Close family or business ties to well-placed soldiers

also brought timely warnings to stay at home when a raid was planned.

Kumasi residents and traders reported a more predictable annual cycle of price control enforcement by 1978. In the fall, after the cocoa harvest put money in people's pockets and cocoa exports renewed the supply of foreign exchange in the Bank of Ghana, city market stalls filled with new stocks ready for Christmas shoppers. Around November, there was usually a price crackdown that lasted long enough for the soldiers to collect some money and make their own Christmas purchases at the lower official prices. Once they had finished shopping, the police and soldiers considerably left the markets alone, so that others could buy or sell without fear.³⁰

The governing elite remained dependent on the continuing viability of the marketplace system for many unacknowledged services. Without smugglers and hoarders, this elite might run short of high-status foods, drinks and other luxury goods. The poor might be willing to rebel if they lacked the minimum level of subsistence goods still available through these markets, from overseas and local illegal sources. The market also offered the poorest citizens self-employment which, although underpaid, defused or at least dampened the time bomb of rising unemployment. Meanwhile, national leaders continued to deflect blame for the country's increasingly desperate economic situation from themselves onto the convenient stereotype of the wealthy woman trader. Price controls on imports and manufactures remained on the books, always available for enforcement whenever a display of political bravado was needed.

During the Acheampong period, corruption reached levels which even other military officers suspected was unsustainable. In July 1978, he was in turn overthrown by Lt. Colonel Akuffo, who also arrested other notorious public figures but did not impose dramatic punishments or fines commensurate with their gains. He ordered strict enforcement of existing price controls in July and again in November 1978, maintaining the episodic rhythm of market raids. His most innovative tactic, a total currency exchange in March 1979, did target hoards of cash held by corrupt ex-officials and wealthy traders, although arguably sparing those whose bank connections had stayed current.

These episodic raids respected another consistent limit: they always focused on the sections selling cloth and other imports or manufactured goods. Basic local foodstuffs were not standard enough in quality and quantity to set official prices easily, and perhaps the nationalist focus on international terms of trade had some lingering effect. These were the listed "essential commodities" subject to price controls, a category dating from the Second World War. Traders selling these had adapted to the high risk with unusual selling practices that restricted the display of goods and kept most of the stock at a safe distance. A handful of empty cans on a table indicated what canned food was available, once the buyer passed inspection. Another strategy, popular for rice and sugar, was for a wholesaler to hire or sponsor a retailer with no stall to sell from a metal basin on the ground. These were always young, strong men and women, who could run away fast when inspectors arrived. Cloth sellers with stalls in prime locations learned to open their doors only a few inches, sitting inside in the dark with only a half dozen pieces. The owner was always away when known or suspected spies tried to buy something. Traders with weak nerves reported deciding to sell local foodstuffs, which after all took up the majority of the market. Traders who flourished despite the pressure were reputed to have special protection, whether from family connections, magical paraphernalia, or so-called

“bottom power.”³¹ Gender tensions within the lineage and in marriage and parental relations acted as a focal point for economic frustrations that threatened accepted normal standards of child support, meal preparation, mutual respect, and social commitment.³² The iconic market woman presented a pre-positioned lightning rod and scapegoat for all that was wrong in the economy and at home.³³

Commodity group leaders in cloth or provisions (packaged foods) had once been local notables, proud to display their authority in their base of operations. Now market leaders in these groups made such easy targets for arrest that they could not appear openly in the market to settle disputes or represent their group in public. Existing cloth and provisions leaders announced their retirement and stopped coming to market, one by one. Only a few decades before, market elections had been hotly contested, but now no one else was willing to accept these positions, and be identified as one of “those” wealthy traders. Even basic member services could hardly be maintained, such as dispute settlement or representation at funerals or negotiations, unless leaders could be accessible and speak openly. The long hiatus left these groups slow to revive, even after price controls were officially dropped in 1984. Only the yam queen still had an annual Christmas interview on national television, describing the abundance of yams amid scenes of holiday shoppers thronging Kumasi Central Market.

Under military rule, published rhetoric denouncing market women became more and more extreme. In newspaper articles and letters, the image of the poor, hard-working mother trader dropped out of usage entirely, displaced by the evil “market queen.”³⁴ She could be a group leader or simply a wealthy wholesaler, but the media demonized her for her relative success in preserving a reliable income, compared to people who deserved it more: salaried, better educated formal sector employees (predominantly male). As the Ghanaian economy continued to deteriorate, real incomes plummeted with no credible policy response. These diatribes constructed even ordinary traders as grasping viragos responsible for every kind of economic hardship, “big cheats and nation wreckers.”³⁵ Such discourse created an atmosphere that permitted physical repression of traders to intensify rapidly.

Markets under Attack

The pattern of episodic price control raids on imports and manufactures traders persisted while Acheampong was succeeded by Akuffo in 1978, then Akuffo by Rawlings under the brief 1979 Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) regime and then Rawlings by President Limann after the 1979 election. Flight-Lieutenant J. J. Rawlings had significantly intensified the pattern from June to October 1979, but it quickly reasserted itself after his handover to elected civilian rule. The AFRC “housecleaning exercise” still invoked the corrupt or wealthy trader as the targeted “hoarder,” but reached far beyond the familiar list of “essential commodities” with published official prices.³⁶

Soldiers in Kumasi now also took over formal sector stores and market locations devoted to local foodstuffs, not just cloth and imports. They sold off all sorts of goods at prices they set on

the spot, often by figuring one half or one tenth the previous price. Confiscations and forced sales destroyed many Kumasi traders' capital, and a handful endured public flogging. Those traders with any capital left tried to keep it safe by suspending trade; as long as they had savings to live on they could stay home. The poorest traders, who lived hand to mouth and took goods on supplier credit, were disproportionately exposed to these dangers. They had to keep coming in and trying to earn something, even under the least promising and riskiest conditions, or go hungry with their families. Market leaders scrambled to find a strategy that moderated the increasingly arbitrary price controls and unpredictable violence facing their desperate constituents.

The yam queen and her colleagues tried to negotiate official prices for local foodstuffs, since none had existed before, so traders who abided by them could then avoid harassment. They sought out meetings with the Market Manager, the Kumasi Metropolitan Authority and even the Regional Commissioner, as relatively neutral senior authorities who could set price levels in public that enforcers would have to accept. Unfortunately their authority over military personnel proved unreliable. After market leaders invested considerable time in listing quality grades and agreeing on prices for sample specimens, they discovered that soldiers in the market ignored these price lists. If traders had reduced their prices in advance, the soldiers still cut them to one-half or one-quarter the new price.

By contrast, male occupational groups in and around Kumasi received very different treatment from the AFRC during price control enforcement. Truck drivers, spare parts dealers, butchers, and adinkra cloth printers, among others, negotiated their official price levels in relation to prices for their inputs. The military authorities had approached them to start talks before their control prices were announced, and the prices agreed upon were then respected.

Military authorities also summoned the market queens to ad hoc meetings with delegations of farmers or soldiers, but these were quite different from meetings with male groups. Elderly market queens complained of the time and energy consumed by frequent meetings, but all the market elders complained bitterly of the disrespect they faced in the meetings called by soldiers. Despite the attendance of civilian government officials, traders found that the promised negotiations were a sham. The most basic conventions of negotiation and dispute settlement were violated. The time and place were set unilaterally; the soldiers in fact commandeered the commodity group meeting room in the middle of a peak trading day. Most outrageously, the policy decisions had already been taken and were simply being announced, with no opportunity for traders to state their case in a meaningful way or propose alternatives. Traders were subjected to humiliating harangues---"they speak to us like we are children, when we are old enough to be their mothers!" Their carefully honed negotiating skills were tacitly dismissed and rendered useless and besides, "how can you talk to a gun?" The chances of positive participation in any kind of political process seemed very remote.

As the handover to civilian rule approached, Rawlings made one last effort to leave a lasting mark on the national marketplace system. On September 5th, 1979, Makola #1, the most famous market in Accra, was blown up with dynamite, and those in each regional capital faced demolition over the next several days. Kumasi City Council members reportedly argued successfully with the soldiers there to demolish only the outlying sections and spare the oldest section, within the original walls. Still, incoming President Limann found it necessary to

validate his political credentials with a new episode of strict enforcement of price control regulations soon after taking office in October 1979.

When the December 31 Revolution in 1981 returned Flt. Lt. Rawlings to power as head of state with his People’s National Defence Council (PNDC) regime, he immediately reinstated the extra-legal confiscations and violent harassment of the AFRC period. Since I was living in Accra (the coastal capital) from 1982-84 and traveling to aid project villages in different regions, I could observe events in various parts of the country and monitor their impact on villagers as well as passing through Kumasi repeatedly. Interactions between commodity group leaders and the regime reached a new low point in 1982-3 during this early PNDC period. This time, Rawlings seemed determined to destroy or at least dethrone the marketplace system permanently.

The PNDC made strenuous efforts to set up parallel distribution channels that would bypass market traders altogether. Possessing commercial quantities of food was grounds for arrest, and considered *prima facie* evidence of hoarding. Each farm village was exhorted to organize a Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), which would sell their produce directly to institutions and consumer cooperatives from urban neighborhoods. At first, soldiers brought trucks out with cloths, soap and cutlasses to sell to CDRs at controlled prices, providing free transport both ways. These benefits generated some enthusiasm among farmers, but once the goods ran out and CDRs started charging for transport, farmers stopped cooperating. Newspaper reports began denouncing traders for appearing in villages with trucks loaded with consumer goods for sale and offering farmers high prices— all very unpatriotic.

It was the dry season of a second drought year by 1983, not a good time to remove price incentives.³⁷ The repatriation of a million Ghanaian immigrants expelled from Nigeria in February 1983 further stressed the food system. One mother described to me coming in to Kumasi Central Market with money and bursting into tears, because there was nothing to buy to make dinner for her family. Urban food supplies dried up almost completely for several months, leading to the prominent collarbones covertly referred to as “Rawlings’ necklace.” Soldiers were as hungry as anyone and began to hijack food trucks from the highways that passed by their barracks, making farmers and traders nervous of traveling at all.³⁸

The ideological shift that turned any market traders’ organization into a sinister conspiracy made any gesture towards consultation or even negotiation with market women more and more unthinkable. Without announcing any policy reversal, the PNDC quietly began to allow traders to bring and sell foodstuffs in the cities again by late 1983. Resuming the familiar episodic enforcement pattern tacitly acknowledged that the new distribution channels could not do the job of feeding the nation.

Market Deregulation

By 1984, Rawlings capitulated to international financial and diplomatic pressures and accepted the neoliberal austerity measures recommended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). While perhaps motivated by national bankruptcy rather than the leaders’ change of heart, the thoroughness with which the PNDC implemented the already familiar list of IMF loan conditionalities soon made Ghana famous. Price controls and foreign exchange controls were dismantled, bringing consequences similar to those seen elsewhere. Austerity measures

required to balance the budget brought massive layoffs of government employees and drastic cuts in health and education services. The buying power of the typical middle or lower-class market patron was sharply limited by such policies for “demand constraint” and “cost recovery.” World Bank publications featured Ghana prominently as a structural adjustment success story, offering a good example to the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.

On the positive side, traders saw a welcome end to the physical violence of police raids and fear of confiscations. Renewed access to credit and aid funded long-needed infrastructure projects that resurfaced major highways and city streets. Rebuilding the drains that ran through the Central Market took years, but eventually the market no longer flooded regularly and spoiled traders’ stock. Gasoline rationing ended, so transport was readily available to whoever could afford it. This greatly reduced the search effort for specialized travelers, although raising the capital requirements for efficient trading.

The promised surges in foreign direct investment and in innovative local entrepreneurship unfortunately failed to materialize. Despite Ghana’s GDP growth, the living standards of ordinary people hardly budged due to the increasing polarization of income distribution. The same export sectors that colonial policy had favored (gold, cocoa, and timber) received the lion’s share of World Bank investment capital under their new designation of “comparative advantage.” These are also the very production sectors whose income is most concentrated in the hands of a small proportion of their participants, and whose owners and employees are predominantly men.³⁹ New technology in the gold mines raised output but reduced manpower requirements.

As private formal sector employment shrank, partly under pressure from newly plentiful imports, unemployed or never employed workers flooded into the marketplace and the streets. The influx of young men into occupations like vegetable trading, previously coded female, was highly visible at the market’s edges. Dividing up the restricted pool of consumer demand among more people meant even lower incomes for existing traders. Market traders found the new open economy did not open up much viable space for them, and increased income polarization and capital dependency among their own ranks.

Legalization also did not end traders’ political isolation. While they might be off the political hot seat, their concerns still were virtually excluded from development planning or assistance. The much replicated Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) began in Ghana in 1987, but it specifically disqualified traders from its 1988 small loan program aimed to encourage entrepreneurship and risk-taking.⁴⁰ Market repairs moved as slowly and corruptly as ever, and traders’ material interests seemed to be ignored as completely as ever. Those trading in the outer precincts of the marketplace, who operate from flimsy stalls or stop for a few hours in a regular spot, remained subject to repeated clearances, with little warning despite the rent they paid to the city.

Political Inclusion Begins

Some examples suggest that market traders may be making progress towards more political integration as the country settles into a stable electoral democracy. In 1989, women traders from Accra began to appear on a few government advisory and planning commissions. A few traders

won seats on rural district assemblies through local government elections again held in 1989. Under decentralization measures district assemblies operate in local languages and control some funds.⁴¹ Traders’ organizational representatives also joined those appointed in 1991 to the constituent assembly convened to draft a new constitution before the return to national elections.

In Kumasi, the yam queen was also appointed for one term to a city council seat not filled by election and still enjoyed her air-conditioned office in 1994. Debates were always held in English, which she did not understand, so she sat near a family friend who could translate for her. She was satisfied with her own occasional remarks, considering them analogous to the final summing-up by the senior chief presiding over a traditional council. The family friend, conversely, reported that educated members ignored her comments, so they had little impact on council decisions.

A local Kumasi registered non-governmental organization, the Center for the Development of People (CEDEP) made several interventions intended to raise awareness and respect for market women. Its Women’s Forum collected life stories of successful local women as inspiring examples in 1995, deliberately including the yam queen in the Women’s Forum launch celebration and an eventual publication. A subsequent CEDEP initiative organized participative workshops for market leaders at which they prioritized their problems and identified potential solutions and partners. A corresponding workshop for city officials at the Kumasi Metropolitan Authority aimed to raise their awareness of traders’ contribution to local development, stressing that approximately half the total city budget came from market revenues.⁴²

Increased official awareness did not negate the underlying political inequalities and tensions. City officials reacted in 1999 by trying to squeeze even more money out of traders with a dubious security guard scheme. Market leaders had already stated flatly that real progress was unlikely under the longtime city council chairman. Regardless of that (unrecorded) consensus, the assessment exercise may have stiffened their resolve to reject the security guard proposal. In June 2006, a new city leader had not been in office long enough to make long term policy changes evident.

Without the burden of overt government hostility, however, the long history of local rulers promoting local prosperity through trade seemed to slowly reassert itself during the 1990s. Some chiefs of farming districts growing local food crops for sale tried to protect the commercial territory of their hometown traders against urban-based buyers. Techiman and Gonja chiefs, at different times, forbade Kumasi yam traders from buying directly from farmers in villages or town markets, insisting they buy through local traders. In these instances, urban/rural and north/south rivalries overshadowed the occupational divide between traders and farmers. Traders based in small towns and villages are also more often farmers themselves.

A violent confrontation between tomato buyers from the southern cities and tomato farmers from the distant Upper East Region, indicates women traders may now be regaining some access to government officials. These traders (from the national capital, Accra, and nearby southern cities) successfully asked high-ranking public officials to intervene on short notice. The leader of one of the traders’ associations advised me that she took a cell phone call reporting the attack from one of the traders from her town who was there. She immediately headed for Accra to alert her superior, head of the National Tomato Traders’ Association, who had already been

informed by her Accra colleagues who were in the group ambushed near Paga.⁴³ Within hours, they were able to contact national and regional officials to ensure police protection and mediate the dispute.

These farmers grew dry season tomatoes on the irrigation projects fed by the Volta River. Promises that a long-defunct tomato cannery nearby would be rehabilitated had induced them to plant in large quantities that year. Some had sold or mortgaged assets like land to finance larger farms, expecting a higher price from the cannery. Meanwhile, women traders from the southern cities had organized to buy tomatoes in bulk across the nearby border in Burkina Faso, as customs agreements allowed. When the harvest started but the cannery was not ready to buy, farmers were desperate. The Member of Parliament for that area spoke on the house floor of riots and suicides.⁴⁴

These remote farmers had little leverage to hasten the power lines towards their local cannery, but the roads from Burkina Faso brought the more vulnerable traders right through their villages. On March 1, a group of male farmers blockaded the Paga border post, trapping traders with at least 41 of their tomato trucks. After local police escorted these trucks through the nearest large town, Navrongo, farmers ambushed them again farther south, stealing the traders' money and cell phones and sending several traders to the hospital.⁴⁵

The incident brought an immediate response from regional and national officials, starting with the Upper East Regional Security Council, the Regional Director of Agriculture, the Deputy Regional Minister, and the Regional Minister. Before a week had passed, the President of the National Tomato Traders and Transporters Association had extended a compromise offer to farmers and concluded impressive negotiations in Bolgatanga and Accra that involved the Minister of Trade, the Minister of Food and Agriculture, and the President of the National Farmers and Fishermen Award Winners Association. The agreement announced March 7 set up procedures for local purchases and imports that accommodated traders and farmers but paid little heed to international treaties or free market principles.⁴⁶ It was hard to imagine in 1990 or 1999 that public figures of this stature would be openly sitting down with traders' leaders, willing to indicate that degree of respect for their perspectives only a few years later.

Conclusion

The complex historical dynamics of market organizations in Ghana show a continuing ambivalence in the relations between individual traders, their local commodity groups, and the various governments that have sought to control them. Notorious episodes of price control and market demolitions from 1979 to 1984 were only the most dramatic moments in a long series of interventions in trade that public opinion often legitimated. Meanwhile, market rents and daily fees supplied a steady source of public revenue that funded local government institutions. Traders' tenacious resistance to regulation and the resilience of their autonomous organizations advertised the limits of government control of the economy. The shifting contours of this contestation shaped traders' organizational and ideological strategies throughout the twentieth century.

The identification of the occupation of trading with women and men, with Asante and with Northern and foreign ethnic groups, and with contingent nationalist agendas has been an

effective connection in drawing hostility towards traders at successive historical junctures. Underlying contestations over relations based on class, race, nationality, and urban or rural residence seem to intensify this hostility, in spite of not following any simple correspondence with categories of traders or specific punitive actions. The degree and even the direction of these identifications lacked stability in both the demography of the trading population of Kumasi and its ideological positioning. Traders acted as a convenient target for expressing and for deflecting frustrations that rose from a wide range of social contradictions throughout the last century. Gender often figured conspicuously in such constellations of hostility surrounding traders. Not nearly representing a binary opposition between women and men, the diverse gender roles of women as mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters, not to mention as queen mothers, schoolgirls, and temptresses, were precisely what enabled gender to resonate in such powerful ways with economic frustrations. The economic landscape was equally complex and contradictory, including relations that linked and opposed persons and interests across multiple cross-cutting dimensions. The contradictory allegiances engendered by gender relations for both women and men were diverse enough to offer parallels to many of the thorniest local and global dilemmas that entangle them as Ghanaians and continue to do so. Any of them might be invoked by attacking traders as “those women,” so such attacks remained persistently worthwhile through economic transformations that undermined many other legitimating practices. Their diversity simultaneously may have prevented women from organizing effectively in defense of their interests as women, like women did in some Nigerian Yoruba and Igbo communities.

Overcoming such deep-rooted antagonism is a complicated process that will probably take a long time and a combination of many different strategies and cultural changes. On the other hand, the complicated historical dynamics that constructed the underlying mutual distrust also support a more encouraging interpretation. It took just such a complex interaction of many factors to bring the situation to this pass, so there is a precedent for future change being equally complex. Market commodity groups represent neither an eternal tradition nor an imitation of modernity, but an indigenous innovation. If their recent configuration responds to specific late twentieth century conditions, this suggests that traders can and will continue to generate creative shifts in their organizational practices in response to twenty-first century changes in their political, economic and cultural environment. Such future innovations will be needed to preserve the resilience that has been so conspicuous and valuable in their past.

In Ghana, open marketplaces remain the primary economic institution delivering the basic foods and consumer goods without which urban residents (and most rural communities) cannot survive. Marketplaces revive so rapidly after periods of violent crisis not just because traders can deploy a priceless cultural repertoire of transactional and organizational praxis, but because market systems can and do change swiftly. The historical record suggests that public policy towards marketplaces needs to accommodate this flexibility and continuity in supporting traders’ access to public space, customers, transport, storage facilities, credit, sanitation, and other social infrastructure.

Traders contribute best to sustainable economies as active participants creatively meeting contemporary challenges, not as folkloric anachronisms in out-of-the-way preserves. This requires recognizing traders’ organizations as legitimate stakeholders in urban and regional

planning, and including their leaders in all relevant consultation processes. Such inclusion needs to take culturally and historically appropriate forms, but this does not reduce its importance. As a general principle, full inclusion would mean a substantial step forward in the often volatile and destructive relations between traders and their governments in many parts of the world.

Notes

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1. De Marees, 1602; Huxley, 1954; and Little, 1973 are exemplary.
 2. For analysis of the gender conflicts over trade in various Latin American cultures, see Bunster and Cheney (1985); Seligmann (1989); and Weismantel (2001). Further analysis on Ghanaian gender conflicts is presented in Clark (2001); Robertson (1983); Allman (2000); and Mikell (1989).
 3. The political economy of informal trade has attracted distinguished analysts over many years: Geertz (1963), Mintz (1971); Bromley (1978); and de Soto (1989) offer classic generalizations. Case studies were collected in Bromley and Gerry (1979), Guyer (1987); and Clark (1988). Monographs include MacGaffey (1987) on Zaire, Robertson (1997) on Kenya and, on the South American Andes, Babb (1989), Weismantel (2001), and Seligmann (2004).
 4. More details on these research methods are included in the thesis and a subsequent book (Clark 1984; Clark 1994). I would like to thank the ESRC (UK), the ILO, the SSRC, the Fulbright Commission, and the US Dept of Education for funding various of these fieldwork opportunities.
 5. I am especially grateful to historians Gareth Austin, Larry Yarak, and Thomas McCaskie for directing my attention to valuable files.
 6. De Marees, 1602; Little, 1973.
 7. See Clark (1994) for more detailed analysis of commodity groups, drawn from my fieldnotes of that period. Due to the illegality of many of these activities at the time and the recent return to office of the political party linked to that regime, personally identifiable examples and quotations cannot be published.
 8. Hopkins, 1973, p. 79ff.
 9. Hopkins, 1973, pp. 87-88; Hymer, 1970, p. 39.
 10. DeMarees, 1602, p. 396; Dike and Ekejuiba, 1990.
 11. Hopkins 1973, pp. 90-108; Harrop, 1964, pp. 29-31.
 12. Wilks, 1975, p. 111.
 13. Wilks, 1975, pp. 197, 268-9; Akoto interview, 1980.
 14. Priestley, 1969, p. 157.
 15. Priestley, 1969.
 16. NAK1.
 17. Mikell, 1989.
 18. NAK6; NAK7.
 19. NAK8.

20. NAA1.
21. NAK1.
22. NAK7.
23. NAA4; Kay, 1972, p. 62.
24. Hopkins, 1965, p. 135.
25. Howard, 1978, p. 75.
26. NAA6.
27. Drake and Lacy, 1966, pp. 72-91.
28. Allman, 1993.
29. Sudarkasa, 1979; Mikell, 1989.
30. See Clark (1988 and 1994) for observations of the November 1978 and March 1979 events, and more traders’ narratives of earlier episodes.
31. See Clark, 2001.
32. See Clark, 1989b.
33. See Robertson, 1983.
34. Hart, 2006.
35. From a letter to the editor, *Daily Graphic* 3/22/79.
36. For more detailed analysis of the AFRC and PNDC periods, see Robertson (1983) and Clark (1988).
37. Clark (1989a) compares food shortages in 1979 and 1983 to regular dry seasons.
38. Incidents are described in Clark (1988) from fieldnotes.
39. Clark and Manuh, 1991.
40. Recorded from PAMSCAD posters, 1984.
41. Owusu, 1992.
42. King, 1999.
43. Field interview, September 2007.
44. GNA 3/1/06.
45. GNA reports from 3/1/06 to 3/4/06 were compared with oral reports from a participating traders’ organization leader to prepare this summary account of events.
46. GNA 3/7/06.

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Informality and Casualization as Challenges to South Africa's Industrial Unionism: Manufacturing Workers in the East Rand/Ekurhuleni Region in the 1990s

FRANCO BARCHIESI

Abstract: The paper addresses informalization processes driven by layoffs, casualization, and outsourcing and their implications for workers' agency. The empirical focus is on the metal engineering, glass, and paper industries in the East Rand, South Africa's industrial heartland. The author argues that growing job precariousness, the expansion of casual work, the increasing stratification of the labor market, and steadily high unemployment rates represent a hollowing out of an earlier promise of liberation politics, which posited wage labor as the vehicle of social citizenship—i.e. decent living conditions, protected jobs, and social provisions—in a democratic South Africa. Present realities rather suggest an erosion of the socially integrative role of waged employment. It also questions the common binary opposition between “formal” and “informal” sectors that associates the former with inclusion and the latter with marginality. Furthermore, in the author's view the reconfiguration of the meanings of waged work has eroded the socially emancipative role of organized labor. The possibilities and prospects for collective organizing on the basis of wage labor identities are limited to the extent that casualization and informalization undermine workplace-based organizations. It is, therefore, important to consider forms of social emancipation that transcend an exclusive focus on waged employment. The disarticulation of the working class, in fact, is not merely weakening work-based identities, but also creates new spaces for social agency and contestation. The paper stresses that focusing on the strategies and discourse of ordinary workers is more politically productive than mainstream definitions of informality that emphasize capitalist domination or state rationality. Rather than simply representing disempowerment and vulnerability, informality also creates conditions for political possibility.

Introduction

The labor movement was a protagonist in the South African liberation struggle. Hundreds of thousands of black workers saw in trade union militancy not only a tool to improve wages and working conditions, but a promise to redeem wage labor from injustice and abuse. Under regimes of racial segregation, African workers had in particular experienced waged employment as a precarious condition underpinning managerial despotism in the workplace and the denial of social and political rights in society at large.¹ Coercive systems of labor migration, insecure contract occupations, racially defined residential spaces of inferior quality,

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/pdfs/v11i2-3a5.pdf>

and the lack of social benefits defined wage labor as a reality of indignity for the black majority of the South African working class. Trade union struggles announced a radically alternative meaning of employment, turning working for wages into a vehicle of solidarity, social stability, and claims for socioeconomic rights seen as necessary complements to a new democracy.²

After the first democratic elections of 1994, however, the redemptive promise of wage labor has continued to confront an uncomfortable reality of persistently high unemployment rates and a growing casualization of jobs. The intrusion of an illegitimate state in the everyday lives of workers no longer determines, as in the past, employment precariousness. Nonetheless, the economic liberalization that, under the government of the African National Congress (ANC,) has accompanied political liberation, did not prove conducive to the creation of stable jobs with benefits, and has indeed often expanded insecure occupations. The precariousness of waged employment has negatively affected the identities and strategies of the labor movement, undermining collective solidarity, and citizens' access to social provisions.

The post-apartheid labor market appears as highly stratified: approximately one third of South African workers are still in permanent formal jobs, one third are in casual, intermittent, self-employed, and informal occupations, and one third are long-term unemployed.³ Among the unemployed, particularly difficult is the position of residents in the rural areas and the former "homelands," who lack meaningful economic opportunities and survive through remittances from employed relatives or very limited, means-tested government grants, which by now cover 25 percent of the South African population.⁴ In South Africa's tradition of industrial unionism, formal employment is required to belong to labor organizations. Many unions, however, are reluctant to deploy resources to organize casual and informal workers, whose shifting occupational fortunes do not make them reliable dues-paying union members.⁵

In this paper I examine how South African workers have experienced the hollowing out of the post-apartheid emancipative promise of waged work by focusing on the East Rand, the country's manufacturing core. During the 1990s, the region, reorganized in 2000 into the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, has experienced rapid productive and labor market changes in an increasingly competitive scenario. Large conglomerates, which have historically dominated the area, used layoffs, outsourcing, and contingent employment in response to the pressures of market liberalization. In the 1980s, the East Rand had been a stronghold of black union militancy as part of widespread opposition to apartheid. Support for unionization mostly came from migrant workers, the most exposed to the oppressive and precarious realities of the apartheid workplace. The economic restructuring of the 1990s impacted, therefore, on a class composition that specifically embodied the hopes and expectations of wage labor in the "new South Africa."⁶ In the 2000s, the East Rand somehow bounced back, experiencing a renewed industrial growth that was, however, premised on a more dispersed and unstable geography of production, where a growing number of workers are employed in small-medium enterprises, often with limited benefits, insecure employment, and no contractual protections. They often constitute a gray area where the boundaries of formal and informal production become hazy and undistinguished. As a result, the region reflects a broader reality where employment is hardly conducive to social inclusion and citizenship. Rather, it produces new forms of poverty and inequality. A study by the Human Sciences Research Council found that two thirds of employed workers in South Africa can be defined as "poor."⁷

The paper is based on research I conducted between 1999 and 2001 in East Rand plants with histories of African grassroots union organizing dating back to the anti-apartheid struggle. I visited three metal-engineering, two paper, and two glass factories, and interviewed in a semi-structured format a total of 140 workers, almost all blacks, the vast majority of which were African males.⁸ My choice to focus on core, relatively stable working-class communities, rather than workers already employed in informal jobs, allowed me to evaluate casualization and informalization as processes that develop over time across transformations affecting what are usually considered full-time, regular occupations. The study also indicated that workers do not merely suffer the degradation and fragmentation of waged employment as disempowered victims. Instead, they are able to strategize within South Africa's changing world of work and autonomously signify the contrasts between wage labor's old promises and its present uncertain realities.

At the time of my research, the three metal-engineering companies were undergoing deep restructuring processes that, largely driven by changing market conditions, led to job losses and an increasingly contingent workforce. One of the companies, Kelvinator, an electric appliance manufacturer in Alrode (Alberton) employing about 1,200 workers, eventually shut down. The glass and paper companies in the study were also facing increasing market competition. These two sectors are historically dominated by a few large firms, which restructured largely through technological innovations that adversely impacted on employment conditions. All the industries investigated are mostly organized by unions belonging to the ANC-allied Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), a labor federation with deep roots in radical mobilization under apartheid. Respondents for this study were usually members of the Chemical, Energy, Print, Paper, Wood and Allied Workers' Union (CEPPWAWU) in the glass and paper companies, and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) in the metal and engineering plants. During the 1990s, both unions have suffered from organizational difficulties and membership losses, which leave current prospects of recovery uncertain.

In the first two decades of post-apartheid democracy, South African mainstream academic conversation and policy debates have looked at issues of poverty and social inequality with an emphasis on the country's labor market and waged employment scenarios. Various analysts and observers have constantly argued that unemployment is a primary determinant of poverty and, consequently, access to waged jobs is a necessary, albeit not always sufficient, condition for effective social inclusion.⁹ Their recommendations are often phrased in terms that morally praise individual industriousness and initiative, stigmatizing "dependency" on public spending "handouts."¹⁰ This argument has gained authoritative institutional recognition in President Thabo Mbeki's image of "two economies," one formal and one informal, uneasily coexisting and underpinning social inequality. Mbeki's two economies thesis juxtaposes "an advanced, sophisticated economy, based on skilled labour, which is becoming more globally competitive" to "a mainly informal, marginalized, unskilled economy, populated by the unemployed and those unemployable in the formal sector," which "risks falling further behind, if there is no decisive government intervention."¹¹ Such scholarly and political interventions reflect a post-apartheid official discourse that has come to privilege binary oppositions between categories like "formal" and "informal" sectors, "typical" and "atypical" workers, "employed" and "unemployed" citizens, social "inclusion" and "exclusion." In each coupling, the first term

normatively denotes virtue and normality, while the second characterizes social pathologies and policy problems. The government's discursive articulation of South Africa's "two economies," therefore, serves to characterize the second one—being the target of "decisive government intervention"—as a maladjusted residue of market-based modernization.¹² The "two economies" thesis, however, does not problematize the fact that decent, secure jobs with benefits are by now limited to shrinking enclaves, while the proliferation of informal occupations is powerfully connected to strategies of corporate restructuring and decentralization of production. A policy discourse that premises social citizenship on labor market participation, rather than on the need to find alternatives to growing household reliance on low-wage unprotected jobs, contributes to such omissions.

The idealization of wage labor in the post-apartheid policy discourse aimed to resonate with the promise of working-class emancipation in past labor and popular struggles, but in the end, it did not reflect a reality where, throughout the democratic transition, stable waged employment with benefits has steadily declined. In mid-2009, the country's official unemployment rate as measured by Statistics South Africa stood at more than 23 percent of the economically active population (EAP). Since 2004, however, official statistics have conveniently excluded discouraged jobseekers from the EAP. Should they be counted, the unemployment rate would easily climb to more than 30 percent. In the mid-2000s, 65.8 percent of the unemployed aged 25 to 34 and 37.9 percent aged 35 to 44 had never worked in their lives.¹³ But South Africa's problems with waged employment are not confined to joblessness; they are also reflected in the growing share of temporary and casual occupations. Aided by the fact that social grants do not cover working-age unemployed or underemployed citizens, casualization is swelling the ranks of the working poor. Buoyant economic growth in the mid-2000s has not reabsorbed the permanent jobs sacrificed to industrial restructuring in the previous decade, and new waves of layoffs have accompanied the deep recession of 2008 and 2009, the most serious since the end of apartheid. The stratifications of the South Africa labor market no longer reflect institutional racial segregation, but are reproduced through a wide variety of non-standard employment contracts, which, under the pretenses of impersonal market objectivity, amplify the precariousness of most workers' lives. As the relations between wage labor and social inclusion have become frail and hollow, labor market inequalities are particularly affecting the African majority of the economically active population. For them, the concept of informality reflects both a degradation of existing jobs on offer in the labor market and a range of alternative coping strategies developed in response to poor employment prospects. The next section will explore the intersection—vital to grasp what "informal" means in the post-apartheid world of work—of these two aspects, one of which refers to productive restructuring while the other pertains to workers' agency.

Informality, Precariousness, and the Fading Promise of Wage Labor in Post-apartheid South Africa

After 1994, the alliance between the ruling ANC and COSATU expressed ambitions for a "developmental" state, embodied in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), in response to widespread expectations for socioeconomic justice and redress. Integral to the

post-apartheid project were corporatist-styled policymaking institutions—especially the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC)—for tripartite bargaining among representatives of the government, business, and labor. The system envisaged a participative social compact aimed at job creation, the protection of workers' rights, and inclusive social security.¹⁴ Labor representation was, however, confined to trade unions and therefore tended to exclude casual and informal workers. Moreover, working-class influence on state policies found a further barrier in the government's program of economic liberalization and public spending thrift contained in the 1996 Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy. GEAR foreclosed radical redistributive options, encouraged labor flexibility as an avenue to job creation, and left the expansion of formal employment to the operation of market forces.

Policymakers indeed shared the priority of restoring macroeconomic fundamentals and private investor confidence undermined by international isolation, socioeconomic disruption, and low productivity under apartheid.¹⁵ Analysts and politicians argued that most unemployed workers had poor skills that made them unsuitable for the competencies required in high-end globally competitive productions.¹⁶ The only occupations they saw feasible for most jobseekers in South Africa's "labor surplus" economy were, therefore, low-wage positions with reduced security and limited collective bargaining protections.¹⁷ COSATU rejected GEAR as "neoliberal" and clung onto its collective bargaining protections, but economic liberalization nonetheless envisioned the informalization of work as a policy response to the country's employment crisis. It also made clear that the social pact based on the creation of decent jobs would apply only to a minority of workers, becoming therefore an increasingly feeble echo of old struggles to redeem wage labor. In view of the government's responsibilities in reproducing a hierarchical world of work, finally, Thabo Mbeki's lamentations on the state of the "second economy" sounded rather paradoxical.

In 1995, 69 percent of the EAP was employed full-time; by 2001, the figure had declined to 49 percent. Over the same period, part-time, casual, and informal occupations rose from 14 to 31 percent.¹⁸ Up through about 2005, employment in "informal" enterprises was hovering between 13 and 17 percent of the total workforce.¹⁹ The economic weight of businesses defined as "informal" has kept growing throughout the 1990s decade of liberalization and deregulation, coming to encompass—precise figures on the matter are notoriously hard to come by—between 16 and 40 percent of the gross domestic product.²⁰ Massive job losses in the second half of the 1990s had different impacts across racial groups, but they revealed the particularly low absorptive capacity of formal occupations for low-skill African entrants. In fact, according to Haroon Bhorat between 1995 and 1999 African employment has grown by 9.94 percent, compared to an African EAP growth of 25.5 percent, resulting in an employment absorption rate of only 25.07 percent.²¹

As low-skill African workers found it exceedingly difficult to land in regular jobs, corporate outsourcing and subcontracting provided alternatives in myriads of non-union small and micro enterprises that operated along an increasingly uncertain boundary between formal and informal. Equally important in the decentralization of production was the shift of labor recruitment towards temporary employment agencies ("labor brokers"), which bring their own employees to work in companies that no longer employ them directly, thus further fragmenting

employment contracts and collective bargaining coverage inside workplaces.²² Under the impulse of labor brokerage, casual, fixed-term, part-time, and “homework” arrangements are on the rise across the whole occupational spectrum, as shown by studies that also emphasize the disparities between temporary and permanent workers in wages, benefits, and working conditions.²³

The South African evidence, therefore, seems to indicate that changing corporate strategies, a business-friendly policy environment, and growing working-class poverty are decisive features in the expansion of the informal economy.²⁴ The scenario contrasts to some extent with what scholars often observe in the rest of Africa, where informality is a tool with which communities—which may or may not be captured in the production cycles of domestic or international capital—respond to macroeconomic adjustment.²⁵ South Africa seems rather to reflect the reality of older industrial societies where informality is shorthand for the growing precariousness of waged workers made profitable at the cost of growing vulnerability and exploitability.²⁶ Rather than eliciting the entrepreneurship and the resourcefulness of the poor, therefore, the informalization of production underlies daily socioeconomic duress, deepened by inadequate social grants and the governmental injunction that virtuous and empowered citizenship requires economic activity rather than claims for “handouts.”

According to Devey, Skinner, and Valodia, if “informal” work is defined not in terms of the nature of the employer (registered or unregistered) but according to the types of jobs and whether they come with legal provisions, statutory benefits, and protections, in South Africa formality and informality tend increasingly to overlap.²⁷ In fact, 44 percent of “informal” workers (80 percent of whom have no written employment contract) are in permanent relations with their employers, while 16 percent of “formal” employees are not. More and more “informal” workers are hired as casuals and subcontractors by registered enterprises, even in manufacturing sectors where the externalization of functions was once limited. While almost 90 percent of informal workers have no company-based retirement coverage (and in South Africa there is no national state-subsidized retirement system), this also applies to one third of formal employees. Finally, 44 percent of formal workers, but only 8.4 percent of informal ones, are members of trade unions.

The South African case ultimately points at the limitations and quandaries of definitions of formality and informality that primarily rely on the economics of the firm or on the sociology of labor markets. It also provides a much broader view of informal work than in mainstream definitions centered on its “extra-legal” juridical status.²⁸ The informalization of work is rather revealing of the erosion of the “centrality of the labour contract as the foundation of the social order” in a context where, nonetheless, work remains central to the official imagination of what being a full citizen means.²⁹

The profound and complex connections between formal production and informal work also belie the dualistic view expressed in the “two economies” thesis, as well as exposing its simplistic, ideologically biased understanding of social exclusion. Scholars inspired by the “chronic poverty” paradigm reject the idea that a clearly defined line separates the included and the excluded depending on whether they have a real job or not.³⁰ Such a paradigm can surely have normative implications as it teaches the poor to conduct themselves as workers-in-waiting, accept corporate power and the labor market as naturally objective sources of value,

direct their desires towards job seeking, and stigmatize claims for redistributive social grants. Dualist arguments ignore, however, the role waged employment and labor market inequalities play in reproducing the exclusion and poverty of those for whom a job in the unstable divide between formality and informality amounts to a precarious social existence.

The East Rand Working Class in Flux: Employment Change and Industrial Restructuring in the 1990s

Since the mid-1970s, the East Rand (now the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality) has been a stronghold of the South African labor movement. The unionization of a rapidly growing African working class, largely made of contract migrants from apartheid's rural "homelands," accompanied the rise of the region as the country's manufacturing core. During the 1980s, workers' struggles in the East Rand tended to transcend workplace-based demands, a terrain privileged by early black trade unions, and join community movements fighting for housing rights and basic social services and against apartheid local governments and the political disenfranchisement of the majority.³¹

The economic crisis of the apartheid system during the 1980s also contributed to the gradual decline of manufacturing. In the 1990s, layoffs became generalized: approximately eighty thousand manufacturing jobs were lost in the East Rand between 1988 and 1999.³² The decline of waged employment undermined hopes and expectations for comprehensive social change woven in earlier labor struggles and dealt severe blows to workers' organizations. For example, the country's main industrial union, COSATU-affiliated NUMSA, lost 45 percent of its East Rand members between 1989 and 1999. The downturn in the local industrial economy became more pronounced with the post-1994 economic liberalization, which facilitated further factory closures, workforce downsizing, and casualization.³³ Service sectors, especially retail, conversely, expanded: by the early 2000s, up to 65 percent of East Rand retail workers were hired on a contingent basis.³⁴ By 1999, 44.3 percent of the East Rand workers were employed in services, while manufacturing had plunged to 32 percent from the above 50 percent figures of the 1970s.³⁵ Unemployment, which soared from 32.2 percent in 1996 to 40.4 percent in 2001, facilitated the spread of precarious jobs.³⁶ Throughout the 1990s, downsizing mirrored the outsourcing of production in sectors like metal, engineering, chemical, glass, and paper. Small companies, largely non-union, have proliferated especially in production segments that do not require substantial capital investment and overhead. The use of "labor brokers," finally, played a significant role in the casualization of employment.

The companies I researched reflect the type of challenges faced by stable, unionized working-class constituencies in the area. Union Carriage and Wagon (UCW) is a manufacturer of railroad transport equipment that has seen its headcount fall from 800 to 150 employees between 1997 and 1999, largely as a result of the exhaustion of short term contracts for overseas markets and the government's continuous neglect of domestic public transportation. Kelvinator, a manufacturer of electric household appliances, was liquidated in 1999, which meant the loss of twelve hundred jobs. In June 2000, a competitor, Defy, bought the company's physical assets and decided to transfer production to the largely rural Ladysmith area, once an "industrial decentralization" point subsidized by the apartheid government and now a low-

wage labor reservoir amidst massive unemployment. Defy hired approximately 250 workers there, with remunerations as low as one third of the old Kelvinator levels.³⁷ Companies in the glass industry (Consol Glass and MB Glass) and in paper products (Nampak Corrugated, Sappi Enstra) are largely subsidiaries of vast conglomerates that, in a highly vertically integrated production process, have also heavily suffered the impact of layoffs.³⁸ In these cases, however, management met renewed competitive pressures, for example due to the diffusion of plastic containers, through determined, aggressive technological innovation and organizational changes involving the outsourcing of “non-core” business.

Employers have used the decentralization of labor recruitment across the local urban economy as a powerful weapon to stratify the labor force and generalize its vulnerability. The combination of temporary contracts and labor brokerage can ensure workers’ compliance and flexibility while minimizing the obligations of the companies towards their employees, which are legally employed by the recruiting agencies. At UCW, layoffs have accompanied the hiring of contract workers, often the very ones who had been previously retrenched, via a local labor broker. Brokered workers received higher cash remunerations than UCW employees. The employment agency had in fact to pay higher wages because it mostly hired artisans, who are harder to retain, but it could also afford to raise the monetary pay by cutting medical insurance, which UCW workers enjoyed by virtue of their union contract. Workers hired through the labor broker were, quite unusually, organized by NUMSA, which allowed them some benefits like retirement pensions. The duration of contracts, however, could be as short as three months, terminable at a one week’s notice.³⁹ Even if they undermine the position of permanent employees, labor brokerage and fixed-term contracts are seen by some workers—especially qualified ones who can negotiate higher wages with the employment agency—in a positive light. But overall, labor brokerage indicates that jobs have become insecure, long-term career orientations are almost impossible, and workplace identities have grown weaker. Most employees saw non-permanent contract employment, no matter how remunerative, as a short-term survival strategy in a precarious environment, rather than an investment in waged work as a force of social emancipation:

You see, if you are unmarried and are not a husband your problems would be less than mine, especially on the finance. For those years when I was a permanent, I really did not benefit anything, but I started to benefit when I started to become a contract, then I saw an improvement at home and in my life. I could save something like R500 a month while I am giving my wife enough money to support herself and her children, I could pay an equal share of the telephone bill and the electricity bill, and we still suffer. But before, when I was a permanent, I used to suffer more, I had lots of debts behind my back, I couldn’t even afford to pay everyday expenses with the money I used to have in my pocket. . . . Now I am just thinking that I have got a job here, I am just like a horse who’s got now enough grass, I don’t look at the outside and after that maybe I’ll get another job. I have been in this situation for a long time, when the job is finished, I have to sit down and wait for another one.⁴⁰

At the same time, many UCW employees resent the presence of the labor broker in the plant. Their condemnation has not only to do with competition from contract workers. It also evokes a need for stability, commitment, and fairness, which they mobilized to reinforce claims to permanent work against casualization:

I am permanent and I care for my house, my children, everything. These guys [brokered workers] come only to get the money and they are told they are going to stay for two months, after which they must go. But I am permanent, I am working here more than two months, and those guys don't care about what is going on here in the factory, they're only here to take their pay and they cannot look three-four years from now, they just say "*ek weet nie*" —I don't know—but here I have to do my best for the future of the factory, because I worry about my children.⁴¹

The moral economy of the workplace and attachment to full-time worker identities come, however, under heavy pressure in a situation where a job through a labor broker can mean a wage 50 percent higher than regular company employees, albeit at the cost of reduced benefits. In general, labor brokerage conveys the impression that standard conditions of employment, applied across the board, give way to informal interactions between specific groups of workers and an elusive employer, which does not coincide with the management actually running the workplace. Workplace-based collective responses therefore prove of limited power in a production milieu that extols strategies of survival and adaptation relying on individual initiative and skills. My respondents generally recognized the importance of defending waged employment as a source of livelihood. Many did so, however, with a certain instrumentalism that led them to keep all options open, instead of soldiering on with union identities and a collectivist working-class ethos. They cherished, most importantly, the possibility of escaping one day from a workplace that no longer guarantees social stability and the satisfaction of household needs. Workers' fantasies of self-entrepreneurial alternatives sometimes took the form of starting individual businesses in addition to an insecure and unfulfilling factory job. Among respondents, 19.3 percent of metal-engineering workers and 9.7 percent of glass-paper workers had a second job, almost always on an unregistered, self-employed basis. The average income from second jobs in the case of metalworkers was R588 per month, compared to an average net monthly wage of R2202. Lack of capital, crime, and difficulties to access further training are the reasons most often cited as impeding self-employment options. Many workers, moreover, presented individual strategies of escape as a matter of basic survival:

The income for the workers is far too little to allow them to go out and buy what they may sell. On Friday they get their money, do grocery shopping for the family and on Sunday they are left with only five or ten Rand, only enough to pay to come back to work on Monday, and on Monday they are borrowing money from other people. That's the life we are living in this company. . . . My intention is to have enough money to run a business, but around here, *ek se* ["I

say,“] you are taking a risk if you open a business because you don’t sleep when you have got a business; too much crime, especially in the township.⁴²

Some workers who lost their jobs at Kelvinator planned to collect their retirement benefits and pool them with retrenched colleagues or neighbor to start small unregistered businesses. The others, however, usually needed the money to provide food, clothing, and utility payments for their families, repay company borrowings, or settle debts with “loan sharks.” Economic necessity drives insecure workers into all sorts of parallel occupations, which may well be more exploitative than their own official jobs. At UCW an important source of additional income is provided by seasonal employment in the oil refineries of Secunda during their annual shutdown and cleanup, when permanent local employees are on leave. Cleaning the plant from oil and chemicals is an extremely dangerous job, for which UCW workers are hired as scarcely trained casuals, a practice the unions have blamed as a major cause of deadly accidents. The informalization of once stable jobs creates, therefore, in this case a floating reservoir of cheap, unprotected labor to satisfy the demands of corporations with intermittent employment requirements.⁴³

Survivalism unquestionably remains the main motivation of individualized strategies of response to the crisis of waged employment and allows little idealization of the entrepreneurial spirits allegedly unleashed by informality. Workers’ strategies to escape the factory and their disenchanting commentaries on the workplace environment, however, also denote an embryonic critique of work and productivism. They voice a sharp awareness of the contradictory post-apartheid location of wage labor, torn between its glorification in official policy discourse and its grim, degraded material realities. The informalization of work opens therefore possibilities for alternative modes of workers’ signification and agency. In few cases among my respondents, second jobs are indeed conducive to actual self-valorization, which workers oppose to the dullness and meaninglessness of the industrial shopfloor. A shop steward and electrical fitter at UCW grew disillusioned with the company as a consequence of frequent retrenchments followed by intermittent contract employment. For him, the frustrations and deprivation arising from workplace life contrasted markedly with the satisfaction derived from his parallel career, built entirely on self-taught skills. For three hours after clocking off at UCW and before going home in the township of Duduza (Nigel), this worker tended to his business as a self-defined “architect” in an office rented in downtown Nigel, where he drafts—without holding any formal certificate but “just a talent for drawing”—plans for all sorts of buildings.⁴⁴ One of his colleagues, an electrician, has indeed no qualms about sabotaging his factory tasks for the sake of his self-employed weekend activity as an electrical repairman. For him, the “informal” activity explicitly takes priority over his waged occupation:

Sometimes I can take a day off here at work. Before there was no pay for sick leave, now it is paid so I can just take one day and bring back a fake doctor’s note to cover up. Many people do it, even if one must be careful, they notice when someone brings doctor’s notices three times a month.

Q: So working at UCW for you is mainly something like...

A: To improve my life, but the main thing is that I can really stand alone, I can work alone, the electrician job is what I really care about.⁴⁵

Many workers indeed told me that they would not mind being laid off, if that allowed them to collect severance packages and retirement contributions to fund some new self-employed enterprise. Therefore, even if waged work is weakened as a site of identity and life strategies, workers do not necessarily consider unemployment as a reality of mere victimhood but can also seek in it new opportunities. The fact that workers volunteer for layoffs faces the unions, whose collective solidarity is already undermined by employment fragmentation, with fresh challenges. For shop stewards, this is a major cause for concern:

[Workers] volunteer when they hear the company wants to retrench, they know that under packages they'll get lots of money to pay for their accounts. . . . Even when we as shop stewards told them, 'No, you mustn't do this, let's wait what the company is going to do.' They say, 'No, the company told us they want to retrench, now you have to remind the company about that,' and I say, 'No that's not my job, to remind the company to retrench people.'⁴⁶

The ability of workers to signify their own precariousness and use informality as a life strategy critically questions the centrality of waged work in South Africa's policy and scholarly discourse. But choices to escape waged work also reveal that the entanglements of survivalism and self-realization in informal employment can be quite problematic. On one hand, informality and precarious employment are not only conditions of disempowerment, but also indicate workers' quest for emancipative alternatives to waged work. The ambivalent meanings of informality in workers' lives and imagination, on the other hand, is a warning not to confuse informality with its progressive possibilities and raise the question of how such alternatives are articulated politically.

Respondents for this research displayed a set of contrasting attitudes towards employment. They mostly saw their actual jobs—with their low wages, demeaning tasks, oppressive routines, unsustainable work rhythms, and widespread insecurity—as removed from ideas of a dignified life. The prospect of a meaningful human existence lay for them elsewhere, in a place often fantasized through dreams of individual market empowerment. Yet, when asked what they regarded as the best solution to South Africa's problems of poverty and inequality, "job creation" was the overwhelmingly dominant response. Such ambiguous attitudes towards work were reflected in conflicted approaches to the ANC, to which one third of respondents belonged, while a further fifth identified themselves as party "supporters." Workers' allegiance to the ANC surely reflected their COSATU membership and deeply engrained political traditions. When it came to evaluating the policies of the ANC government, however, 48 percent expressed a bitter disappointment and argued that post-apartheid job losses and precarious employment had betrayed the promises of political liberation. The ANC emerged therefore contradictorily as a responsible for the jobs crisis and the force expected to fix it through job creation policies. It was, finally, remarkable that job creation occupied such an important symbolic place among workers so disillusioned with the ability of their own jobs to

build decent lives. Such contradictions were partially explained by the fact that, when questioned on why job creation was a priority for them, many workers did not signify employment as a mere economic transaction. Male respondents in particular represented “proper” jobs as the imagined foundation of a social order — alternative to the precarious occupations they held — that could restore family respectability, household authority, traditional values, and power relations along gender and age lines. As one worker put it:

As in our customs, you are responsible for your family, I must make sure everything is in order, that my children and my wife have enough food. Even if she’s working I shouldn’t rely on her money.⁴⁷

Conversely, respondents considered high unemployment and occupational insecurity as conducive to all sorts of social ills, from rampant juvenile crime to the disintegration of the family as women’s need to earn wages allowed claims to independence from male household authority. A social order hinging on stable jobs represented an alternative where male breadwinners could keep disorderly youth in check and confine women to tasks of reproduction and care. The symbolic centrality of job creation, in other words, revealed workers’ longing for a conservative masculinity whereby images of ideal jobs conveyed lingering resentment at the decay of the actual ones.

The political possibilities opened up by the informalization of waged work remain, therefore, a contested terrain. The workers who imagine informality as the possibility of an entrepreneurial escape from their own employment predicament are often the same who desire job creation policies as a commitment by the state to restore a lost world of male working-class respectability. Conservative family values can, however, also interact with radical public discourses conveyed by union militancy to originate a different set of responses. A minority of workers I interviewed tried to articulate the critique of wage labor made possible by informality not in the sense of individual strategies and conservative imagination, but by arguing for a renewed progressive activism. They blamed the degradation of work on the decline of union membership and solidarity, and advocated COSATU’s independence from, and critical engagement of, the ANC. They continued to see the unions as workers’ representatives on bread-and-butter issues, and even desired their greater involvement as service organizations and legal advice structures. Outside the workplace, however, about one fifth of respondents saw labor organizations as having limited value in dealing with the social consequences of the employment crisis. To face the growing poverty of the working class, the rising costs of basic necessities, the inadequacy of housing and municipal utilities, they argued that the unions should act as community-based structures, possibly joining social movements critical of the ANC’s macroeconomic agenda. As one summarized:

The union has to engage the government, because the government has been voted by us. The previous government was oppressing us but now we are in a democracy so now if we have some complaints those people must hear us. . . . Every night I am always dreaming about whether I will lose my job, where will I go? What will happen in ten years time in our country if people are not working?

The union needs to be more militant in engaging the government, because in the present day I can't be happy that I am working. If the union says, hey, let's go and fight the government and I say no, I can't go there because I am working, then I will be killing myself, at the end of the day I will lose my job. *The union must fight both for the unemployed and for the people which are working.*⁴⁸

Various social and community movements, like the Anti-Privatization Forum, have, since the early 2000s, interrogated the inadequacies of the labor market in relation to social marginality, and demanded universal social protection and a decommodified social wage, including free basic services and basic income grants, for the majority of South Africans who cannot enjoy a dignified living through employment.

The informalization of jobs has, in short, reopened the question of the relationships between work and social emancipation, after the disappointments of wage labor in the post-apartheid era. Contrasting desires crisscross the unions' rank and file and shake collective identities and loyalties, while workers' dreams to escape jobs that have become frail and embattled seem to enable radically different political imaginations. My research, however, indicates that progressive political subjectivities are more likely to emerge from a rapidly informalizing world of production if work loses its centrality in the ways ordinary people imagine life in a democratic society. Assuming—as governmental rhetoric and the mounting resentment of sections of the working class tend to do—that despite its material degradation wage labor must remain the normative foundation of society and citizenship, is by now at risk of feeding a conservative and chauvinist political discourse. It is also likely to reflect the material conditions of only the shrinking minority of workers with stable and decent jobs while leaving the precarious majority voiceless and invisible.

In this contestation, it is the politics of working-class resentment that is for the moment gaining the upper hand. At the end of 2007, a rank-and-file worker insurgency, led by COSATU's leadership, caused a historic change at the top of the ANC. The new party leader, Jacob Zuma, proceeded to become South Africa's president following the national elections of 2009. The movement that propelled Zuma's rise (called a "tsunami" by his supporters), crucially expressed workers' disappointments with high unemployment and casualization under Thabo Mbeki's government, and it amounted to a rejection of GEAR's neoliberalism.⁴⁹ Zuma has, however, articulated such feelings in a public discourse that with renewed strength emphasizes hard work, deprecates welfare "dependency," condemns young women claiming social grants, and resonates with the new leader's masculine persona, allegiance to family values, and toughness on crime. The informalization of work and the anxieties it generates played a decisive role in such momentous shifts. Whether they will have a progressive political outcome will also depend on the ability of workers, social movements, and ordinary citizens to articulate a political imagination of liberation from, and not only of, wage labor.

Conclusion

My findings suggest that informality is not, as the "two economies" thesis indicates, a separate social realm of backwardness left behind in the post-apartheid globalized economy. It rather

represents an aspect of capitalist modernization as it increasingly relies on a hierarchical world of work and makes occupations precarious and insecure. Yet, the erosion of waged employment as a condition of decent life for the majority is accompanied by arguments that, from the government and rank-and-file workers alike, continue to imagine wage labor as the foundation of respectable families, social discipline, clearly defined gender roles, and economic initiative. On the workers' side such a conservative imagination of work seems all the more paradoxical considering the disillusionment most respondents expressed with their jobs. Desires to escape waged occupations reveal nonetheless workers' reluctance to be disempowered by employment precariousness and their desire to use informality as an avenue for alternative possibilities. Such possibilities, however, remain predominantly couched in the languages, often mutually reinforcing, of individual entrepreneurship or working-class resentment. Only in a minority of cases does informality enable a progressive imagination of union and social activism.

The most important political implication of this paper is, in the end, that the reconstitution of a progressive linkage between work and emancipation, after the disappointment of the post-apartheid promise of wage labor, greatly depends on how workers will signify informality. Does an increasingly informalized world of work enable demands for a universal social wage and basic income independent from employment status? Or are, conversely, the anxieties of precarious employment and dreams of individual empowerment contributing to the hegemony of new conservative work-centered paradigms? To address such questions scholars and activists will have to think of informality politically, rather than confining its analysis within the parameters of the workplace and the labor market. Perhaps useful insights can come from the history of labor struggles in Africa, where workers have often chosen informal and precarious occupations as ways to resist capitalist work discipline and the attempts at labor cooption by colonial and postcolonial regimes alike.⁵⁰ Escaping the necessity to work for wages remains also crucial, especially in contexts of neoliberal attack on labor under structural adjustment programs, to keep multiple livelihood networks and social interactions alive.⁵¹ Amidst the suffering and uncertainties it generates, the precariousness of work in South Africa has the merit of raising the question of whether formal wage labor should still be the obvious, indeed desirable, driver of social integration and citizenship, an issue that profoundly interrogates what until now has appeared as an unassailable post-apartheid consensus.

Notes

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1. Von Holdt, 2003.
 2. Friedman, 1987.
 3. Webster, 2006.
 4. Posel, 2003; Seekings and Nattrass, 2005.
 5. Hlela, 2003; Appolis and Sikwebu, 2003.
 6. Barchiesi and Kenny, 2002.
 7. Altman, 2006.

8. 140 interviews were conducted between July 1999 and May 2000. They are here numbered according to their position in the author's database. The interviews were conducted in the following companies: 1 to 20: Baldwin's Steel (Brakpan); 21 to 40, plus 45: Union Carriage and Wagon (Nigel); 41 to 60, minus 45: Kelvinator (Alrode); 61 to 80: Paperlink (Germiston); 81 to 100: Nampak Corrugated (Wadeville); 101 to 120: Consol Glass (Wadeville); 121 to 140: MB Glass (Leondale).
9. May, 2000; Bhorat et al., 2001; Seekings and Natrass, 2005.
10. Meth, 2004, provides an insightful discussion of these ideological debates.
11. RSA, 2003, p. 97.
12. Hart, 2006.
13. Bhorat and Oosthuizen, 2005.
14. Adler and Webster, 2000.
15. Hirsch, 2005; Cassim, 2006.
16. Bhorat and Hodge, 1999.
17. Natrass and Seekings, 2005.
18. Altman, 2003.
19. Bhorat and Oosthuizen, 2005.
20. Hlela, 2003.
21. Bhorat, 2003, p.6.
22. Theron, 2004.
23. Mosoetsa, 2001; Bramble and Barchiesi, 2003; Kenny, 2005.
24. Lund, 2002.
25. Meagher, 1995.
26. Critchlow and Tabak, 2000.
27. Devey, Skinner and Valodia, 2006.
28. See Hansen and Vaa, 2004.
29. Offe, 1997, p.82.
30. Aliber, 2003; Du Toit, 2004.
31. Ruiters, 1995.
32. Barchiesi and Kenny, 2002.
33. Rogerson, 2004.
34. Kenny, 2005, p.164.
35. Barchiesi and Kenny, 2002.
36. Development Bank of Southern Africa, 2005.
37. Bezuidenhout, 2004.
38. Rosenthal, 1999.
39. Interview 45. Male, 46, carpenter, UCW. Nigel, October 20, 1999.
40. Ibid.
41. Interview 27. Male, 33, Machine operator, UCW. Nigel, August 7, 1999.
42. Interview 4. Male, 39, sales representative, Baldwin's Steel. Brakpan, July 19, 1999.
43. Desai, 2002.
44. Interview 21. Male, 47, electrician, UCW. Nigel, July 24, 1999.

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45. Interview 39. Male, 39, electrical tester/wirer, UCW. Nigel, September 22, 1999.
 46. Interview 1. Male, 45, sales representative, Baldwin's Steel. Brakpan, July 12, 1999.
 47. Unnumbered interview. Male, 29, truck loader. Norwood Municipal Waste Depot. Johannesburg, February 23, 2000.
 48. Interview 137. Male, 37, general worker, MB Glass. Leondale, May 16, 2000.
 49. Ceruti, 2007.
 50. Cooper, 1987; 1996.
 51. Simone, 2004.

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Informalization from Above, Informalization from Below: The Options for Organization

JAN THERON

Abstract: The paper examines different strategies for the collective organization of informal workers, on the basis of a number of empirical illustrations from South Africa. It argues that the situation of workers in the informal economy is best understood in terms of two inter-related processes. The first is “informalization from above,” whereby employment is increasingly externalized, resulting in a layer of workers ostensibly located in the formal economy to whom labor standards increasingly do not apply. The second, “informalization from below,” is manifested by the expansion of self-employment and survivalist activities. The dominant form of membership based organization in South Africa has been trade unionism. For reasons that are canvassed in the paper, however, trade unions have not been able to respond effectively to informalization from above. Trade unionism also does not represent an appropriate model of organization to respond to informalization from below. What is needed, rather, is an entrepreneurial form of organization. The paper therefore advocates a paradigm shift towards building collective organization from the bottom-up, based on a culture of self-reliance and of communal solidarity. In this context it discusses the current upsurge of new cooperatives and emphasizes the potential of the cooperative form of organization and the notion of building the social economy as a means of empowering informal workers.

Introduction

Perhaps the arts are better able to express what is happening in South Africa in the era of capitalist globalization than the social sciences. Although South Africa’s contribution to world cinema is a modest one, it is surely no coincidence that in two critically acclaimed films of the post-apartheid era the theme is crime, against a back-drop of social disintegration.¹ In *Tsotsi* the protagonist is a young gangster who finds his humanity when it turns out that a vehicle he has hijacked has a baby in the back seat. There is no such theme of redemption in the more recent *Jerusalema*. Here the gangster styles himself the head of a housing trust, whose ostensible object is to accommodate the poor and homeless. He gets rich by “stealing” buildings.²

Crime in this paper is a signifier of social disintegration. The social indicators most often invoked in public discourse about crime are unemployment and inequality. It is often suggested, for example, that there is a causal relationship between crime and unemployment. But unemployment does not suffice as an explanation for the violent nature of crime in South Africa. Inequality does not provide a ready explanation for crime directed at the most vulnerable sections of society, women and children in poor and working class

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/pdfs/v11i2-3a6.pdf>

communities. There are societies elsewhere where inequality is extreme but where crime is demonstrably less of a problem.

What differentiates South Africa from the rest of Africa, some would argue, is that it has both high unemployment and a small informal economy.³ It is also the smallness of its informal economy that differentiates it from other societies with extremes of inequality, such as India. Official statistics appear to confirm this. Probably these statistics underestimate the extent of the “informal sector” (as it is described), and informality is certainly increasing.⁴ Even so, what is distinctive about South Africa, along with some other middle-income countries, is rather the numerical and historical significance of its working class.

There are two factors associated with this predominance of the working class in relation to what would otherwise be characterized as the poor. The first is what I term a “wage culture.” This is a societal norm in terms of which people in general, particularly men, aspire to or expect waged employment as a means to subsist. This is in contrast with societies in which there is no such expectation, and where poor people are either self-employed or engage in the range of entrepreneurial activity that is generally conceived of as constituting the informal economy.⁵ The second is the historical ascendance of trade unions as a form of membership-based organization in poor and working class communities.

Trade unions played a key role in establishing and defining a tradition of communal solidarity in poor and working-class communities in the apartheid era, I argue.⁶ Communities with a strong tradition of communal solidarity will be more coherent and less susceptible to crime. But the political and cultural transition associated with the dismantling of apartheid coincided with South Africa’s economic integration into the global economy, at the precise point at which trade liberalization began to take effect.⁷ Capitalist globalization in turn has widened the gap between rich and poor in what Sklair has termed the class polarization crisis.⁸

The effects of class polarization in South Africa have not been adequately theorized. It is nevertheless clear that inequality is increasing between what is traditionally conceived of as the working class and those who are relatively more deprived.⁹ At the same time, the prospect of waged employment is increasingly unrealistic for ever larger numbers. Realizing this, individuals and groups have devised various strategies to enrich themselves, of which the protagonist of *Jerusalema* is an exemplar. Personal greed, rather than communal solidarity, is the order of the day.¹⁰ If there is any prospect of re-establishing a tradition of communal solidarity, I argue that another form of membership-based organization will have to be promoted in poor and working class communities. It will also be necessary to recognize that a “wage culture,” insofar as it creates unrealistic expectations, is part of the problem that has to be overcome.

The scheme of the paper is as follows. The next section is a historical outline of the role of trade unions in establishing and defining a tradition of communal solidarity. This is followed by an analysis as to how membership-based organizations and communal solidarity have been undermined by a process of informalization, both “from above” and “from below.” The paper then proceeds to consider organizational responses to informalization. It concludes that a different paradigm is needed, if membership-based organizations in poor and working class communities and a tradition of communal solidarity is to be re-established. In this context, the paper emphasizes the significance of the cooperative form of enterprise. The paper then turns to consider case studies of cooperatives established in South Africa and discusses the extent to which the cooperative form of enterprise has the potential to establish a new paradigm.

The membership-based organizations that emerged in the period of the struggle

South Africa in the 1970s was predominantly an industrial country with a working class divided along racial lines. There was a white working class that was one of the beneficiaries of apartheid and a black working class that was disadvantaged to varying degrees (the term “black” is used here in its generic sense, to include both so-called “coloureds” and Africans). The black working class was generally perceived as poor and the poor as working class. The following quotation accurately sums up how the national situation was conceived at the time the foundations of a “new” trade union movement were being established, in the late 1970s. “Most black South Africans are workers,” it begins. “We believe, therefore, that to understand the problems facing black South Africans we must begin with the labour situation. It is the situation in which there is the greatest potential for forging new organisations through which blacks can reclaim their human dignity.”¹¹

In retrospect, the urban and gender bias of the statement “most black South Africans are workers” is apparent. Half of black South Africans are women. There were black women workers, notably in low-wage manufacturing industries such as clothing and food manufacturing, and women also predominated in domestic work. Most women, however, were relegated to the rural areas and so-called homelands by apartheid’s policy of influx control. There they were forced to live off traditional agriculture and the kind of survivalist activities that are nowadays categorized as informal.

It was nevertheless true that the labor situation had the greatest potential for forging “new” organizations, as the next decade was to prove. Of course the trade unions that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s did not represent an entirely new form of organization. There was already a long established tradition of trade unionism, including of trade unions organizing African workers.¹² But this tradition had to be reinvented, in the course of a series of debates internal to the unions: whether workers were best represented by trade unions or plant-based committees; whether trade unions should organize generally or industrially; the importance of non-racial unionism; what proper organization entailed; and the relationship between trade unions and the community.¹³ These debates were in turn shaped by the experiences of organization on the ground.

These trade unions were of course not the only membership-based organizations to emerge during the struggle, but they were by far the most important. This was because, unlike any other organizations or institutions having a membership base (such as faith-based organizations) trade unions drew their support from a working class constituency and the working class in an industrial country was politically potent. This was particularly so to the extent that unions were able to unite different strata of the working class. In this it seemed they were comparatively successful. One gauge of their success was the extent to which they were able to recruit the “ordinary worker.”

The “ordinary worker,” in the low-wage manufacturing industries mentioned, was typically black and female. In most other industries, the ordinary worker was unskilled and a so-called contract worker from the rural areas. Because these unions subscribed to the principle that the members should be in effective control of their organization, they also articulated the need for ordinary workers to be part of the political process. In some instances ordinary workers were elected to high office in such unions. Arguably this was what was really “new” about these trade unions.

By way of contrast, the civic associations that began to emerge at about the same time as trade unions did not feel any need to recruit members to justify their claim to represent the community. More importantly, almost without exception, they had no presence amongst the poorest sections of the African community: amongst contract workers living in the hostels and, with the influx of people from the rural areas, amongst shack-dwellers in informal settlements. The divide between these contract workers and recent arrivals, on the one hand, and urban “insiders” on the other, was at the root of episodes of factional violence in 1976 and subsequently.

There was also a tension within unions in implementing the principle that “ordinary workers” should be in control. It necessitated the adoption of procedures some perceived as laborious and unnecessary.¹⁴ Underlying these tensions was a divide between the “ordinary worker” and a comparatively sophisticated, urban-based, male leadership that was becoming increasingly ascendant. As the unions grew larger, and were inevitably drawn into a political role, these tensions were exacerbated. At the same time, there were unions that were in effect proxies for political organizations and were less concerned with developing a membership base than a political following.

These tensions were not resolved with the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). It was accepted that the key policy that was to inform the structure of the new labor organization was broad based-industrial unions, formed on the basis of one union for one industry. But there was no debate as to how these unions should be constituted. Here there were conflicting traditions. There was a tradition that emphasized the importance of the financial autonomy of the union and the autonomy of the branch or local structure over the head office, or national union.¹⁵ With few exceptions, however, the emergent unions had since their inception relied heavily on donor funding and had no tradition of financial self-sufficiency. Partly as a consequence, most unions favored a highly centralized structure, in which the branch or local structure was allocated funds (and hence controlled) by the head office. This “top-down” approach prevailed.

Informalization from above, informalization from below

The trade unions’ reward for their support during the struggle was to institutionalize a political role for themselves and to enact supportive labor legislation. The former took the form of the establishment of a political structure, the National Economic, Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), in terms of which organized labor and organized business would be consulted about the introduction of socio-economic policy. But for this corporatist project to be credible, it was necessary for government’s “social partners” to be seen as representative of those affected by social and economic policy.

Well before 1994, it was already evident that business had embarked on a process of restructuring that was to have a significant impact on trade unions. There had already been significant numbers of unskilled workers retrenched in a number of sectors, notably in manufacturing, where the “new” unionism had been based. From now on, the typical union member was less likely to be an “ordinary worker” than to be skilled or semi-skilled. In part this process of restructuring can be seen as an endeavor, endorsed by the new democratic government, to “modernize” the economy and integrate it into the global economy. This required protectionist measures to be dismantled and tariffs to be liberalized. In part it appears that restructuring was motivated by an aversion to employment as it was then

structured, with the workplace as a locus of organization, and the risks this entailed for employers. As a consequence employment was increasingly externalized.¹⁶

The first consequence of externalization is that, increasingly, the workplace has ceased to comprise a community of workers with different skills, working in the same physical locality for a single employer.¹⁷ Instead, the workplace has become a community of service providers or intermediaries, each of which employs its own workforce, but which is nevertheless subordinate to a core business. The core business determines not only the parameters on which services are provided but also the parameters on which the service provider or intermediary provides employment, whether by virtue of its control of the workplace, or by virtue of its ownership of the intellectual property rights to what is produced or sold there.

A second consequence of externalization flows from the first. If informalization is regarded as a process whereby economic activity takes place outside the scope of formal regulation, externalization has the effect of informalizing work in the formal workplace. Workers employed by franchisees or temporary employment agencies or service providers in the formal workplace are nominally employees, to whom labor legislation applies. But, they are unable to avail themselves of the rights and protections labor legislation provides insofar as the conditions under which they are employed are in fact determined by a person that is legally not party to the employment relationship, namely the core business.¹⁸ This can be described as “informalization from above.”¹⁹

There is no empirical data as to the extent of this form of informalization, but sectoral case studies suggest it is widespread.²⁰ Moreover, all indications are that workers employed by these subordinate employers earn substantially less than workers employed by the core-business doing comparable work. Interviews with employers pursuant to a study of temporary employment services suggest that the determinant of an appropriate level of remuneration for such workers is what is perceived to be the going rate for “casual” labor.²¹ This would be what one would expect, in a situation where “casual” labor can be readily hired and where there are sufficient “casuals” willing to take the going rate in order to escape unemployment and survive. This, then, is the level at which informalization from above merges with “informalization from below,” representing the range of occupations comprising what is more traditionally conceived of as the informal economy.²² These include self employed workers, working on their own or with others (such as apprentices and family members, whether paid or unpaid).

Informalization has had a profoundly debilitating effect on the level of organization in poor and working class communities. In the case of “informalization from above,” workers in informalized employment are not able to associate, let alone exercise bargaining rights, because their employer does not control the workplace where they work: hence their employment is fundamentally insecure, and they are easily victimized. In the case of “informalization from below,” the difficulties in organizing workers relate to the practical problems of linking-up isolated economic actor in different locations and in identifying how it can be to their mutual benefit to associate.

This situation has not in any way been ameliorated by the creation of a third constituency in NEDLAC, alongside organized labor and business, to represent the interests of “the community.” The only way the community could be represented at this level is through federation(s) of membership-based organizations. But the claims of the federation of civic associations to fulfill this role are not credible. Indeed, corporatist arrangements such

as NEDLAC do not encourage building such organization from the bottom up, as much as lobbying in the corridors of power.

It is also important in this regard to differentiate membership-based organizations from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the one hand and social movements, on the other. NGOs form part of what (imprecisely) is sometimes referred to as the “non-profit” or “voluntary sector.” NGOs, of course, may play a supportive role in developing membership-based organizations. The dynamic of an NGO, however, is quite different from a membership-based organization: it is ultimately accountable to those that are the source of its funding, rather than a membership. Social movements, absent a defined membership base, are open to the same objection.

The need for a different paradigm

What, then, should be the organizational response to informalization? Trade unions are the dominant form of organization in the formal workplace. The obvious response to “informalization from above,” and the segmentation and polarization described, seems to be to organize workers into one union. But this has not happened in South Africa, although there are cases where it has been attempted. Rather, where unions have succeeded in organizing workers employed by service providers it has been into separate unions.²³ This implies an acceptance that they belong to a separate sector from their fellow workers in the workplace of the core business. This is problematic.

It is thus an unresolved question as to what form a trade union response to “informalization from above” should take. At the same time it is clear that the historical ascendancy of trade unions as a form of membership-based organization in poor and working class communities is a thing of the past and that other forms of organization need to be considered. This is no less clear in respect of “informalization from below.”

In South Africa, the Self-Employed Women’s Union (SEWU) is the only example of a trade union response to “informalization from below.” SEWU in turn modeled itself on the Self-Employed Women’s Association of India (SEWA).²⁴ But it is debatable whether SEWU was truly a trade union. From its inception SEWU defined its membership constituency as the self-employed.²⁵ In so doing it broke with a conception of trade unionism that holds that its members must be workers in an employment relationship. The self-employed were defined as those who earn their living by their own effort (as opposed to those who earn a regular wage or salary) including a person who employs not more than three others to assist her.

The SEWU had initial success in bargaining with the local authority for facilities and services for street traders. It seems more appropriate, however, to conceive of this kind of bargaining within an entrepreneurial paradigm, in which it is one of a number of strategies the association devises to promote each member’s economic interests. As it happened, it was not able to consolidate on the gains achieved by bargaining, and it then began to focus on other strategies to empower its members economically, such as entrepreneurial education and training and the introduction of a micro-credit facility for its members.²⁶ This raises the question whether the use of the trade union form of organization is compatible with the function of creating entrepreneurs out of its members.

Regrettably, SEWU was not allowed to resolve this question for itself. It was forced to dissolve in 2004 rather than comply with a court order compelling it to reinstate two dismissed (and so far as it was concerned, discredited) officials. SEWU could simply not

afford the cost of the accumulated back pay this decision entailed and was liquidated. Yet the need it fulfilled still exists: at the time of writing some members of SEWU are in the process of reviving the organization under a different name.

The SA Owner-Driver Empowerment Federation is another example of an organization faced with an identity crisis. This is a Johannesburg-based voluntary association representing owner-drivers.²⁷ As its name implies, it regards the owner-drivers as entrepreneurs, rather than workers in a relation of dependence on the firms they service. For the owner-drivers who joined and paid their membership fees, however, the burning issue was that they were being exploited. Many found themselves economically worse off than when they had been formally employed.²⁸

There were two possible ways in which this association could have responded to a situation of exploitation. The first was to adopt the strategies of a trade union. But the association, as we have seen, was conceived within an entrepreneurial paradigm in which owner-drivers were seen as economic agents in their own right rather than workers. So this option was excluded from the outset. The other response was to become an enterprise that was able to advance the members' economic interests.²⁹ However it did not pursue this course either. Instead the Association lingers on, with a declining membership. In fact, the only form of enterprise that this association could have become, within the confines of the law, was a cooperative. That is because in South Africa, as with other countries that have adopted the English corporate model, an association for gain is not permitted unless it is registered.³⁰ But that, of course, is not the primary reason for advocating cooperatives here. Rather it is because, in the current context, today's "ordinary worker" is as likely as not to be someone working on his or her own or with others, with no identifiable employer. The "ordinary worker" in this situation can benefit from association no less than formerly, when employed in a formal workplace. However, to do so effectively such an association needs to operate as an enterprise, and that is what a cooperative is.

The appropriate conceptual framework for developing a cooperative response to informalization is that of the 'social economy': the notion that alongside the private and public sector there exists a third sector, of which cooperatives and other forms of association are an integral part.³¹ Clearly this third sector assumes increasing significance in a context in which, as a consequence of externalization, direct employment in both the private and public sector has been diminishing and public services have increasingly been cut-back.

In the context of the global financial crisis that broke towards the end of 2008, arguments that cooperatives and mutual societies were outmoded business types have come back to haunt some of those that converted to companies in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. According to Birchall, there is now a countertrend. Indeed cooperatives world-wide, and specifically financial cooperatives, are in a comparatively healthy position, and in some instances flourishing, notwithstanding the global financial crisis.³²

But cooperatives are of course not the "magic bullet" that will kill the vampire of market fundamentalism. A cooperative that is not clear about the needs it aims to meet, or is not able to meet these needs, or does not operate reasonably efficiently, will not be sustainable. Also, as with any form of entity, cooperatives are open to abuse. Further, like all forms of membership-based organizations, and particularly those catering for the disadvantaged, cooperatives are also vulnerable to capture by elites seeking to utilise the cooperative to their own advantage.

There is no need to reinvent the wheel. For this reason it is also appropriate to propose a different rather than a new paradigm. The strength of the cooperative tradition, as embodied

in the internationally accepted cooperative values and principles, is critically important in this regard. These principles set up a creative tension between what “is” and “ought to be” in cooperative practice.³³ They also provide a necessary corrective to “top down” approaches to cooperative development that arguably facilitate elite capture.

Case studies of “successful” cooperatives

The history of cooperatives in South Africa illustrates both the potential and limitations of cooperatives. During the last century cooperatives representing primarily poor whites were successful in economically empowering a section of this community. In particular, agricultural marketing co-operatives were successful, and it was this form of cooperative the legislation primarily catered for. But the membership of these cooperatives was in effect racially defined.

There was also the negative experience of cooperatives established in the 1980s and subsequently, with no clear conception of how to operate as an enterprise, and which failed for this reason. Cooperatives continue to be established and fail for this reason until the present day.³⁴ In the 1980s, however, cooperatives faced a hostile economic environment with no institutional support.³⁵ In theory that has now changed, with the adoption of a new co-operative development policy and, in 2005, new legislation.³⁶

Whether in response to the new legislation or for other reasons, there has also been an upsurge in newly established co-operatives in all parts of the country, and in particular in the most impoverished rural areas.³⁷ The first of several purposes of the new legislation is to “promote the development of sustainable co-operatives that comply with cooperative principles, thereby increasing the number and variety of economic enterprises operating in the formal economy.”³⁸ The argument advanced here is that cooperatives represent a model for countering or even reversing informalization. This argument can only be sustained, however, with reference to specific kinds of cooperative operating within specific sectors. The case studies below were compiled following an investigation into “successful” cooperatives operating in the Western Cape province. These cooperatives are considered “successful” only in so far as they had been in existence for a period of three years or longer at the date at which the investigation was concluded.³⁹ In other words, they had proved sustainable. Data was obtained through structured interviews with the leadership of cooperatives.

Case study 1: A transport cooperative

Everyone needs transport. Until the 1980s, the Cape Town working class relied on public transport: to get to work, shops, hospitals and the like. The government’s railway service provided rail transport. Bus passenger transport was provided by the Golden Arrow Bus Service. The same company had had a virtual monopoly on bus transport for decades, and received a subsidy to make it more affordable. But for the working class communities that mainly used its services, the fares were steep. As happened elsewhere in the country, fare increases were often the subject of bitter bus boycotts. No doubt this was one of the things that prompted the government of P.W. Botha to actively encourage mini-bus taxis as an alternative form of transport.⁴⁰ It was consistent with policies to encourage small business and de-regulate the labor market, at a time when the Reagan and Thatcher governments were vigorously promoting such policies in the United States and Britain.⁴¹

For the P.W. Botha government, the mini-bus taxi represented a proto-type of the sort of small business in which a black person could be successful. The vehicles used were relatively affordable, and the overheads of running a mini-bus taxi could be met by the fares the passengers paid. The passengers in turn would have the salubrious experience of being exploited by one of their own instead of by a faceless company owned by whites. The social costs of this initiative, including lives lost in so-called "taxi wars" between the different operators, and the escalation of road accidents, were to prove enormous.⁴²

If the apartheid government did not want the community united over an issue of public transport, one might have expected the converse to have applied in the case of the first democratic government. Converting a privatized taxi industry into cooperatives seemed the obvious way to do so. Yet the political will was evidently lacking, and taxi wars between private operators competing for business continued to flare up until the present. Nevertheless a handful of cooperatives have been established.

In 1999, a cooperative was formed by fourteen small bus operators, who at the time survived on small contracts, providing services to churches and schools.⁴³ The object of forming a cooperative was to pool their resources in order to enable them to tender collectively for larger and more lucrative contracts. This they succeeded in doing. In 2005, they successfully tendered for a contract to provide a bus service to the University of Cape Town. Then they were approached by Golden Arrow to tender jointly with it, as its empowerment partner, for a contract put out by national government. Although the contract was aborted, the cooperative now jointly operates a bus-service between Atlantis and Cape Town. It had fifty-two members in 2007 and was generating substantial surpluses.

Case study 2: A housing cooperative

Until the 1980s, urban housing for the working class comprised flats and houses rented usually from the local authority, and in African communities, hostels for the contract workers. Informal settlements were actively discouraged if not prohibited, although it was clear by the late 1980s that prohibition had not worked. The hostels where contract workers used to live in the heyday of apartheid are to be found in every African working class community. Typically the hostels were designed to accommodate males only. They were erected by the companies that they worked for, who leased or bought the land on which they were located. Nowadays they are sites of overcrowding and urban squalor.

In Hlazo Village, Nyanga, outside Cape Town, the land on which the hostels were sited was leased from the local authority. When the contract labor system was abolished, several companies donated hostels to their occupants. In 2002, some of the occupants established a co-operative and entered into an agreement with the local authority to acquire this land. The cooperative then undertook an ambitious scheme to upgrade the hostels into 274 units, comprising two bedrooms, a lounge, a kitchen, and a bathroom. This represents one unit for each member.⁴⁴ The cooperative was able to undertake this scheme by assisting its members to access a housing subsidy the government provides, which is used to acquire building materials. The costs of construction had to be covered by member savings, or by sweat equity (in other words, by providing their labor). The cooperative also established a savings scheme to help the members to save.

Case study 3: A social cooperative

There were minimal social services for the working class in the apartheid era and certainly none in the informal settlements that started mushrooming around the big cities in the 1980s and subsequently. One such settlement was Crossroads. It was notorious for its factional conflicts and the warlords who presided over the allocation of houses and resources, in collusion with the apartheid authorities. Now it is integrated into the adjacent townships, and the building the most notorious warlord once occupied became a crèche and pre-school.

The crèche was started in 1985, when its founder learned there were women in Crossroads desperate enough to abandon their babies on a nearby rubbish dump.⁴⁵ During the day there are sixty-three children in it, up to the age of six years. There is also a large and flourishing vegetable garden. Produce is sold to the community. To the elderly and sick it is given away.

In 1999, this creche and pre-school was one of fifteen in the area that banded together to form a care co-operative. The largest of these leased premises from the local authority and received a subsidy from the government. Others operate "backyard crèches," from their homes. The costs of administering the co-operative are minimal, since it does not employ anyone itself. But it provides at least two important services to its members.

The first is to negotiate with the local authority and government on a variety of issues affecting the members. The second is training, to enhance the skills of both the members themselves and the persons they employ. Each member employed between three and six such assistants, called teachers. Strictly speaking, then, the members are employers who are in a relationship of power over those who work for them. However the co-operative subscribes to the principle that what each crèche earns should be equally shared between the member and those who work for her.

The incomes of these crèches fluctuate from month to month. People do not require care all the year round, and there are poor parents who cannot afford to pay regularly, or at all. The co-operative regards it as a demonstration of its commitment to the community, in accordance with co-operative principles, to accept the children of such poor parents.⁴⁶ No doubt the community has greater confidence in entrusting their children to a co-operative that displays such commitment. A co-operative is also accountable to the community for the standard of care its members provide in a way an individual operating on her own, or a for-profit organization, could not be.

Case study 4: A marketing cooperative

Making "arts and crafts" to sell to tourists is an obvious way to survive in a tourist town, but the problem is marketing: where to sell your goods. Many sell by the side of the road and at traffic lights. Its better still to sell at a tourist site such as the renovated areas of the Cape Town docks, known as the Waterfront.⁴⁷ But access to the Waterfront is strictly controlled. An individual would simply not be able to trade there on her own.

A co-operative was established in 1991 to overcome this problem, and market "arts and crafts" produced by its members. Its most important asset was the lease it had secured to a stall in a well-placed trading site at the Waterfront. It started with about ten members.⁴⁸ Sixteen years later it had forty members, from a variety of backgrounds, ranging from those who employed workers to assist them, to those who work on their own, to those who have employment elsewhere, and work in their spare time. About half the members were female and more than half black. Everyone worked from home, and most depended entirely on the

income from the goods they produced, which the cooperative sold on at a fifty percent mark-up.

The cooperative made a surplus in 2007. It was not critical that it do so each year, however, and before that it made a loss. Provided losses do not accumulate and it is able to continue paying the rent and the manager's salary, it continues to serve its members interests.

Case study 5: A savings and credit cooperative

The working class have always needed to be able to access cash, whether to avoid debt or to cope with the contingencies of life, such as access to emergency medical care or funeral costs. What are commonly referred to as *stokvels* in South Africa are in essence rotating savings and credit associations (ROCSAs), whose object is meet this need, by providing a lump sum to their members. They are informal and unregulated. Funeral associations represent a different kind of informal strategy to cope with risk. Yet these different kinds of self-help strategy have obviously not eliminated money-lending. Indeed one of the most pervasive signs of the impact of economic globalization in the 1990s is the micro-lender, or "loan shark," as they are more euphemistically known, who have their signs in towns large or small, rural or urban, advertising cash loans in bold print. The activities of the micro-lender are supposed to be regulated, but of the authorities lack the capacity for effectively doing so.

The limitation of *stokvels* relates to their scale. They work where the members are able to trust each other, usually because they live in close proximity to each other. That is also the reason they are able to get by without formal controls, safeguarding against corruption. A savings and credit co-operative (SACCO) is able to overcome the limitation of scale, by being an autonomous local body that is affiliated to a secondary structure that is nationally based. There are some twenty-six such SACCOs affiliated to a secondary co-operative, SACCOL, which also acts as a regulatory body for the SACCOs.

The members of most of these SACCOs are employed in the same workplace. The employer deducts a contribution from the payroll. This suggests that it is a form best suited to workers in a formal workplace. However, there is one SACCO in the farming district of Stellenbosch that is not workplace based. Farm workers are generally regarded as amongst the most vulnerable sections of the employed and include significant numbers of non-standard workers, particularly in fruit and wine areas, where employment tends to be seasonal.

The SACCO started with ten members in 2002. In 2007, it had 3,000 members, the majority of whom were female and all of whom were black.⁴⁹ The SACCO offered its members a variety of products tailored to meet their specific needs as farm workers, including a "quick loan" which is re-payable over six weeks, and a "long-term loan" payable over a longer period. The SACCO encourages members to save, and the amount of the loan for which they qualify depends on the amount of their savings. The interest rate the SACCO charged on its loans was only 2 percent. Yet, despite the low interest rates it still faced competition from the micro-lenders. They have a foot in the market primarily because of the high rates of alcoholism amongst farm workers and their vulnerability to unscrupulous lenders. Despite its low interest rates, the SACCO succeeded in making a surplus for the first time in 2006.

Case study 6: A small farmers' cooperative

Government has identified agriculture and agro-processing as a priority sector, amongst other reasons because it is labor-intensive.⁵⁰ Any attempt to galvanize the sector, however, will be constrained by the slow pace of land reform, and by the pressures farmers face as a result of the government's overzealous liberalization of tariffs in the 1990s.⁵¹ Small farmers, in particular, cannot hope to compete in a global market with heavily subsidized farmers from the North. But there is some hope if small farmers co-operate with one another.

Rooibos is a plant that occurs naturally in a dry, mountainous region north of Cape Town. In 2000, fourteen small farmers decided to form the rooibos tea co-operative. Some individually owned small tracts of land. Some were part of a group that collectively owned a farm. Some rented land. Their original object in forming a co-operative was an extremely limited one: to establish a facility to process each member's tea, so that it could be delivered to a marketing company.

This marketing company was formerly a co-operative that had converted to a company, and some of the small farmers were contractually bound to deliver all their produce to it. However, there was unhappiness at the price it paid. It soon became apparent that the co-operative could get a much better price by marketing their tea through an agent under a fair trade label and as organically produced.

During the first year of its operation the co-operative leased a centrally located facility to produce the tea, some of which was then marketed through an agent. So successful was this that the following year all the members were marketing their tea through the cooperative, and the co-operative realized a substantial surplus. By 2004, the cooperative was confident enough to eliminate the agent and deal directly with the buyers. This required that they obtain the requisite certification from the Fair Trade Labelling Organisation (FLO), a relatively sophisticated process. One of the potential benefits of the cooperative format is that collectively producers are able to engage in such a process as well as to achieve vertical integration of the different units making up the enterprise by means of pooling equipment and collectivizing the costs of seasonal labor.

The cooperative used its surplus to encourage the participation of women. In 2007, it had thirty-six members. Twelve were women, whereas they constituted only two of the founding members. The cooperative has also sponsored a number of training and development programs, which have included topics ranging from financial management to global climate change, an issue of direct relevance to the sustainable cultivation of the tea.

Case study 7: An environmental cooperative

One of the principal initiatives by government to address the issues of unemployment has been the establishment of public works programs. Until 2002, when it committed itself to the adoption of the so-called Extended Public Works Program (EPWP), its flagship program has been the clearing of alien vegetation in various parts of the country under the terms of a program established under the auspices of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF). The alien vegetation in question comprises mostly trees imported from Australia in the colonial era. These trees have spread throughout the country and are choking the indigenous vegetation, as well as the water supply. They also are a potential source of

timber, which can be processed or sold in raw form. This represents a potential entrepreneurial opportunity.

As with any public works program, the aim was to recruit unemployed workers to undertake the clearing of alien vegetation. But the workers would not be employed permanently. In fact, the program was designed so that employment was externalized: the teams of workers actually clearing the vegetation would not be employed by the program at all. Rather they would be employed by so-called emergent contractors engaged by the program. The same result, however, could be achieved by engaging co-operatives composed of a group of workers. Such co-operatives were in fact formed in the Western Cape and elsewhere, but the government was not prepared to support this initiative. To get work at all, one had either to be an emergent contractor or employed by a worker of an emergent contractor.

In 2002, a group of fourteen persons who had become emergent contractors formed a cooperative in Atlantis, a dormitory town of Cape Town.⁵² Their experience as emergent contractors was that they had been compelled to undercut one another to secure the limited number of contracts DWAF provided. They were also compelled to incur expenditure on protective clothing and machinery which as a cooperative could easily be pooled. The cooperative had sixty-five members in 2007, of which only twenty-three were contractors. It had also greatly extended the scope of its activities, which included making crafts from alien vegetation, harvesting reeds to be used for thatching houses and various activities related to tourism. It had also linked up with a crime prevention program in an endeavor to make the area safe for tourism.

Conclusions

There is no simple description of the national issue in the first decade of the new millennium equivalent to the 1970s formulation “most black South Africans are workers...” The following description of the economy in urban slums worldwide, however, mirrors the vision of social disintegration in the films referred to at the start of this paper: “Politically, the informal sector, in the absence of enforced labor rights, is a semi-feudal realm of kickbacks, bribes, tribal loyalties, and ethnic exclusion. Urban space is never free. A place on the pavement, the rental of a rickshaw, a day’s labor on a construction site, or a domestic’s reference to a new employer: all of these require patronage or membership in some closed network, often an ethnic militia or street gang.”⁵³

Yet, the reference to “enforced labor rights” is curious. This is surely not realistic under current conditions, and arguably never has been. In this analysis, the only way that poor people and the working class are able to enforce labor rights is through organization. The alternative to a strategy of enforcing labor rights through trade unions is through cooperating, pursuant to a strategy of self help. The semi-feudal realm referred to is essentially a manifestation of disorganization in poor and working class communities.

One would need a lot more information than can be presented here to make any kind of definitive statement about any of the cooperatives discussed above, and definitive statements about organizations are dangerous. Organizations are always in flux, and today’s democratic and accountable leadership is tomorrow’s autocracy. But, the mere fact that they have sustained themselves for as long as they have is significant. Even more so is the fact that in most instances their membership had grown. It is a membership that is

overwhelmingly black and from a disadvantaged background. Women are well represented, even in sectors where they are generally not.

Of course not all members are from a disadvantaged background and some are relatively well off. Indeed a mix of members with different skills, and from different economic backgrounds, appears to be one of the ingredients of a successful cooperative. This may be because of skills such members have, or because of the bigger volumes their participation brings. In the case of the rooibos tea cooperative, better off members willingly sacrifice a proportion of the surplus that would otherwise be due to them in order to encourage participation by poorer members. That is what a culture of solidarity entails.

Certain of the cooperatives have been the recipient of grants and other forms of financial support. It would scarcely be conceivable to embark on a project of the magnitude of the housing cooperative without significant resources behind it. On the other hand, there were cooperatives that have thrived without any assistance whatsoever, or with relatively modest contributions to capital projects. In most instances the cooperative, once established, was resilient enough to carry on without external support. This is also what a culture of self-sufficiency requires. But, self sufficiency is not a virtue where cooperatives become “stand alone” institutions providing welfare services to their own members without regard to the obligations of the state to do so.⁵⁴ The care cooperative is an example of the use of the cooperative form to leverage resources, where otherwise they would not be prioritized. Self-reliance through forming cooperatives should also not be confused with the kind of models promoted by “bootlace ideologues” that hold the poor responsible for its own deliverance.

It would be premature to say the case studies of cooperatives we have discussed portend a “new” cooperative movement in South Africa. Rather the debate about what form this movement should take has hardly begun. Yet the cooperative case studies illustrate the potential for such a movement. As in the case of the trade unions in the 1970s, this movement needs to be built from the bottom up, and focused on the “ordinary worker.” Its leadership need to learn from the mistakes I have argued the trade unions made in adopting highly centralized structures and undermining local autonomy. If this happens, cooperatives can help bring about a shift from a “wage culture” and help establish a culture of communal solidarity.

Notes

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1. Crime is also one of the burning themes that animates public debate in post-apartheid South Africa. Although crime statistics also remain contentious, there is an overwhelming consensus that crime is out of control.
 2. *Tsotsi* was written and directed by Gavin Hood, and won an Oscar for best foreign language film in 2006. *Jerusalema* was written and directed by Ralph Zulman.
 3. According to Danni Rodrik (“Understanding South Africa’s Economic Puzzles,” unpublished paper, Harvard University, 2006, cited in Skinner, 2006), the average urban unemployment rate in sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa) is 16

percent, in comparison to South Africa's 29.3 percent in a comparable period. The percentage of the informal employment as a share of non agricultural employment in sub Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa) is 74.8 percent.

4. According to the latest available statistics, formal sector employment (excluding agriculture) accounts for 68 percent of total employment. See Statistics SA, Labour Force Survey, September 2007, page x. A study conducted by the UNDP indicates the shift away from formal employment. Those in formal and informal employment are given as 67.5 percent and 32.5 percent of a total of 10,896,420 persons employed in 2002. What is significant about this figure is that the total of unemployed is given as 4,783,502, and that the total of unemployed plus those in informal employment significantly exceeds the number in formal employment. This is compared to a situation in 1990, when the number in formal employment was 82.7 percent of the total employed compared with 19.2 in informal employment, and those in formal employment far exceeded the combined total of the informally employed and the unemployed (UNDP, 2003, pp. 238-39).
5. The existence of such a culture would go some way to explain why, according to Seekings and Natrass, those who lose jobs in the formal economy in Latin America tend to find work in the informal economy, whereas in South Africa they end up unemployed (Seekings and Natrass, 2006, pp. 320-21).
6. I acknowledge that there is a danger of idealising something as intangible as communal solidarity, as indeed there is with any argument that privileges culture over social and economic factors. For a discussion of the concept of tradition in relation to membership-based organizations, see J. Theron, 2007.
7. South Africa was party to the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations that commenced in 1986 and was finalised in Marrakech in January 1994. When an ANC government came to power in 1994, South Africa had already committed itself to extensive tariff reductions. However, it appears this was done in consultation with the ANC leadership.
8. Sklair, 2002, pp. 48-53.
9. Seekings and Natrass (pp. 271-99; 377), writing about South Africa, speak of a second class divide, between "those who had jobs, or more precisely those who had jobs most of the time, and those who either did not have jobs or had jobs in sectors (especially agriculture and domestic work) that were especially precarious." Accordingly, they distinguish between a "core" and "marginal working class." Davis (2006), writing about the global situation, speaks of the "informal working class."
10. The political commentator Alister Sparks used the phrase "culture of personal greed" a propos a finding in a recent social survey that 77 percent of people between the ages of 16 and 25 have, as their main ambition in life, to make more money. However, he was by no means the first to do so. See A. Sparks, "Crime's Become a Routine Part of Life," *Cape Times*, 7 February 2007.
11. Fischer and Nxasana, 1976. This document was one of a number of such documents circulated semi-clandestinely at the time.
12. Africans were not regarded as "employees" in terms of labour legislation, but it was not illegal to organise for or belong to a trade union.
13. The notion of the community was initially a proxy for the relationship between the emergent trade unions and politics, and political movements, which were repressed.

As trade unions became more confident, and the political terrain shifted, political affiliations became overt. For a useful discussion of the relationship between trade unions and politics in this period, see Hindson, 1987, pp. 208-17.

14. For example there was a practice of translating meetings from the various vernacular languages spoken by “ordinary workers” into English and vice versa. There was also an exhaustive process of report backs from negotiations and the like.
15. The Food and Canning Workers Union was the primary exponent of this tradition.
16. Externalization refers to a process whereby the employment relationship is being restructured, so that it is in effect or actually regulated by a commercial contract, rather than a contract of employment. This occurs when someone is engaged as a contractor rather than an employee, and labor legislation is by definition excluded, or where workers are employed by an intermediary to work for someone else, usually regarded as the client, and labor legislation is in effect excluded, because the terms of employment of those workers are in effect determined by the commercial contract the client has with their nominal employer.
17. Supiot, 1999.
18. This refers to the so-called triangular nature of the employment relationship. Typically a client (or core business) may decide at will that it is no longer prepared to allow a particular worker(s) on its premises. Employment may either be regarded as terminated automatically (depending on the contractual regime) or the intermediary or provider is compelled to terminate employment, or risk losing the contract. By the same token the client will determine what workers of the service provider are to be paid, in terms of the commercial contract with the service provider.
19. Compare the International Labor Organization’s definition of the “informal economy” as referring to “all economic activities by workers and economic units that are- in law or practice- not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements.” See International Labor Organisation. “Resolution concerning decent work and the informal economy,” adopted by the General Conference at its 90th Session, Geneva, 2002.
20. Ndungu and Theron, 2008; Webster et al, 2008.
21. Theron et al., 2005.
22. The distinction between informalization “from above” and “from below” corresponds with a distinction drawn between informalization from the demand side and from the supply side drawn by Birchall, 2001, p. 13.
23. Thus workers in the private security and the so-called “contract cleaning” industry have been organized into a separate industrial union, the SA Transport and Allied Workers Union.
24. It has been suggested that the SEWA has changed the conventional wisdom as to who trade unions can organise and what they can do for their members, and represents a third-world model of a new form of union (Rose, 1992, cited in Devenish and Skinner, 2004). I am not persuaded that this is the case. Impressive though many of its achievements may be, the impression the SEWA creates is of a well-resourced NGO rather than a trade union. The SEWA model has also proved difficult to replicate in other countries.
25. The SEWU was established in 1994.
26. Devenish and Skinner, 2004.

27. This can be considered a classic instance of "informalization from above," under the guise of empowerment. Thus manufacturers and other companies externalised the function of driving vehicles to deliver their products, by "empowering" drivers to own their vehicles. These owner-drivers in turn became the employers of their assistants.
28. Interviews, Jan Theron with members of SAODF, 14 June 2005.
29. This could be done in one of two ways: firstly, by providing services to its members (insurance, legal and business advice would be amongst a host of possible services); secondly, by negotiating a better deal for its members with the firms that engaged them. In the latter respect, they would be bargaining collectively for their members, within an entrepreneurial paradigm.
30. Section 30(1), Companies Act No 61 of 1973. A partnership is the only unregistered form of association that is permitted, but may not exceed twenty partners.
31. Defourny and Develtere, 1999.
32. Birchall, 2009, pp.9-10.
33. Birchall, 2003.
34. The International Labor Organization (ILO) has defined a cooperative as an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise. See Article 2, Recommendation 193 of 2002, International Labor Organization.
35. This was in contrast to the trade unions, which benefited from a degree of ambiguity amongst a business community anxious for reform.
36. Cooperatives Act, No 14 of 2005.
37. Theron, 2008.
38. Section 2(a), Cooperatives Act, No 14 of 2005.
39. These case studies reflect the position that prevailed when this paper was first drafted, in April 2007. One of the cooperatives has since disbanded.
40. The government of PW Botha preceded the transitional regime of FW De Klerk.
41. The promotion of small business and entrepreneurial values also corresponded with an attempt to create a black middle-class, and to fragment an increasingly militant working class.
42. After many delays and much wrangling, government is at the time of writing implementing a taxi recapitalization scheme that aims to address some of the social problems that have arisen in the taxi industry.
43. Interview, Margareet Visser with Gretel Hornischer, Western Cape Bus Operators Transport Cooperative, November 2006.
44. Interview, Margareet Visser with Godfrey Qolweni, Ilinge Labahlali Housing Cooperative, 22 November 2006.
45. Interview, Jan Theron with Nosiseko Care Co-operative, November 2004.
46. The seventh co-operative principle, as adopted by the International Co-operative Alliance, is headed "concern for community." See McPherson, 1995.
47. Tourism has been identified by government as a priority sector in terms of its Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative (ASGISA).
48. Interview, Margareet Visser with Bonita De Kock, Masizakhe Cooperative, 29 November 2006.

49. Interview, Margaret Visser with Harriet Stewart, Stellenbosch Winelands and Employees Savings and Credit Cooperative, 24 October 2006.
50. This is in terms of the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative--South Africa (ASGISA), The government is in the process of devising a strategy for the sector in terms of ASGISA. See Media briefing by Deputy President Mlambo-Ngcuka, 6 February 2006, www.pmg.org.za/bills/060206asgisummary.htm.
51. The pattern of landownership established by the 1913 Land Act, in terms of which 8 percent of the land (later expanded to 13 percent under the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act) was allocated to Africans, has not changed much. According to official figures, only 4 percent of land has been transferred to black persons since 1994.
52. Interview, Margaret Visser with Martinus Fredericks, 2 November 2006.
53. Davis, 2006, p. 185.
54. Satgar, 2006, p. 39.

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Employment Relationships and organizing strategies in the informal construction sector

JILL WELLS & ARTHUR JASON

Abstract: The expansion of self-employment, casual labor and outsourcing in the construction sector around the world and the growing involvement of intermediaries has led to an increasing complexity of employment relationships. The paper discusses the implications of this complexity for collective organizing, drawing on recent studies of informal labor in the construction sector in three cities in Africa (Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, and Cape Town) and a fourth study in Nepal. Recruitment through intermediaries clearly limits the opportunity for trade unions to organize the workers. As the greatest divide seems to lie between the intermediaries and the large contractors, however, there may be scope for collaboration among the intermediary agencies and the workers, who together can put pressure on the large contractors to get better deals for workers. The paper then takes a closer look at the Tanzania case, where informal construction workers have come together into groups for social security and economic purposes. The relationships within the groups and the role of the leaders is discussed. These dispersed groups have recently formed an umbrella organization, the Tanzanian Informal Construction Workers Association. The paper discusses its agenda, achievements, targets, and the diverse range of allies and actors with whom the association engages.

Introduction

In recent years there has been a significant shift in employment practices in the construction industry, paralleling developments in other sectors of the economy. Construction enterprises around the world have shed their permanent labor forces in favor of employing workers on a casual (often daily) basis or of outsourcing their labor supply through intermediaries. These trends have led in many places to a proliferation of small enterprises supplying labor and a consequent increase in the number of “workers” in these enterprises.¹ They also render employment relationships in the construction sector increasingly diverse and complex. This paper explores this complexity and discusses implications for collective organizing in the informal construction sector.

The paper provides a brief overview of the changing employment patterns in the construction sector in the Global South by drawing on an extensive number of studies, many of which were conducted under the auspices of the International Labor Organization (ILO). The nature of the varied employment relationships is then discussed in greater depth. The discussion is based on three studies of construction workers in Western Cape (South Africa), Nairobi (Kenya), and Nepal plus one participatory action research project in Dar es Salaam

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/pdfs/v11i2-3a7.pdf>

(Tanzania).² The discussion will bring to light that the multiple relationships between contractors, workers, and intermediaries are critical factors affecting the potential for collective organization among the workers. Equally important are the needs and aspirations of the workers. Prospects for trade union involvement are discussed.

The paper then looks at particular organizing initiatives in the construction sector in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. It explores the motivations for self-organization into worker groups as well as for the formation of an umbrella organization, the Tanzania Association of Informal Construction Workers (TAICO). The discussion brings to the fore the adversaries of the informal construction workers, the emergent alliances in which they engage, and the achievements and limitations of the umbrella organization. State actors emerge as targets, clients, and allies. The Tanzanian case is based on a participatory action research project (in which the authors of this article participated) initiated by United Nations Volunteers (UNV) in collaboration with the ILO, and with inputs from the National Construction Council (NCC) and the University of Dar es Salaam. Twelve Tanzanian volunteers were employed in the project over a period of two years (2001-2003).³ On the basis of a broad survey carried out in the city, the project selected 38 among the existing groups of construction workers for study. These groups would also be the founding members of the new umbrella organization, TAICO. The leaders of these 38 groups were interviewed.

Informalization of the construction workforce

It has always been customary in many countries to employ a proportion of the construction workforce on a casual and temporary basis to cope with the variations in contractors' workloads. There is, however, evidence to show that the number employed in this way has grown substantially in recent years in a great variety of contexts. For example, an attempt to measure the extent of casualization across industrial sectors in India on the basis of data collected from the National Sample Survey suggested that the share of casual labor in the construction workforce increased between 1983 and 1993 by roughly 10 percent.⁴ In 1993, 64 percent of men and 96 percent of women working in urban construction were employed on a casual basis. The author argues that casual workers are only a subset of the larger group of workers who comprise the "informal sector of the labor force" and that if self-employed workers were also included then 89 percent of men and 97 percent of women working in construction in 1993 could be considered as "informal labor."

At the end of the 1990s, 74 percent of construction workers in Malaysia were employed on a casual basis, and casual workers were estimated at 85 percent of the construction workforce in the Philippines, 66 percent in Mexico, and 77 percent in the Republic of Korea.⁵ In Egypt, an estimated 90 percent of construction workers are either hired on a casual basis or are self-employed.⁶ China has not escaped the trend. A reform program launched in 1984, called "Separation of management from field operations," led to the shedding of labor by state owned construction companies.⁷ The majority of construction field workers are now employed on a temporary basis by urban collectives. As a result, the proportion of temporary employees in the Chinese construction industry reportedly rose from 28 percent in 1980 to 65 percent in 1999. Together with the self-employed, they make up 72 percent of the total construction workforce.

Many of those employed on a casual basis in construction are not employed directly by the

main contractors or subcontractors, but by intermediaries. The practice of outsourcing labor through intermediaries is deeply embedded in many developing countries. A 2001 report prepared for the ILO draws on an extensive literature to document the extent of the practice in India, Nepal, Malaysia, Korea, Philippines, Egypt, Brazil, and Mexico.⁸ The same report presents evidence of an increase in the practice in some countries in recent years as workers who had previously been employed directly by the main contractor have been laid off and re-employed through subcontractors. For example, data from the national household survey in Brazil shows that construction employees registered with the Labor Ministry (assumed to be the permanent staff of contractors) fell from 41 percent of the construction workforce in 1981 to 21 percent in 1999, while unregistered and self employed workers rose from 57 percent to 75 percent during that period.⁹ At the same time there was a rapid expansion in the number of small employers, most of them believed to be labor suppliers.

In South Africa, restructuring in the building industry from the mid-1990s also resulted in a dramatic reduction in the number of workers directly employed by the main contractors and a corresponding increase in the number employed through subcontractors.¹⁰ A study of construction labor in Cape Town in 2002 found that almost all of the workers on construction sites around the city were employed by subcontractors.¹¹ The author found further evidence of contractors having recently shed their directly employed labor in favor of outsourcing in the fact that three quarters of the employers interviewed had previously been employed themselves, as artisans or supervisors, in larger construction companies. They had left for negative reasons in half of the cases, mostly after retrenchment. They were now supplying labor to their previous employers.

Similar trends can be detected in other countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Studies in both Kenya and Tanzania show that employment in the construction sector has stagnated or declined, while informal sector surveys indicate a large and increasing number of construction workers in enterprises with less than five or ten employees.¹² This apparent shift of employment to very small enterprises is indicative of outsourcing. One of the most interesting developments documented in Kenya is the growth of specialized enterprises offering labor for common tasks such as concreting or block laying.¹³ More recent studies in Tanzania and Zambia show that this development is also common in other countries in the region.¹⁴

A further trend, which has been noted in a number of countries in Africa, is that a growing number of private clients are choosing to by-pass general contractors and the more formal procedures for awarding contracts in favor of buying materials and managing the process themselves, while engaging directly with informal sector enterprises to supply labor.¹⁵ Contracts between the parties are verbal and construction takes place in stages. This method of organizing the building process, without the use of contractors or formal contracts, has been called the "informal construction system."¹⁶ It is the approach traditionally used by individual house builders in most countries in the world, but it is no longer restricted to individual clients or to housing. Large multi-storey buildings (hotels, flats, etc.) are now being constructed in Kenya in this way. Public sector clients in Tanzania have also begun to by-pass contractors in favor of the informal system, particularly for small-scale community-based projects.

Employment relationships under outsourcing

Recent research has also revealed an enormous variety in the role of the intermediaries and even more variation in the employment relationships that can be found under the generic heading of outsourcing. This section discusses this variety on the basis of three studies of construction work commissioned by the ILO in South Africa, Kenya, and Nepal, as well as the study conducted by the authors in Tanzania.

The four studies varied in their scope. Jha's Nepal study covered labor practices in a wide range of construction project types across the country. The study by English in South Africa focused on informal employment in construction projects undertaken by registered contractors in the Western Cape. The Kenya study by Mitullah and Wachira addressed labor practices in large Nairobi multi-storey building projects being constructed informally (without contractors). In Tanzania, the focus of the work reported by Jason was on informal groups working mainly for individual house owners (occasionally for contractors) and including informal producers of building materials. Despite this variation, the studies provide interesting insights that throw light on the issue of organization in the construction industry.

Relationships between intermediaries and contractors

An earlier study of contract labor in India's construction industry describes the main function of an intermediary as that of bringing labor to the construction site when it is needed and taking it away when it is no longer required.¹⁷ In this case, the intermediary is more accurately referred to as a labor broker or labor agent.¹⁸ The division of responsibilities and the forms of payment can vary. In some cases, the workers are supervised and paid directly by the contractor or subcontractor who hires them according to the daily rate, with the broker responsible only for recruitment, for which s/he is paid a commission. This arrangement is also now becoming popular among brokers in Nepal, as they can make good money out of the commissions on the wages of the laborers supplied without having to bear the additional responsibility of supervising them.¹⁹ In most Nepalese cases, however, in the piece rate system of payment is adopted, whereby the unit rate is mutually agreed with the broker who undertakes responsibility for supervision and for paying the individual laborers, retaining a cut of the workers' wages as his/her reward. All the arrangements for engaging the brokers and the construction workers in both cases are informal and verbal.

In other situations, the intermediary may take on further responsibilities. Besides supervising the workers, s/he may manage the construction work and/or advise on materials. The contractor or building owner may still pay the workers directly, while remunerating the intermediary separately in the form of a fee. This is the arrangement found to be most common in the Nairobi study by Mitullah and Wachira, where the intermediaries are referred to as gang leaders. The gang leaders interviewed in the study were working in the informal system and the workers were mostly employed and paid by the building owners.

The most complete form of outsourcing is where the intermediary is paid a lump sum for a task, out of which s/he pays the workers enrolled, taking his/her reward in the form of profit (the difference between the lump sum payment and the labor costs). S/he is more accurately described in such situations as a labor sub-contractor. It may be argued that only in this latter case is the intermediary a true entrepreneur, a risk taker, and an employer of others, and therefore not a worker.²⁰ This type of arrangement was found to predominate in the Western

Cape.²¹ Labor subcontractors were less common in the studies conducted in Kenya and Tanzania. Only 28 percent of the workers interviewed in the Kenya study reported to be hired by labor subcontractors. In Tanzania the research found few instances of group leaders acting as entrepreneurs, in the sense of taking risk and making profits. Labor subcontractors do exist in the construction industry in Dar es Salaam, but few of the groups involved in the project appeared to be acting in this way.

Relationships between intermediaries and workers

An examination of the dynamics within groups of workers reveals similar diversity in the relationships between the leaders (intermediaries) and the workers.²² Only in the larger worker groups in Nepal do the leaders see themselves, and are seen by the workers, as employers. They are more often seen as team leaders rather than employers. Besides supervising the group, the leaders in Nepal sometimes work themselves. When there is no work for the group, they may even work in other groups. Group members usually come together through family and friends and form a socially cohesive unit. As is common in developing countries, most construction workers are migrants from the rural areas and often come from the same village. The majority also lives together while they are working in construction.

As in Nepal, many of the construction workers interviewed in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam migrated recently from the countryside.²³ Construction work groups in these towns are social networks that play an important role in recruitment and in sustaining workers in the urban economy. The networks can be seen as a form of social capital and act as insurance for the workers who have no formal insurance. Recruitment into Nairobi construction work groups is through friends and family, and workers are often from the same ethnic group and share a common language. The leaders have control over their gangs and earn more than the gang members. But they are seen as mentors to the gang members, rather than their employers. They are in fact themselves employees of the main contractors or building owners (clients) for whom they are working.²⁴

The leadership of the 38 groups of construction workers interviewed in Tanzania would seem to stand even closer to the rest of the group.²⁵ In none of the groups do the leaders get extra benefits for being leaders. Some accept the positions for the prestige it brings, while others emerged as leaders because of the help they could give to the group and the influence they have outside the group. In most cases, the more experienced elders influenced the formation of the groups. Group leaders have the task of settling disputes. In many groups, they also search for jobs and distribute the available jobs and tasks. In most cases, they are a part of the group's work force rather than employers of the workers.

The implications for collective organizing

Union density in the construction industry has decreased almost everywhere, in parallel with the decline in the regular workforce. Faced with this situation, trade unions recognize the urgency of recruiting those informally employed, and many have drawn up strategies to do so. But the barriers are significant. Problems in recruiting casual workers, even when directly employed in formal enterprises, include the temporary nature of employment, the long periods

without employment, and the difficulty of collecting contributions from workers who do not have regular incomes.

Further difficulties arise when workers are employed through intermediaries. Whatever the exact role of the intermediary (broker, gang leader, or labor subcontractor) and the types of contracts entered into, it is clear that the use of an intermediary drives a wedge between the principal employer and the workers, thus complicating the employment relationship and raising critical issues for collective organizing. The detailed study of construction workers in the Western Cape notes that the outsourcing of labor through subcontractors has diffused the power of the unions and freed employers from the restrictions imposed by both unions and government.²⁶ Escaping such restrictions is often a key reason for outsourcing in the first place.

In situations where a direct employer/employee relationship is being replaced by a variety of more diffuse and indirect, but nonetheless dependent, relationships in the process of production, it has been argued that organizing strategies can no longer focus primarily on the employment relationship, but need to focus instead on the workers and their needs for protection and representation.²⁷

Aspirations of the workers

The main aspiration of the construction workers interviewed in the course of the four studies was to gain access to employment and income. According to the Tanzanian 2000/01 Integrated Labor Force Survey, 60 percent of construction workers in Tanzania are now self-employed and half of them are in fact unemployed for most of the time.²⁸ Unsurprisingly, the urgent need to increase opportunities for employment and income was the main concern expressed by the informal construction workers interviewed, as well as the driving force behind the formation of the Tanzanian Association of Informal Construction Workers (TAICO) in Dar es Salaam (be explained below).

In her study of organizing in the building sector in South Africa, Goldman shows that those working informally in construction regard themselves as “the unemployed,” and their greatest felt need is to find work. They would only want to join a union if that would help in the search for work. The overwhelming aspiration to find regular work was also borne out by interviews with workers in the Western Cape.²⁹ Only 22 percent of respondents described their position as permanent, and even these workers used the term to refer to their relationship with their employer rather than to indicate continuity of work. They were called only when their employer had work and often had long periods out of work. Three quarters of those interviewed said that they had periods of unemployment, with the average length of time out of work being ten months. When asked about their rights, workers revealed a widespread fear of dismissal and a common perception that casual workers, particularly the majority who were working for subcontractors, have no labor rights. Union membership was seen as more likely to be a barrier than an advantage in obtaining a job. While almost half (43 percent) of the respondents stated that they were members of an organization in the workplace, a larger proportion (52 percent) were members of burial societies. Only 11 percent were members of a trade union.

The research among informal construction workers in Nairobi uncovered similar findings.³⁰ Slightly over half (55 percent) of the respondents said they belonged to some form of

association, but these were mainly welfare associations and revolving savings and credits associations. Others belonged to ethnic/clan associations, self help groups, development groups, *jua kali* associations, and church associations.³¹ When asked about the benefits of association, the majority responded that the benefits include taking care of welfare matters (56 percent), financial support (22 percent), and undertaking development projects (11 percent). Only two respondents belonged to organizations that engaged in advocacy and policy influence and in the protection of workers' rights, and they belonged to a *jua kali* association and a trade union respectively. The author concluded that the "there is a need to expose the workers to the benefits of belonging to associations which have the potential to engage in advocacy and influence policy. Associations of workers would be able to lobby and represent the workers' interests: for example in areas related to insurance, wages, training and terms and conditions of work."³² One third of those interviewed agreed that membership in trade unions is important for lobbying, but they were simply unaware of the existence of a construction workers union in Kenya.

The main aspiration of Nepalese construction workers is also to have increased income on a regular basis. The leaders of the workers groups, know locally as *naikeas*, are instrumental in providing this by offering employment and occasional overtime. The *naikeas* also offer some degree of social security, providing monetary advances in case of emergencies such as sickness or social obligations. Clearly the workers see him/her not as an adversary but as their friend and defender against the bigger adversary, the main contractor. As the *naikea* provides access to work and most are hostile to trade unions, it is unlikely that the workers would unite in action against him/her.

Organization among labor suppliers

In the light of the above, it is worth considering the prospect of uniting labor suppliers to struggle for a better deal with the main contractors. In South Africa, where labor suppliers are seen as emerging employers, trade unions seem to be thinking along these lines. One trade union official interviewed in 2003 elaborated: "You have the emerging employer and the big giant [i.e. the main contractor] who squeezes him. Out of the little from the big employer, the small employer needs to share that with the workers."³³ The implication is that in order for workers to be better off it is the emerging employer who needs assistance to negotiate a better deal with the main contractor.

Support for this idea was also found in the Cape Town study.³⁴ The newly emerging labor subcontractors, now the main employers of labor, were found to be sensitive to the need to raise the wages of the workers. They were conscious of their failure to observe the collectively bargained agreement on wages. But they cited as excuse the intense competition for work which led to tender prices that were not sufficient to cover the cost of minimum wage rates and benefits as set out in collective bargaining agreements. In other words, the harsh terms offered by main contractors seem to be the cause of low wages and lack of benefits for the workers.

The Deputy General Secretary of the South African Building and Construction Workers Union (BCAWU) spoke in an interview of building the ability of subcontractors to negotiate with the main contractors in order to gain sufficient funds to be able to abide by minimum wage rates and benefits.³⁵ However, he recognized the risk for the union in engaging with

subcontractors in this way. If organizers found that paying the minimum rates was impossible in terms of cash flow, the workers would start to question the credibility of the union. The solution that he proposed was for the government to assist emerging contractors to form an association that could build their negotiating power in relation to the main contractors. The speaker commented that this is an interesting suggestion, as the government does not support trade unions in this way. In the current situation, maybe it should?

Is there a role for governments?

It has been suggested by others that there is a role for governments in settling labor disputes in developing countries where trade unions, employers organizations, and other institutional infrastructure for dispute settlement are not in place or do not include the majority of workers. In a landmark paper on labor standards in the context of globalization, Singh and Zammit argue that governments might legitimately intervene for a variety of reasons, for example, “to represent the interests of those in the informal sector who may be affected by the bargains between employers and employees in the formal sector” and “to promote cooperation between employers, employees and those working in the informal sector for common national good, rather than have adversarial relations between these groups which developing countries can ill afford.”³⁶

One way in which governments might intervene is through the registration of labor intermediaries, which could potentially lead to greater access to work, as well as to training and better social protection for the workers. A good example of such intervention comes from the United Kingdom where following the death of a group of Chinese cockle pickers, the government decided to license labor intermediaries in order to protect informal workers from exploitation. The Gangmasters (Licensing) Act of 2004 sets up a procedure for licensing persons acting as gang-masters in the agriculture, horticulture, shellfish gathering, and food processing and packaging sectors of the economy. There are not yet plans to extend it to the construction industry, but such extension has been discussed.³⁷ The licensing procedure requires that the gang-masters abide by certain standards and conditions, including making provisions for the health and safety of the workers.

The Government of Nepal has proposed the registration of all construction workers through information centers at municipal level. The Nepal study found that the *naikeas* were mostly opposed to this idea, as they fear it would attract trade union activities, which in turn would erode discipline and cohesiveness within their groups.³⁸ The highest priority and concern of the *naikeas*, however, is the regularity of job opportunities. For this reason, some of those interviewed would favor registering their enterprises in such centers if it helped them to find clients. Some also considered that any social benefits or training programs targeting the workers could be channeled through such centers. The *naikeas* interviewed maintained that they were willing to invest in training programs but only if there is a market demand for higher level skills. They also recognized that workers greatly appreciate social benefits such as accident insurance, overtime payment, food and lodging facilities, and so forth. However, they felt that the building owners (clients) should bear the cost. One way of achieving this could be through the procurement process, by including in the contract the requirement that specified benefits be paid and providing sufficient funds to cover the cost. Proposals along these lines are said to

have met with widespread support from stakeholders in Nepal.³⁹ This is a clear task for the government in its role as regulator of the public procurement process.

In the current context, a strong argument can be made that governments do have a role to play in support of the weaker sections of society, including workers who are struggling to improve their situations and realize their rights. Pressure from below is still needed to push governments in this direction. Further evidence comes from Tanzania, as outlined in the next section.

Informal construction workers in Tanzania

The activities of informal construction workers in African cities are not well understood by either the authorities or scholars, and their interests are seldom articulated publicly. An action research project was implemented in Dar es Salaam between 2001 and 2003 to address the issue. Its aim was to strengthen construction workers as a group by helping them to understand the problems that they face and enabling them collectively to identify and implement solutions. After much debate, the definition of informal construction workers adopted by the project included all those working in the construction sector who are not on the regular payroll of contractors or of other employers. As it is now recognized that informal construction enterprises and workers in Tanzania supply not only labor but also materials to contractors engaged in larger projects in other sectors of the industry, it was decided to also include producers of building materials in the definition of 'informal construction workers' and hence include them in the project.⁴⁰

The project carried out a broad survey in the city and estimated the total "population" of construction workers at around 26,500. In the initial stage of the research it was found that some were already associated into groups. A total of forty-three groups of informal workers were identified involving 1400 workers. Interviews were conducted with leaders of thirty-eight of these groups. These groups would also be the founding members of the new umbrella organization, TAICO.

The thirty-eight worker groups selected included groups of labor suppliers as well as construction materials suppliers. Twenty-two of them were supplying only labor. The majority of the labor groups were comprised of mixed trades but specialized groups were found in plumbing, carpentry, aluminum and glass fitting, and in pouring concrete. Of the five groups supplying materials, three were involved in crushing stones to make aggregates and the others in selling scrap metal. A further eleven groups were selling both labor and materials, mostly timber items, concrete blocks, and even food vending. Clearly, some of the groups supplying construction materials own some capital and equipment, but all of the members, including the leaders, are still regarded as workers. Most of the groups are very far from becoming individually-owned enterprises. The more organized and capitalized groups are organized more like workers cooperatives.

Motivation for forming worker groups

According to most of the interviewees, the main motivation behind the formation of the groups was related to the provision of social insurance rather than to business development. The

groups accumulate funds which are then used to make payments to members when they are hit by adverse circumstances (sickness, death, etc.). But some groups also use their account to purchase construction tools, which are then rented to the group's members. This benefits members who are able to utilize new and effective tools and also increases the size of the group account. Some groups distribute surpluses to members at the end of the year.

There are various ways of making contributions to the group funds. When working as a group, selling either labor or materials, the usual arrangement is that a certain percentage of the proceeds is retained for the group account, and the remainder is distributed to the members. When members work on an individual basis, they are expected to contribute to the group's fund from their earnings, usually 10 percent. Members of some labor supply groups are expected to make a fixed contribution to the group's fund each day, whether or not they have a job on that particular day. If there is no work, the amount owing will accumulate accordingly. In some groups, membership fees are another way to raise funds. Fees are collected either monthly or weekly, with those joining late having to make back payments.

Joining a group also has work-related advantages, particularly for suppliers of materials. These advantages include collective bargaining power when negotiating for payments with customers, sharing the payment of various government dues such as business licenses, sharing experiences, and learning from each other. For example, stone crushers find working in a group eases the acquisition of land (quarry plots) from the responsible ministry. Another advantage is that the group is able to produce large amounts of material to fill a lorry, which is important for attracting big customers. Some well-established and well organized groups producing materials are able to accumulate profits, which they use to give loans to the members at very low interest rates.

The formation of TAICO: struggling for markets and recognition

The biggest problem that informal construction workers experience is the search for a market for their services and products. Finding customers means finding work and income. Their customers, however, are mostly limited to individuals developing residential houses. Only one third of the workers in the project had secured jobs from contractors or subcontractors. The market for material suppliers is also largely in the domestic and small scale construction sector.

At a series of workshops organized by the project, the workers expressed the view that most construction projects are available in the public (government) sector and that they cannot access these projects because they lack official recognition. They requested assistance to form an umbrella organization in order to fight for official recognition that would enable them to bid for public sector projects.

The idea of forming an umbrella association comprising the various groups of informal construction workers did not initially receive support from all of the groups. Some were of the opinion that the groups were comprised of people with differing trades. Thus, they have different interests and problems, and hence solutions would differ as well. Organization among the individual groups is still very fragile, and some felt that bringing all the trades together under one organization would cause conflict rather than generate solutions to their problems. These concerns were taken on board in the drafting of the Association's constitution. Eventually, those voicing potential disadvantages were overwhelmed by the majority, who saw

the benefits of a united approach to lobbying, marketing, conflict settlement, etc. TAICO was formed in 2006 with the first leadership elections held early in 2007.

The Association's objectives are to safeguard the interests of the informal construction workers and to pioneer for policy changes and access to markets. Attaining legal recognition, empowerment, and facilitating access to markets were the motives behind the formation of the Association. A specific request made by the workers participating at the workshops was that the government set aside a proportion of its capital development funds to procure the products and services supplied by the informal construction workers. They also considered that the existing government policy of using labor-based technology should be extended to the maintenance of urban infrastructure, so as to create more opportunities for employment in the urban areas.

For the groups supplying labor, the immediate objective was to secure registration for TAICO members by the Contractors Registration Board (CRB) so that they could bid for public sector contracts. The CRB has agreed in principle to register labor suppliers as "community contractors." Yet, obstacles remain to their registration. One significant challenge for the workers is to demonstrate their formal qualifications. The CRB requires the groups seeking registration to have at least one member holding a trade Test Certificate at Grade II level in the trade for which the group is seeking registration. To overcome this hurdle, TAICO persuaded the Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA) to develop a tailor-made curriculum to suit the informal construction workers' needs. As a result, many informal construction workers have now attained the required certificate.

Having acquired the necessary training certificates, the workers, through TAICO, began negotiating with CRB for a reduction in the registration fee. They are also requesting that government contracts under 75,000,000 Tanzanian shillings (around US\$60,000) in value be reserved exclusively for the informal groups registered as community contractors. This will almost certainly be opposed by contractors already registered in class seven (the lowest class), for they also are struggling to obtain contracts in order to survive.

TAICO has paid less attention to date to the problems of the groups engaged in the supply of construction materials. They face the critical problem of a lack of working premises. It is proposed that the material dealers will lobby through the Association for appropriate working premises and attain permission to operate legally from such premises. The policy of the government is that informal sector operators should carry out their businesses on areas legally located for such businesses. In 2006, groups of stone crushers were evicted by the government from the quarry at Kunduchi on the northern outskirts of Dar es Salaam. These groups were not affiliated with TAICO. However, other groups of stone crushers who were affiliated worried that the same could happen to them. Therefore, as a matter of precaution, TAICO consulted the Ministry of Minerals and the Ministry of Lands on the legality of operating from their current working places. TAICO members were issued with temporary working permits in such areas.

Targets and Allies

From the above it is clear that the main target of the informal construction workers is the government. The construction workers' organization is trying to persuade the government on behalf of labor suppliers to modify its policies so that they can register their groups and hence

gain access to public works projects. In their efforts to lobby for these changes the workers were supported by United Nations Volunteers (UNV), who paid for the technical training of the workers so that they could obtain a Grade II trade certificate and be registered with the CRB. The workers have also been joined by the World Bank-funded Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF), which uses locally-available labor in its construction projects. Construction companies have also sometimes been supportive. For example, one foreign construction company operating in Tanzania has in principal agreed to use the registered worker groups affiliated to TAICO.

Indeed, in their struggle to enhance their lives and working conditions, the informal construction workers work with a number of organizations and other construction industry stakeholders. Some of these are in the public sector. The National Construction Council (NCC) serves as a custodian of their Association, TAICO. A special Program for Property and Business Formalization (MKURABITA) in the president's office has also expressed an interest in supporting the informal construction workers association and has paid the fees for TAICO to register as an association with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

TAICO also has potential allies outside of the public sector. One such potential ally is the construction trade union. In Tanzania, construction industry workers are represented by the Tanzania Mines and Construction Workers Union (TAMICO). But the union has not made any inroads into the informal construction sector. The major obstacle for TAMICO is the irregular incomes of informal workers which makes it difficult to collect subscriptions on a monthly basis, as the union traditionally collects dues by automatic deductions from salaries. However, TAMICO has conducted a number of meetings with TAICO and organized a workshop on occupational health and safety for informal construction workers. It has also been agreed that TAICO should become a member of TAMICO and pay fees on behalf of its members, but difficulties within the union have put these plans on hold.

TAICO member groups involved in supply of construction materials also have a potential ally in the street traders association *Jumuiya ya Vikundi vya Wenye Viwanda na Biashara Ndogo Ndogo*, known locally as VIBINDO. There is some potential commonality of interests, as these groups strive for premises where they can legally conduct their businesses, and VIBINDO defends street hawkers who have been subjected to evictions. The link with VIBINDO, however, is not yet official.

New groups are joining TAICO, and its membership is increasing. However, it still covers only a small percentage of the total population of informal construction workers in Dar es Salaam. In addition, membership is only open to groups of workers, and these groups must have some form of registration (as a cooperative, business entity, or community based organization). The informal construction workers who work individually thus cannot join the association unless they first join an existing group or form a new group and register it. To the extent that TAICO proves successful in fulfilling its objectives so that others are anxious to join, the requirement of being in a group could provide a strong incentive for further organization amongst informal workers into collectives.

Conclusion

Teams of workers are needed for any particular construction project, and they are needed at different times and for relatively short periods. Hence, the most common way to recruit labor for work in construction is to hire workers as a group. The groups may be comprised of semi-skilled or unskilled laborers, craftsmen with a particular trade, or mixed groups of workers with all of the trades needed for construction of a building. They supply labor to contractors on large construction sites in the formal part of the industry and, at the other end of the scale, to individual house owners in the domestic sector of construction. Studies from a diverse range of countries show that workers come together spontaneously in groups to provide labor for construction. The greatest needs of construction workers are to earn income through work and to have a degree of social security. Being in a group facilitates access to both security and work. Hence workers everywhere come together to meet these needs.

Groups of workers with construction skills are well developed in many Asian countries and are just emerging in countries of sub-Saharan Africa. A few of the large and/or more established groups may be legitimately regarded as business enterprises, with the leaders operating as genuine entrepreneurs, taking risks, and making profits. In these cases, the entrepreneur is regarded (by himself and by the workers) as the employer of the workers. These groups are relatively stable, disbanding when there are no contracts but coming together again whenever there is work. Many other groups are more like labor cooperatives than businesses, however, with the leaders working alongside the other workers and seen more as mentors than employers. In these instances, the work group is not always the same. One, several, or many members of the group may be engaged, depending on the size and nature of the job. Even the role of leader may change as the member that finds the job opportunity becomes the leader for the duration of that project. In this situation there are no clear employers, and workers generally regard themselves as self-employed.

Given the context above, it is relevant to ask how the trade unions might attempt to engage with the workers and what they might have to offer. The role of the trade unions has traditionally been to protect workers in employment and bargain with the employers over terms and conditions. It is not obvious how they can fulfill this role when there are no clear employers. Even when intermediaries act as employers, a key question is whether trade unions should attempt to organize among the workers and help them fight against exploitation by the intermediaries, or whether they should try to engage with the intermediaries to fight for better conditions from the main contractors? In order to address these questions we need to assess where the main divide lies: that is, between workers and intermediaries or between the intermediaries and the main contractors? While there is no doubt that in the more developed and entrenched systems the intermediary employer can be a harsh exploiter of the workers, we have argued that the relationship between the workers and the intermediaries is more often benign, one of mutual dependency. The workers look to the intermediary for help and guidance in finding work and acquiring skills, but also for providing loans in times of adversity. The overriding interest of both is to find regular and financially rewarding employment. Hence, in such situations trade unions could potentially link up with the intermediaries to press jointly for better terms and conditions of engagement for informal workers. In this endeavour they also may need to engage with the government.

As TAICO's experience in Tanzania has shown, the workers and their leaders together can

put pressure on those who control their opportunities for advancement. These may be the larger contractors, who can be lobbied for better terms. But in many situations, it is the government which in various ways controls access to construction jobs and work. Governments control access to public sector contracts by setting the procedures for public procurement and the regulations governing who gains access to tender lists. As major clients of the construction industry, governments can decide (within the rules they have set) who they wish to engage to build hospitals, roads, and schools and how they wish to do this. TAICO has successfully lobbied the Tanzanian Government to reserve a share of public sector contracts for informal groups of workers. They have also campaigned for the greater adoption of labor-based construction technologies. The government has thus so far been the main target of TAICO. At the same time, it has enjoyed the support of a special program in the president's office. Whether as clients, targets, or allies, government actors seem to relate in multiple and complicated ways with informal construction workers.

Notes

1. The employers, employees and own account workers in these small enterprises, together with the casual workers informally employed in formal enterprises, make up the informal segment of the construction labor force, as understood in this paper.
2. English, 2002; Mitullah and Wachira, 2003; Jha, 2002; and Jason, 2005, respectively. The first three studies were commissioned by the ILO while the fourth was a joint ILO/INV research project.
3. At the close of the project Arthur Jason was re-employed by UNV to continue support to TAICO under the auspices of the NCC.
4. Pais, 2002.
5. Abdul-Aziz, 2001; Yuson, 2001; Connolly 2001; Cho, 2004.
6. Assaad, 1993.
7. Lu and Fox, 2001.
8. Vaid, 1999; Van der Loop, 1992; Jha, 2002; Abdul-Aziz, 2001; Yoon and Kang, 2000; Yuson, 2001; Assaad, 1993; Saboia, 1997; Zylberstajn, 1992; Connolly, 2001.
9. PNAD, 1999.
10. Goldman, 2003.
11. English, 2002.
12. Wachira, 2001; Wells, 2001; Wells and Wall, 2003.
13. Ngare, 1998.
14. Mlinga and Wells, 2002; Jason, 2005; Mashamba, 1997.
15. Mitullah and Wachira, 2003; Wells, 2001; Wells and Wall, 2003.
16. The informal construction system was recognised and defined at the first meeting of the CIB Task Group 29 *Construction in Developing Countries* held in Arusha, Tanzania, 21-23 September, 1998.
17. Vaid, 1999.
18. This is common in civil works projects in India, in Nepal, and in many other countries.
19. Jha, 2002.

20. This argument is put by the Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) in the Philippines.
21. English, 2002.
22. Jha, 2002.
23. Mitullah and Wachira, 2003; Jason, 2005.
24. Mitullah and Wachira, 2003.
25. Jason, 2005.
26. English, 2002.
27. WIEGO, 1999.
28. United Republic of Tanzania, 2002.
29. English, 2002.
30. Mitullah and Wachira, 2003.
31. The literal meaning of the Swahili term *Jua kali* is in the hot sun. It is the term used in Kenya to denote informal economic activities.
32. Mitullah and Wachira, 2003, p.31.
33. Goldman, 2003, p.13.
34. English, 2002.
35. Goldman, 2003.
36. Singh and Zammit, 2004, p. 96.
37. The Act defines a gangmaster as an individual or business that either supplies labor or uses labor in these sectors: Gangmasters Licensing Authority.
38. Jha, 2002.
39. Jha, 2002.
40. The point had been clearly demonstrated in the paper by Mlinga and Wells.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Adekeye Adebajo and Abdul Raufu Mustapha (eds). *Gulliver's Troubles: Nigeria's Foreign Policy after the Cold War*. Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008.

In *Gulliver's Troubles*, the editors, Adekeye Adebajo and Abdul Raufu Mustapha, have succeeded in pulling together outstanding essays and fascinating narratives on Nigeria's post-Cold War foreign policy. Starting with the foreword by Adebayo Adedeji, the contributors are heavyweights in the discipline and/or long-term practitioners that include retired career diplomats, ambassadors, former foreign ministers, and so on. Every student of Nigeria's contemporary affairs should have a copy of *Gulliver's Troubles*.

Gulliver's Troubles is a massive book, but then Nigeria, the Gulliver in this narrative, is a massive country with massive potentials and enormous problems. Its sixteen chapters are organized into five sections, with the three core sections (aside from the introduction and conclusion) dealing with the three "contexts" of Nigeria's post-Cold War foreign policy: the domestic, regional, and external (or global) contexts. Readers will find the political cartoons placed at the end of the book both funny and interesting.

Adebajo's strong "Introduction" establishes the book's main arguments and positions, including the application of the old conceptual framework that looks at Nigeria's foreign policy in terms of three (or four) "concentric circles." There are several strong points: a detailed summary of the book, a comment on Nigeria's soft power and the role of the "prolific film industry" (p.28), and a preemptive note on the contribution of the book to scholarship. While the term "post-Cold War" refers to everything since the 1990s, it is not clear, however, why the chapter focuses so much on the civilian regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo and why this was placed in the early part of the chapter. After reading the analysis of the achievements and failures of the Obasanjo administration, one would come away with the erroneous impression that Obasanjo governed the country from 1990, when he was actually in power in 1999-2007. Only passing are references made to the regimes of Babangida, Abacha, Abubakar, and none at all to Shonekan.

Part II examines the background and domestic contexts of Nigeria's foreign policy. It leads off with the contribution by the co-editor, Abdul Raufu Mustapha, which examines the three inter-connected determinants of Nigeria's foreign policy process. "The first...is the arena of formal diplomatic negotiations and agreements and the pursuit of sub-regional hegemonic ambitions. The second...is the way in which its 'fractured' nationhood impinges on the foreign policy process. The third is the impact of Nigeria's global reputation or 'identity' on the foreign policy process" (p.41). These can be restated as the diplomatic apparatus, nationality, and identity. The chapter takes a fairly longitudinal look at these issues, seeking their origins in the colonial, decolonization, and immediate post-independence (especially Civil War) eras. It

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/pdfs/v11i2-3a8.pdf>

emphasizes that image is everything, which might provide a strong support for the current efforts to 'rebrand' Nigeria.

Ibrahim Gambari's contribution extends the theme of internal determinants of foreign policy. Although the article's subtitle is "the theory and practice of Nigeria's foreign policy," it is an empirical study that addresses the latter (i.e., the practice) more than the former. The Nigerian diplomatic service, called the "unsung player," is the subject of Oladapo Fafowora's piece. Written from a deep inside knowledge supplemented by interviews with retired and serving officers, Fafowora reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the Nigerian foreign service. He addresses the questions of recruitment, training, professional development, and promotion of officers; the conduct of diplomacy and policymaking; and the "periodic purges" (p.90) in the foreign service. A more recent phenomenon is the preponderance of political appointees, rather than career diplomats, in ambassadorial posting—a development that is almost inevitable under the civilian dispensation. W. Alade Fawole's article on the military and militias, and Ike Okonta's on the "tragic Ogoni story of Ken Saro-Wiwa" round up the list of major internal determinants addressed in the book. Other determinants not addressed include the condition of Nigerian universities, leadership and governance issues, and the debilitating effects of a mono-crop economy. Indeed, the impact of petroleum production and export deserves more than a mere mention. While some of these determinants promote direct positive action, most of them are distractions—a whole lot of Lilliputians tying down Nigeria's Gulliver.

The book begins to examine foreign policy per se in Part III, starting with Akinjide Osuntokun's article on Nigeria and its neighbors. He describes Nigeria's relations with countries along the Niger River and the Lake Chad basins; and reviews Nigeria-Benin, Nigeria-Equatorial Guinea, and Nigeria-Cameroon relations. Other articles in Part III are Kate Meagher's on Nigeria's informal trade networks in West Africa, Adebajo's on Nigeria's interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and Chris Landberg's on Nigeria-South Africa relations and their impact on the construction of the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Part IV addresses the external contexts of Nigeria's post-Cold War foreign policy, covering the country's multilateral and bilateral relations outside of Africa. The lead off paper in this section is Martin Uhomoibhi's on Nigeria's role in the United Nations (UN) and the Commonwealth, and relations with the European Union (EU). Uhomoibhi makes it clear very early in the chapter that multilateral diplomacy has been one of Nigeria's major foreign policy tools (p.223). The chapter then reaches the logical conclusion that Nigeria has been perceived as "a significant player in international affairs" (p.251). This may explain in part the recent "election" of Nigeria to a vacant non-permanent seat of the UN Security Council. The rest of the book focuses on a number of important bilateral relations, with Kaye Whiteman on Nigeria-Britain; Gwendolyn Mikell on Nigeria-United States; Jean-Francois Medard on Nigeria-France; and Sharath Srinivasan on Nigeria-China relations.

To conclude this review, we have to return to the title, *Gulliver's Troubles*, borrowed from *Gulliver's Travels*, the Jonathan Swift classic published in 1726. Adebajo explains the title thus: "Nigeria, the most populous country and one of the most powerful states in Africa, is a Gulliver; and the Lilliputians have been Nigeria's leaders, whose petty ambitions and often inhumane greed—like the creatures in Swift's tale—have prevented a country of enormous

potential from fulfilling its leadership aspirations and development potential" (p.2). But we know that Gulliver's troubles, like Gulliver's adventure in the original tale, does not stop here. Where do we place Gulliver's next adventure in Brobdingnag, where he is dwarfed totally and completely? How do we anticipate and explain Nigeria's foreign policy choices in the next decades as the forces of a more mature globalization act as the new Brobdingnag for Gulliver, or Nigeria?

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Kenji Yoshida and John Mack (eds). *Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Africa: Crisis or Renaissance?* Suffolk, UK: James Currey/Unisa Press, 2008.

Issues on Africa have grown into great areas of research interests, and archaeological studies have not been ignored. In fact, African cultural heritages, with its generally misconceived and checkered history, have emerged as a serious issue both in political and ethical terms. This has led to increased efforts by many ethnic groups in Africa towards creating or re-creating their own cultures by reviewing their cultural legacies. Considering the historical looting of African cultural artefacts by the West, which reached its climax in the 19th century and has not stopped, there is need for dissemination of knowledge about African arts. *Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Africa* is a literary and picturesque exhibition of possible answers to the nagging questions concerning the emigration of artistic works from Africa.

The book is a collection of a mix of contributions to a symposium of the same title held in Japan in late 2003 by members of the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan; and several other relevant essays by other interested authors. Overall, the essays encapsulate key issues towards the understanding of African ethnography, history and emerging trends in the preservation of African cultural heritages. The authors' professional experiences provide an in-depth focus on the themes x-rayed, while their interdisciplinary approaches expositively reveal the politics involved in the collection, protection, exhibition, and preservation of African objects, memory-sites and other intangible cultural heritage.

The volume is highly challenging to the average reader. In total, the book has four parts, comprising of fifteen sections with contributions from by different authors. The first part scrutinizes the idea of African heritage by literarily deconstructing "memory" and "history" and afterward constructing how they are experienced in museums and objects –by *weaving* museums as "theatre of memory" (pp. 13-27). The second part discusses issues involved in the preservation of cultural heritage in Africa. It focuses on the deleterious consequence of looting, smuggling, politicalization of antiquities in Africa and the stance of UNESCO in the implementation of its Intangible Heritage Convention. Case studies from Zimbabwe, Mali, Zambia, and other African countries are used to highlight and pave the way for an answer to the question, "crisis, or renaissance?" (p. 76). The third part deals with the process of "Creating Heritage" (p. 107) and elaborates on the effect of national, ethnic, community, and individual identities as reflected in artistic endeavors in Africa. Here, the intricacies and vagaries of how

South Africa is struggling to define its heritage after its apartheid experience are critically surveyed. Also, a Nigerian case study mirrors how an experiment in overcoming gender bias in museum collection of African arts by making Yoruba women wall painters to become better recognized is fraught with too many challenges. In the final part of the book, an essay entitled “Ethnological Museums and the (Un)making of History” (pp. 187-198) contains strongly critical view on recent ethnological exhibitions in the West.

In seeking to clarify the significance of “cultural heritage for African people in post-colonial Africa as well as explore the role of scholars and museum professionals outside Africa in supporting African colleagues in handing down the cultural legacy to future generations” (p. 7), the book adopts a provocatively interesting tone. It exposes not only the naivety of African governments but also the double-standard posture of Western governments in dealing with African archaeological matters. It’s accompanying expository narratives in exhibiting African cultural and historical information to even the most technically unaligned reader of archaeological literatures makes it good for general, but not average readership. It captures an explanation of the various aspects African problems typified in ethnological challenges.

The book unbelievably, chose to take a neutral stand, instead of a definitive one, on the call for the West to return cultural artifacts taken away from Africa. Its assertion that “Whether the heritages of the African continent are in crisis or undergoing a renaissance is largely determined by... the balance between the agency of those individuals who make up our public, and the degree to which heritage is hijacked by the hegemony to perpetuate itself” (p. 76) should “be read as the answer to the question posed in the subtitle of the volume” (p.8), could be viewed as a tone of indecisiveness.

This very scholarly book analyzes the pros and cons in preserving and managing Africa's cultural heritage. The co-editors, Kenji Yoshida and John Mack, and their colleagues have truly done valuable work by revealing the issues and expressing their individual views. That the book did not specify a clear answer to its front-paged question probably shows once more, however, the great difficulty encountered by honest researchers in dealing with African affairs.

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Mwenda Ntarangwi. *East African Hip Hop: Youth Culture and Globalization*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009.

Hip-hop music has often been associated with global, as well as local cultural and economic landscapes. This is especially true for Mwenda Ntarangwi's book, *East African Hip Hop*. Ntarangwi presents years of investigative and ethnographic research on major hip-hop stars from Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. Many resources were utilized in the development of the book, including various websites, books, radio programs, magazines, concerts, and direct interviews with numerous hip-hop stars. The breadth of resources provides a 'global' understanding of 'local' hip-hop music. Ntarangwi intends to identify the social, political, and economic impact of hip-hop music by East African youth through lyrical analysis and commentary provided by various hip-hop artists.

Ntarangwi's discussion of culture and globalization captures the "historical process of contact and even conquest across geographical, cultural, and political boundaries in which people, ideas, goods, and capital circulate over an expanded terrain and period" (p. 2). In short, Ntarangwi is in agreement with other anthropologists' views on globalization, as "accelerated flows or intensified connections - across national and other boundaries - of commodities, people, symbols, technology, images, information and capital as well as disconnections, exclusions, marginalizations, and disposition" (p. 2). Notably, Africa's connections with colonialism, neocolonialism, and imperialism influence the social parameters of culture and music.

Still, Ntarangwi does not offer a critical definition of hip-hop, especially as it pertains to an East African model. The distinction between hip-hop and rap is rather synonymous, though it is not discussed. It can be posited that hip-hop and rap are the chosen genres of music for youth with little political and societal empowerment and/or little financial resources to purchase expensive acoustic and electric musical instruments. At any rate, Ntarangwi is not concerned with geographical boundaries and genre characteristics. Instead, Ntarangwi's hip-hop or rap styles are indicators of local traditions using global and a collective mode of musical transmission using the human voice.

Youth identity is at the heart of musical expression through hip-hop. The sociopolitical and cultural encounters within Africa and beyond represent a multifactor scenario for hip-hop musicians on the verge of a new globalization. Ntarangwi provides a social, political, and historical development of hip-hop music in East Africa with lyrical examples and first-hand accounts with hip-hop artists. In essence, Ntarangwi discovers that identity is a strong motivator for East African youth. Identity formation also incorporates languages from the East African diaspora, as well as Europe and the United States. Ntarangwi adds conflicting conjecture regarding local vs. global hip-hop music and the types of messages and languages utilized. The musical roles of men and women in East African hip-hop have been influenced by globalization. A majority of East African hip-hop artists are male, though women artists are becoming more commonplace. Ntarangwi notes on hip-hop shows and gendered displays of oppositional identities between men and women and how it essentially supports the theory of local vs. global as a confluence of 'East meets West.'

The influence of hip-hop and politics is enormous. Politicians are targeted for good or bad in songs. East African youth remain a critical voice in political elections, policies, and social issues. Ntarangwi's critique of the local music industry provides insight into the political regulations and exposure of music. In one instance, Ntarangwi describes the act of buying local music cheaply, although illegally. In East Africa, compact discs (CD's) are burned from computer downloads, because commercial CD's are priced out of the range of most listeners' budgets.

Ntarangwi devotes a chapter to music and sexuality in relation to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Perhaps the global as well as the local impact of HIV/AIDS warrants discussion for hip-hop artists and community members. The coverage on social and moral implications of HIV/AIDS is transmitted by hip hop artists in the lyrics, social commentary, and political involvement. If anything, Ntarangwi shows that hip-hop artists are becoming social ambassadors on the issues of HIV/AIDS, religious issues, and sexuality in general.

The final chapter on hip-hop's enduring legacy contains a prospective outlook on East African hip-hop. The role of technology, westernization, and numerous media forms provide tools of mass influence to reach within Africa's borders. Ntarangwi's examination of hip-hop lyrics provides a valid study on the future of hip-hop music. Through a culmination of local cultures and traditions to global views on hip-hop music, Ntarangwi illustrates a dynamic musical flux with much certainty. Overall, the chapters are informative, engaging, and at times, introspective. Unfortunately, too much attention is given to general issues of globalization and youth culture, while East African hip-hop coverage seems to be lacking. For undergraduate and graduate students in ethnomusicology, Ntarangwi's book provides a limited analysis on musicology. Still, the book references a few biographies of hip hop artists mentioned throughout, as well as a glossary, notes, reference lists, and index.

Matthew J. Forss, *Independent Scholar*

Charles M. Good Jr. *The Steamer Parish. The Rise and Fall of Missionary Medicine on an African Frontier*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004.

The intertwining of colonial administration, Christian missionizing, Western education, and medical work in Africa is well known but has rarely been described in such detail as by Charles Good Jr. in his voluminous *The Steamer Parish*. Good, a medical geographer, traces the history of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), a high Anglican missionary society. These missionaries, like many others inspired by Livingstone, began their activities in the second half of the nineteenth century in a vast and remote area around what is now called Lake Malawi.

The title of the book refers to the steamer ships that the UMCA sent from England. They were dismantled at the seaport on the East African coast and carried in pieces over a distance of about 600 kilometers to Lake Malawi where they were reassembled. The ships not only facilitated communication and medical service between and to the growing number of mission stations but also filled the local population with awe for the missionaries' miraculous technology.

Good has written extensively about medicine in Africa; thus the missionaries' medical work is the focus of his study. He writes with respect and admiration, but not uncritically, about the pioneers who travelled to central Africa for a cause they regarded as ultimately important: saving lives and souls. Good criticises the critics of missionary medicine who fail to see the missionaries in their historical context and judge them by medical and political standards of today. His study is an impressive attempt to describe and understand missionaries within their own time.

He derives his information mainly from Malawi national and British missionary archives and from a missionary magazine. Apart from one interview with three older African men, it is almost exclusively missionaries and other Western sources who are speaking. The voice of the African population and their reaction to the missionary presence is not heard. Good is aware of this bias, but apparently had no other choice.

It is impossible to summarise here 450 pages of detailed description and extensive quotations from missionary sources, but a few points need to be mentioned. Most crucial for the development of the missionaries' medical endeavour was probably the lack of funds and people, which severely frustrated the UMCA's ambitions in the field of medicine. Throughout the 75 years of medical work, there was hardly ever more than one medical doctor available. That single doctor was responsible for a stretch of 600 kilometers, with several hospitals and a growing number of health centers. At the end of his study, Good is still "puzzled" by this dramatic understaffing. The church's strict maintenance of celibacy as a condition for missionary medical doctors may be one of the reasons for the lack of interest among physicians in England for this job.

Critics of missionary medicine are likely to condemn the missionaries for using medicine as a tool to 'win souls.' That critique is, however, a regrettable sign of hodiecentrism. Taking the missionary religious belief as a starting point, one can only acknowledge that they did what they regarded as having the highest priority. Saving African souls, however ethnocentric and bizarre this may sound today, was at that time an impressive proof of humanitarian concern. That is not to say, however, that all missionaries always gave priority to the soul before – or at the expense of – the 'body.' With fascinating quotes, Good shows the ambivalence of several missionaries towards this delicate issue. One nurse wrote; "For the moment we are concerned with Christ's work for people's bodies. It is impossible to think of the Gospel and of Our Lord's life apart from the sick and afflicted" (p. 311). Good's study would have benefited from a chapter on UMCA's theological views on spiritual and bodily care to shed more light on this crucial internal debate.

The most critical point that Good raises in this engaging study concerns the racist attitude that the missionaries exhibited in spite of their self-sacrificing service to the African. The segregation that the missionaries built between themselves and the local people and the condescending words they wrote about them appear indeed an incomprehensible – and reprehensible - contradiction from today's perspective. Nevertheless, a historian needs more imagination. For one moment Good seems to forget what he remembers again a few pages later: that we must recognise "the right of the past not to be colonized by the present" (p. 426).

Finally, it seems too crude to speak of the "fall" of missionary medicine as Good concludes in his final chapter (and announces in the title of his book). It is true that the medical achievements of the UMCA were less than those of other missionary organizations in the region, but eventually they did contribute substantially to the development of health care in the region where they started their work in 1885.

Sjaak van der Geest, *University of Amsterdam*

Julia C. Strauss and Donal B. Cruise O'Brien (eds). *Stage Politics: Power and Performance in Asia and Africa*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007.

As Henry Giroux points out, “politics is the performative register of moral action;” it prevents justice and compassion from being extinguished among us (Giroux, p.150). Ceremonial rituals and rhetorical performance in politics constitute an integral part of state- society relations today. *Stage Politics: Power and Performance in Asia and Africa* is a pioneering study of the theatrical, symbolic and performative modes of politics in several Asian and African states during the 20th and 21st centuries.

The thirteen essays in this edited work are arranged thematically and address the following issues:(a) How politicians, nation builders, and community activists make claims and rally popular support through different public performances? (b) What institutional mechanisms the political performers use to engage the emotions of the targeted audiences and mobilize them for actions, and (c) How the politics of performance contributes to the process of state building and affects the state-society relations at large? The editors and authors examine these issues by referring to various case studies of public trials, election campaigns, and street demonstrations in Asia and Africa. They provide important conceptual and methodological insights as they investigate the diverse patterns of political mobilization, the various indigenous traditions of order and governance, and the institutional mechanisms that have shaped the state-making process.

In their introductory chapter, Julia C. Strauss and Donal B. Cruise O'Brien identify the three distinct modes of performative politics: first, ceremonial rituals staged by nation-states; second, theatrical performance by politicians and activists in election campaigns and street protests; and third, individual performance in the form of a speech or an event to engage people's emotions and rally support. They argue that these modes often overlap within a collective movement and require a platform to be created for dramatic performances, be it a public square, a school, or city streets. However, there is a danger that the performers may lose control of the audiences. This conceptualization sets the framework for understanding the changing power relations between the political performers and the intended audiences in all temporal and spatial settings.

O'Brien's chapter on Senegal draws on Benedict Anderson's concept of “an imagined community” and asserts that a state only comes into existence when it is popularly imagined and accepted by different sectors of the society. In Senegal, the secular state, either as the French colonial regime or the post-independent government, worked closely with the powerful Sufi brotherhoods in modernizing the country. As the Senegalese state gained legitimacy by incorporating many Sufi rituals, symbols and institutions, a symbiotic relationship developed between the state and the indigenous religious establishment.

The in-depth case studies of the revolutionary politics in Iraq and China during the 1950s reveal that political transition in new states could be very violent and brutal, especially when the authorities staged public trials against those connected with the former regimes. According to Charles Tripp and Julia C. Strauss, the “People's Court” in post-monarchy Iraq and the political campaigns in Maoist China staged countless public trials to punish the enemies of the state and to propagate a new set of ideologies. In both cases, the revolutionary states carefully

orchestrated the trials in order to eliminate potential opposition and lay the ground for establishing the new government institutions. An example of a “show trial” that went terribly wrong and backfired was the Gandhi’s trial in British India in April 1922. According to Sudipta Kaviraj, Gandhi hijacked this political trial and used it to gather popular support. This was a significant step for Gandhi’s career as he enforced his leadership in the Indian struggle for independence.

As with political trials, elections provide the perfect platform for dramatized political performances, especially in electoral campaigns, debates, speeches, and public rallies. Unlike show trials, which are tightly controlled and heavily scripted by the state, the outcomes of openly contested elections are always unpredictable. This element of unpredictability makes elections an exciting political theatre. Patrick Claffey’s study of Mathieu Kérékou in Benin shows a charismatic politician who broke away from revolutionary Marxism of the 1970s, converted to Pentecostal Christianity and then reinvented himself as a democrat in the late 1990s. In 2002, he emerged as the only presidential candidate capable of holding the country together and won the election. Vincent Foucher’s analysis of the “Blue Marches” in 2000 Senegalese election is intriguing, as the opposition politicians were keen to present themselves as relatively youthful and mobile against the traditional party militants. The Senegalese politicians recognized the need to mobilize the youth, especially high school and university students and to make politics more appealing to ordinary citizens. The chapter by Dafydd Fell draws attention to the politics of Taiwan’s multi-party electoral campaigns. Because of the fast pace of democratization, Taiwan’s colorful electoral campaigns were played out on streets and in cable TV, thereby contributing to the high levels of political engagement and voter turnout. According to Steve Heder, the elections in contemporary Cambodia were put on as a show for foreigners, and the electoral results were predetermined. This explains why the Cambodians were less engaged and excited about electoral politics than people in Benin, Senegal, and Taiwan. Compared with show trials and elections, massive public protests are the most open-ended and unpredictable form of performative politics. Nicolas Jaoul refers to the Dalit (untouchable) movement in rural Uttar Pradesh in India. The Dalit activists reinvented the local Ambedkar festivals to force the Indian secular state to protect their rights. Agnes Shuk-Mei Ku’s analysis of popular protests in Hong Kong highlights that on July 1, 2003, a loosely organized coalition of prodemocracy activists organized a huge demonstration of over half a million people against the security legislation, and this forced Beijing to delay the legislation. Eva-Lotta Hedman’s chapter on the 1986 election-watch campaigns in the Philippines shows that the process of electoral monitoring was a highly contested political drama because the citizens subscribed to the idea of “free and fair elections” and sought to challenge the Marcos regime. The concluding chapter by Joseph W. Esherick pulls all the issues together and reminds us of two important factors that determine the effectiveness of performative politics in Asia and Africa. The first factor concerns the people’s expectations of real drama and unpredictable outcomes, and the other factor has to do with the stable civilian-military relations. In all the cases under study, the absence of the military intervention guarantees the smooth transitions to democracy.

In short, the strength of this edited volume lies in its clear and sophisticated framework that highlights the complexities of performative politics in modern Asia and Africa. This work

is timely and insightful, and should be useful for anyone interested in comparative politics and state-society relations today.

Reference

Henry Giroux, "Vocationalizing higher education: Schooling and the politics of corporate culture." *College Literature*, vol.26, no.3 (Fall 1999), pp.147-161.

Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, *Pace University in New York*

Emizet François Kisangani and Bobb F. Scott. *Historical Dictionary of the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. 3rd edition. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2010.

Professor Kisangani has taken on the daunting task of writing an historical dictionary about the third largest country in Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo. Over six hundred pages long, this work covers all of Congo's history, including now fifty years of independence from Belgian colonial rule. Three sections of particular use for researchers include a twenty-page chronology of the country beginning in 2000 B.C. through 2009, the body of the dictionary that includes over eight hundred entries, and a substantial sixty-page bibliography. Building upon the two previous editions published by F. Scott Bobb in 1988 and 1999, the third edition not only adds the events of a tumultuous decade, but also seeks to revise the previous editions. Kisangani not only manages this difficult task well, but also does so succinctly by adding only twenty-six pages of additional text.

Besides the chronology, dictionary, and bibliography, there are numerous helpful lists, maps, and appendices. The introductory section includes a nine-page list of acronyms and abbreviations, although some entries have not been successfully updated. For example, entries such as SNCZ (*Société Nationale de Chimins de Fer Zaïrois*) and UNAZA (*Université Nationale du Zaïre*) refer to the country under its previous name of Zaire. Other important abbreviations have been left out entirely, such as CNDP (*Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple*), CAA (*Compagnie Africaine d'Aviation*), and COMICO (*Communauté Islamique en République Démocratique du Congo*). Next comes a short guide to name changes, which has been substantially expanded in the third edition and is of paramount importance for any student of Congo/ Zaire/ DRC. The volume includes two important maps, one apparently of natural resources and the other a political map of the recent division into twenty-six provinces. Unfortunately, the map labels have been left off. Following the body of the dictionary are three useful appendices including a table of the evolution of the provinces, the rulers of Congo from 1885-1960, and leaders from 1960 to the present.

The first of the three primary resources in this dictionary is the chronology, which has been substantially revised from the second edition. In addition to including ten more years of events, the author has greatly expanded the entries from 2000 B.C. to the arrival of foreigners in the 1400s, highlighting important facts about African indigenous groups. Kisangani has also introduced the organizational tool of noting months and dates within a year in bold face, which

assists the reader quickly scanning for a certain event and breaks up the previous edition's block descriptions for each year's entry.

The majority of the volume consists of over 550 pages of dictionary entries ranging from an important date in April 1990 to the Zongo River. The author has done an excellent job of including a breadth of entries covering disparate themes such as politics, society, important people, history, locations, religion, culture, and more. Entire books have been written on many of these topics, yet Kisangani provides us with the important facts in a concise fashion. Entries contain bolded phrases referring to other entries and a "See also" clause for the reader seeking further clarification. As a complement, the text concludes with a substantial bibliography encompassing general information, history, politics, economics, society, culture, and the newly added science subsection. In an effort to provide a novel resource, the author has focused on works in English published in the last two decades and referring the interested reader to the previous edition for older and more foreign-language references.

An introduction to the third edition, which is double the length of the previous version, precedes the dictionary portion. The author focuses his discussion on the political and economic history of the Congo since independence, highlighted in sections about the First Republic from 1960-5, Mobutu's Second Republic, and the Third Republic of the Kabilas and the democratic transition. The introduction concludes by stating, "... political renewal and economic recovery appear bleak, and human security is likely to remain a distant dream for years to come," (xcii). This pessimistic appraisal of the situation is also prominently displayed on the book's back cover, which is understandable in the recent climate, but misses an important dynamic. In the early history of Congo, the author made a concerted effort to assert Congolese agency, as can be seen in the chronology section. What is lacking, however, is the continuity of this theme throughout the dictionary portion. For example, no recent visitor to DRC can ignore the huge proliferation of civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active to provide services to citizens and rebuild their society after years of devastating conflict. Even in remote areas, one can see hand-painted wooden plaques nailed to palm trees or mud brick homes announcing a local organization with development aims. However, this recent edition of the dictionary contains no reference to civil society or NGOs. The pessimistic conclusion of the author rightly points out the failures of the larger political system, but he fails to fully document the effort and success Congolese citizens have had in organizing to provide their communities with relief.

Despite minor limitations, the *Historical Dictionary of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Third Edition* is a valuable resource for any student of the DRC. In particular, it is a much-needed tool for undergraduate libraries to house for students just beginning their intellectual interest in this vast central African state. The more advanced scholar will find it invaluable as a quick desk reference for dates, locations, and further reading. Emizet François Kisangani has provided us with a valuable research tool and accomplished an important and successful revision of previous editions.

Ashley Leinweber, *University of Florida*

Evan Maina Mwangi. *Africa Writes Back to Self: Metafiction, Gender, Sexuality.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009.

In recent years, as the era of formal European colonialism in Africa has grown more remote and the relative brevity of that era has become more apparent, more and more critics have been privileging literary approaches over political ones in their evaluation of African writing. Starting from the claim that “Since the mid-1980s African novels have become markedly self-reflexive in the way they rewrite one another and draw attention to their own fictionality,” Evan Maina Mwangi’s *Africa Writes Back to Self: Metafiction, Gender, Sexuality* suggests that this turn to the literary among critics reflects a similar turn among African novelists away from the “nationalist and realist impulse that governed earlier writing,” (p. 1). This turn to the literary among critics and away from realism among novelists does not mean, however, that critics and writers are any less “grounded in factual material conditions in specific locations in Africa” (p.2); rather, Mwangi asserts that contemporary African writers use their metafictional devices to scrutinize the social and political reality around them especially the hierarchical structures of gender and sexuality that govern everyday life. Conceiving of his approach in part as a reaction against an outdated “writing back” model of early postcolonial theorizing, and in part as a response to more recent calls by postcolonial critics to focus on local specificity rather than grand abstractions, Mwangi judiciously uses both non-African postcolonial theorists and local intellectuals to make his case that metafiction is not solely a Western phenomenon.

After a wide-ranging opening chapter dealing with writers such as Helon Habila, Moses Isegawa, and David Maillu, Mwangi reverts in chapter 2 to a range of pre-1980 texts. In analyzing works by frequently studied authors (Nadine Gordimer’s *The Lying Days* and Ngugi’s *Petals of Blood*) alongside much less familiar texts (Kibera’s *Voices in the Dark* and Bukenya’s *The People’s Bachelor*), Mwangi effectively reinforces the familiar argument that early nationalist texts’ metafictional critique of European discourse about Africa masked profound gender chauvinism. Although Mwangi is anxious about presenting himself as a “native informant,” some of the strongest and most original readings provide the basis for chapters 3, on national language literatures, and 4, on the orature/literature interface. Mwangi’s local expertise on specifically East African literature and history leads to some tantalizing analysis of a number of recent novels written in Kiswahili as well as invaluable accounts of earlier novels by Kenyan Luo women writers Margaret Ogola and Grace Ogot. While the chapter on orature sets up a striking juxtaposition of Ogola and Ogot against J.M. Coetzee’s *Elizabeth Costello*, subsequent chapters on so-called “palimpsestuous” novels by Karen King-Aribisala, Abdulrazak Gurnah, Gordimer, and Ngugi, and on ekphrasis and gender in Zakes Mda, Bessie Head, and Nuruddin Farah have less coherent argumentative drive, tending to offer rather superficial and selective readings of less clearly connected texts.

The book gets back into its stride in chapter 7, with Mwangi’s discussion of gay themes. Starting with lively analysis of novels by Rebekah Njau, and Abdulrazak Gurnah, Mwangi then moves on to the strongest section of the entire book, readings of the South Africans Phaswane Mpe and K Sello Duiker. The discussion of Duiker’s explicit representations of gay sex is especially thought-provoking, probing the limits of (sexual) liberation in post-apartheid South Africa and posing tough questions as to whether “pornographic reproduction [can be] used as a

textual means of political power against both the Western canon and a parochial and homophobic nationalism" (p. 220).

Haunted by the memory of the all-too-early deaths of Mpe and Duiker, this chapter implicitly proffers perhaps the starkest reminder of the material reality behind the metafictional representations that Mwangi is writing about. Indeed, if I have any criticism of this fine and wide-ranging book it would be that in the face of such overwhelming material circumstances as the AIDS epidemic in southern Africa in particular or the use of rape as a weapon in central Africa, Mwangi's high theoretical pronouncements can sometimes seem not just abstract but profoundly disengaged. Mwangi ends his book with a complicated account of his own critical practice; explaining that he still sees postcolonial theory as offering "the best model of interrogating the limits of nationalism and Western hegemony," Mwangi writes that he has "chosen to remain within it" to "criticize it from within" (p. 261). But that very claim silently raises the old, perennially vexed, perennially vexing metacritical question of the relationship between postcolonial theory and praxis.

Simon Lewis, *College of Charleston*

Terence Ranger. *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

In the late 1990s, the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians, in partnership with the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies began systematically to study the role evangelicals played in the social and political development of countries in the global south (Latin America, Africa, and Asia). A substantial grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts enabled field research in seventeen countries over a three-year period, culminating in a three volume series. This review focuses specifically on the Africa volume edited by Terence Ranger, Oxford University's Emeritus Professor of Race Relations.

For those not familiar with the explosive growth of Christianity across Africa and how churches have engaged with the political dynamics buffeting these nations, the preface, written by the editor of the series, provides a helpful summary. At this point, the book can be read from two approaches, either as a holistic understanding of religion and politics across a continent or as a specific examination of one of the countries highlighted. Structurally, the six main chapters each tackle a different country in sub-Saharan Africa and are written by scholars indigenous to their country of focus; a seventh chapter comprises a response by Paul Gifford; and an introduction and afterward, written by Ranger, brackets these chapters.

The first chapter explores the relationship between evangelicals and Muslims in Northern Nigeria during the contestation of the declaration of Sharia law. Written by Cyril Imo, it is the only one that addresses inter-religious issues. A fifteen year time span is covered next by John Karanja, who describes the different attitudes and actions of evangelicals to the democratization process in Kenya. In 1991, former Zambian President Frederick Chiluba declared Zambia as a "Christian Nation." Isabel Phiri focuses on the political fallout of his actions in the following

decade and how evangelical Christians were split in their support for Chiluba. A rich and dynamic description of the role evangelicals have played in the tumultuous political developments of Zimbabwe is tackled by Isabel Mukonyora. In Mozambique, Teresa Cruz e Silva compares and contrasts the United Methodist Church with Zionist churches in the capitol city of Maputo. Following the end of apartheid in South Africa, Anthony Balcomb examines the role evangelicals have played during the transition to democracy. In the concluding chapter Paul Gifford, having written extensively on the public role of Christianity across Africa, provides seven valuable comments based on his perspective of the evidence presented.

In any edited volume, the remarks by the editor are important ties that hold the work together, and this is no less the case with Ranger, who had the momentous task of weaving the common threads of evangelical Christianity and democracy through six African countries. His introduction begins with defining “evangelical Christianity” as consisting of a focus on four general characteristics: conversion, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism. He later posits three phases of democratic transition across Africa and then details the roles churches played throughout this process. Comments in his afterword present recent developments in Nigeria, Zambia, Kenya, and Zimbabwe.

The inherent strengths and contributions of the book are numerous. As a collaborative project, the editor and individual contributors met during two workshops to discuss this project and can be credited with giving the volume greater coherence, which is often difficult with multiple authored works. The central question driving these scholars was not necessarily *whether* evangelical Christianity has been political, but instead a descriptive focus on *how* this has occurred. In the process, this collaborative effort challenges an argument made by Gifford in 1988 that evangelical Christianity cannot function as a “school of democracy” and instead reveals a greater propensity for Christians to move from political passivity to greater civic engagement. A multi-disciplinary perspective is also evident, for the contributors come from diverse backgrounds, including sociology, history, religious studies, philosophy, and theology. It appears each author was given artistic license to make a literary scrapbook of the phenomena they witnessed during their field research, thus leading to various perspectives and approaches.

The book does not purport to provide detailed qualitative data with the explicit goal of cross case comparative analysis, so it may be unfair to critique the book in this regard. But, due to the different approaches used in each chapter, it makes systematic comparisons across these six countries problematic. The selected cases are also disproportionately biased toward Southern Africa; therefore, it would have been beneficial to see additional countries included in this study as well as a standardized methodological approach employed. However, the greatest shortcoming is the apparent delay in publication. The six main chapters end in 2001 or 2002. Ranger offers brief updates for only four of the countries, and only goes to around mid-2005. The book was published in hardback October 2006 and the paperback version in April 2008. This three to four year lag is unfortunate, for the material presented already represents an outdated snapshot of the ever changing dynamic of religion and politics in Africa.

Overall though, *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Africa* brings a varied and rich descriptive portrayal of how these churches and pastors have interacted with the democratization process in their respective countries. The authors highlight the complexity, conflict, and controversies inhabiting current church-state relations and thus supply several

topics for further research. The book will prove insightful for those seeking a better overall understanding of the political aspects of African evangelical Christianity. For those more versed with this relationship, the volume offers additional insight and perspectives that can challenge preconceived notions of how and why evangelicals are politically motivated.

Steve Lichty, *University of Florida*

Trevor Hugh James Marchand. *The Masons of Djenné.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009.

The mosque of Djenné – Mali’s cultural asset of national pride and reportedly the largest earthen building in the world—is emblematic of its builders’ magical work with earth. For centuries, skilled masons have shaped the distinctively elegant architecture of Djenné, once an important trading and Islamic studies center during the golden days of trans-Saharan trade. Colonization, then droughts, have altered the livelihood of Djenné’s residents, and weakened the *Barey ton* corporation (masons’ guild). World Heritage status was granted to Djenné in 1988 to protect the deteriorating architectural heritage. The entire historic center, home to 12,000 people at the time, became the object of international conservation projects, as well as a tourist destination.

It was in this context of change that University of London architect and anthropologist Trevor Marchand undertook research for this book. His goal was to understand and assess the training and transmission of knowledge among masons, and argue for the support of such apprentice system. To this end, Marchand himself worked as an apprentice on building sites for traditional Djenné houses during two winters in 2001 and 2002. His research is presented in two parts, punctuated by a narrative thread detailing construction progress, from foundation to rooftop elements to interior decoration.

In the first part, Marchand introduces Djenné’s history and architecture, highlighting its economical and ecological nature. Thermally ideal mud bricks, mortar and plaster are made from local deposits of mineral-rich silts after annual flooding. The mason’s broad scope of work, as designer, architect, builder, contractor, and decorator, contrasts with his limited literacy and equipment. Rituals incorporating Islamic and traditional African knowledge are an integral part of his practice. Marchand’s observations of the builders’ interactions reveal a microcosm of Djenné and Malian society, and echo the work of earlier anthropologists (Marcel Griaule, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown) on Dogon-Bozo alliance and the role of bantering in the maintenance of social order. For additional context, Marchand discusses western architecture’s path towards recognizing the genius of non-western form. Thus came Djenné to the forefront of the West’s hailing of non-western dwelling, thanks to scholars Labelle Prussin, Rogier Bedaux, Pierre Maas, and Geert Mommersteeg. Marchand reports positively on the extensive Malian-Dutch project for the restoration of over 100 houses, credited to have revitalized the *Barey ton* in the last two decades. But he points to problems associated with western protection rules that freeze built heritage. He argues that the tradition most worthy of conservation is the apprentice

system itself, so that Djenné's architecture can adapt to modern life while maintaining its identity, and serve as the city's cultural commodity.

In the second part, Marchand presents portraits of the builders he has met and their struggles for professional and human survival. Some masons became authorities on the authenticity of their city's heritage, while others had to switch trades. Foreign laborers worked hard to pay Qur'anic school fees but with little hope of reaching apprenticeship level, which is reserved to Djenné mason families. Career choices, access to, and prerequisites for the mason trade are described, as well as the holistic apprenticeship methodology—individual-based, using physical mimicking, mutual observations, and mentoring throughout a long master/protégé relationship. Marchand notes the masons' adaptation over time, whether in building materials or work organization, but he lists new threats to Djenné's architectural tradition: the Talo dam 150km upstream from Djenné, the fragility of the economy, the impact of increased schooling on work opportunities, and the rapidly modernizing tastes of inhabitants.

Marchand's prior fieldwork addressed apprenticeship practices among minaret builders in Sana'a, Yemen, and he is currently researching contemporary building-craft knowledge among fine woodworkers in the UK. He aims to produce a comparative analysis of knowledge transfer and advance the theoretical understanding of trade-skill communication, referring to current theories on the dynamics of communication and its relation to thought.

Books on Djenné's architecture abound, but a full immersion as anthropologist-observer on an earthen building site represents a first such initiative, and is a fine example of anthropological work with concrete applications. Marchand's research is concentrated on construction sites with private foreign sponsorship, which are not representative of the work of all of Djenné's 200 masons and 100 apprentices. Nevertheless, his book succeeds in paying tribute to the deeply rooted and remarkable expertise of Djenné's masons, and presenting their trade's complex economic, religious, historical, and cultural aspects. It highlights the importance of local knowledge systems in successful development initiatives in Africa, and their capacity to channel change. Marchand ends his book with the annual communal *crépissage* (recoating) of the Mosque, and a renewed plea for valuing process over object, which is a cause he regularly champions at conservationists' meetings. But he clearly stays away from the delicate area of formulating national strategies. Marchand had advocated against the standardization and objectivity of trade schools in his book about Yemeni builders. For Djenné, he does not suggest concrete proposals other than moving away from western-conservation approaches. Rather, Marchand asserts the universal value of holistic training for builders where "morals, muscles and mind are integrated," thereby empowering the builders as guardians of a city's authenticity. Recent developments in Djenné may go in that direction. A local NGO secured funding for the creation of the *Maison du Patrimoine* (Heritage House), devoted to building experimentation and literacy training for masons. And just recently, the masons' expertise was being called upon to address the November 5, 2009 collapse of the southeast tower of the Djenné mosque, due to heavy rains.

Because of its breadth, this book is a valuable resource to architects, anthropologists, conservationists, development experts, and cultural tourists interested in Mali's architecture and society. The bibliography, notes, and masonry terminology are extensive, including links to Arabic roots. Despite some repetitions, personal details, and the occasionally perceived lack of

content organization, the book engages the reader through its narrative style, the masons' stories, thoughtful architectural and anthropological commentary, and the earthen magic at work.

Kathleen Louw, *University of California Los Angeles*

Henrik Vigh. *Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau*. NY: Berghahn Books, 2006.

Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau, while theoretically confounded, adds depth of knowledge to the anthropological understanding of the relationship between agency and structure, specifically focusing on the ongoing negotiation with, and within shifting "social terrains." Author Henrik Vigh interviews 32 of the approximately 1,000 *Aguentas* (literally "helpers or supporters"). These "superfluous young men" mobilized by President João Bernardo 'Nino' Vieira's *Forças di Governo* (Government Forces) as an "irregular militia" were primarily recruited as "cannon fodder" on the losing side of the armed conflict in Guinea-Bissau between 1998 and 2000 (pp. 48-56).

Vigh begins by describing his interlocutors as making up a "community of experience" who share spheres of reference (p. 19). During his sixteen months of fieldwork in the capital city of Bissau, Vigh lived through one of these outbreaks of fighting in November 2000. This experience granted him access "behind the thick, shiny surfaces of politicized discourse and analyze everyday political praxis instead" (p. 22).

Navigating Terrains of War contributes to the understanding of a unique moment in Guinea-Bissau's history, a moment embroiled in tension, conflict, uncertainty, and change. Vigh hopes his work adds, "to the nuancing of perspectives on youth in war" (p. 240). This book explores patrimonial networks and livelihood strategies as well as generational tension, all valuable anthropological themes in need of further ethnographic exposition. As one of the only books truly dedicated to understanding the nature of the 1998 coup d'état in Guinea-Bissau led by the former Chief of Staff Ansumané Mané, it is the most important contribution on the topic to date.

Vigh is consumed by the idea of "social becoming" whereby his subjects must navigate their way through "murky socio-political circumstances" (p. 129). The author organizes his ten chapters into five parts. The ethnography begins with Mbuli's story, an *Aguenta* in search of opportunity due to the general economic decline found throughout Guinea-Bissau. Mbuli's empathy toward his enemies foreshadows similar tales revisited throughout the book. The war, which was instigated over arms sales to the MFDC Diola secessionist rebels in the Casamance, quickly escalated into a regionalist conflict with troops from throughout the region. France backed the government while Portugal supported the opposing *Junta Militar* (populist Military Council). Engagement on the ground level ebbed and flowed with real time socio-political developments. Given the context, Vigh eventually modifies his original preconceptions about the ideologies of warfare and begins to understand the Bissauan conflict as a *Guerra di Hermonia*

(Brotherly War), in which the indigenous factions rebel in search of “a better position and space of possibility within society” (p. 70).

The second part of the book focuses on the processual nature of becoming *Aguenta*. The reader learns that *Aguentas* were primarily urban ethnic Papel youth disenfranchised by an utter lack of upward mobility. Foreign troops escalated the conflict while Bissau-Guineans often shared meals during ceasefires, regardless of their side.

In the third part of the book, Vigh explains how many youth in Bissau felt themselves to be betwixt and between childhood and adulthood. What resulted was a “social moratorium of youth” resulting in “smouldering [*sic.*] inter-generational tension” (p. 97) related to intensifying economic hardships and generationally asymmetrical control over access to resources. Youth became wards of their respective “economies of affection,” which only furthered the generational divide. Meanwhile, the impotent state became nothing more than “a rusty grid, cross-cut and intertwined by patrimonial networks” (p. 111). What resulted were attempts by the youth to take full advantage of their social terrain through cleverness, what Vigh refers to as *dubriagem* (social navigation).

The fourth part of the book outlines the shifting environment of Bissau. By following a particular *collegason*, or youth club, Vigh demonstrates how “the jagged-edged destruction becomes blunted by routinization” (p. 150). Structural uncertainties kept the youth of Bissau in a state of hyper-vigilance always in search of opportunity or the potential for opportunity.

The author concludes by describing the *Aguentas* as stigmatized and marginalized for defending an unpopular government and committing wartime atrocities. At the same time, they were excused from their actions because of their reclassification as youth who could not be held accountable for their actions. The lesson the readership takes away from this disclosure, however, is that the *Aguentas* were not child soldiers, they were failed actors in a theater of war intent on maneuvering their way into “emergent possibilities in order to direct their lives in an advantageous direction” (p. 8).

Vigh’s principal concern is theoretical to the point where much of the cultural description is omitted, hidden, or used superficially to introduce explanatory arguments. In fact, the book’s bibliography reads like a veritable who’s who of grand social theorists while classic works on warfare and Guinea-Bissau seem to be missing.

Rich detail and thick descriptions are wanting, not for the lack of fieldwork. This is unfortunate given the historical and cultural relevance and uniqueness of the topic. The book remains primarily a published dissertation with unnecessary repetition and footnotes. For me, this book often skirts that genre of Afro-pessimism in which the marginalized youth of Africa sit around and reflect on their unlucky global position. For example, Vigh notes that his informants were “in effect making a situation of exploitation one to be longed for” (p. 137). My own experiences in Guinea-Bissau’s countryside several years later were much different. Youth were given their own social space including economic outlets reserved entirely for them. Without a deeper description of the informants’ everyday lives, the reader is left unable to evaluate Vigh’s explanatory claims for his or herself. As a new approach to the debate on structure and agency, however, this is a must read for anthropologists. As the only book available focused on both the *Aguenta* militia and civil war in Guinea-Bissau, this work should find its way onto the shelves of historians, West Africanists, and those interested in conflict

studies and policy issues. I have already found myself recommending this book to a number of my colleagues.

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Thomas Benjamin. *The Atlantic World: Europeans, Africans, Indians and Their Shared History, 1400-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

This is a massive yet highly enjoyable and comprehensive study of the concept of the “Atlantic world,” a world which generated a history of its own with a long and complex process of historical interplay of change and continuity.

The Atlantic World spans four centuries with significant historical periods and transitions between 1400 and 1900; tells the story of the different peoples, societies, and cultures that used the Atlantic and addresses the relationships, connections, and exchanges, which crisscrossed the Atlantic Ocean. Over this period, the Atlantic became a potential source of contacts, communications, networks, alliances and multiple ties between Europeans, Africans, and Native Americans. In the end, it transformed their societies and gave birth to new peoples, cultures, economic and social structures, and global relations.

Three main themes that structure these Atlantic histories are; First, the belief that Europeans were those who pioneered the Atlantic crossing beyond their home borders. Second, that the development of Atlantic trade, colonies, economies, and empires was the outcome of a process of interactions, exchanges and engagements between Europeans, Africans, and Indians to which all of them contributed. The third theme contends that the Atlantic system vanished after having operated with a great deal of zest and dynamism for five centuries.

On the basis of a wealth of primary sources ranging from travel accounts, letters, diaries, journals, and autobiographies to pamphlets, collective documents, and encyclopedias; from Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch sources to English and French ones, from sources covering the pre-Columbian period to those dealing with the modern one, Benjamin wrote a learned, profound, yet an accessible history of the Atlantic world, even to the lay history reader, and a useful textbook to the historian and student of history.

With the advent and growth of the Atlantic world, Benjamin maintains that just about everything everywhere has become interconnected, intertwined, and interactive. Europeans, Africans, and American Indians made then unmade the Atlantic world. This is not to suggest that the author, even though his ultimate objective was to highlight mutuality, reciprocity, and communality, underestimated or ignored those bleak, gloomy and depressing aspects, episodes and phases of the Atlantic history. Indeed, six chapters covered those somber parts of the Atlantic world whose titles *Conquests, Realms, Incursions, Uprooted, Bondage, and Rivals* tell it all. There is a dark side to the history of the Atlantic world to which this work does justice.

According to a compelling argument that goes back to Roman times, Native American Indians could never constitute a civil society. This claim legitimized a course of expansion, which later on shifted into a great colonial scheme involving many European powers. Apart

from the expansionist impulse, Atlantic exploration also had solid economic incentives and the desire to acquire land, products and trade as well. Spain, Portugal, France, the Netherlands, and England respectively made a bridge to conquer the Americas and Africa of the Atlantic during the period being covered. The long feared ocean was soon transformed into a scene of rivalry, piracy, wars, and competition between European individuals, institutions, and even states seeking power, wealth, and glory. These predators, Benjamin, reminds us, did not differ too much from similar motives, practices, and schemes which American Indians and Africans used to have before the inception of the so-called modern era. Again, Benjamin stresses the similarities between pre-Columbian indigenous societies and the Western European ones. The fifteenth century Mexicas and Incas in the Americas, the eleventh- to -fifteenth century African empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai are testimonies that these peoples and societies did not only share some common fundamental traits, histories and civilizations, but equally patterns of governance and an expansionist impetus. In 1500, in fact, Latin Christendom was a minor civilization to these American Indian and African empires, but also to Ming China, Mughal India, and the immense Islamic World. There were indeed antecedents, which Western Europeans emulated. Europe's economic growth and territorial expansion from the fifteenth century onwards should be partly regarded as part of a longer historical trend.

The former and declining, the new and expanding empires and civilizations collided after the fifteenth century. In so doing, they became connected in conflict, collaboration, commerce, competition, colonization, and contagion. This collision led to the establishment of new realms that were extensions of European culture. These extensions, however, were altered, since they were sustained by African and Indian trade and labor, and influenced by their customs and culture. Europe traded, Christianized, 'civilized', 'Europeanized,' refined, developed, colonized, enslaved, victimized, brutalized, terrorized, plundered, and impoverished Indian America and Africa. Similarly, Indians and Africans welcomed, cooperated, married into, resisted, fought, labored, taught, and learnt from Europeans and built communities of theirs despite all odds. The critical aspects of the Atlantic world were blends of interdependence and ill-treatment, partnership, and exploitation.

After having been a barrier to East-West, South-North, Orient-Occident encounters and entanglements until the late fifteenth century, the Atlantic ocean matured into a compulsory passage and a conduit to cooperation and partnership, not without experiencing the inevitable and almost reconcilable evils of revolutions on the one hand and colonialism and slavery on the other, long before a freer and more egalitarian world was established for Europeans, not for American Indians and Africans, without whom this world of equality and independence would not have seen the day.

The Atlantic world saw the rise of the West and the establishment of its economic enterprise and wealth, technological innovations, military strength, and political power. These were achieved thanks to the spirit of adventure, work, and experience, but mainly through exploitation and colonialism. This, however, should not be interpreted solely in terms of the superiority of the West, a now exhausted claim. The Atlantic world, after all, brought peoples, societies, and cultures closer than ever before and has certainly underlined the universality of man.

Adel Manai , *Universite Tunis El-Manar*

Kjetil Tronvoll. *War and the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia: the Making of Enemies and Allies in the Horn of Africa*. Rochester, NY: James Currey, 2009.

While Kjetil Tronvoll's (along with Tekeste Negash) previous work, *Brothers at War* (James Currey, 2000), guided me in having a brief overview of the Eritrean-Ethiopia 1998-2000 War, it was certainly Tronvoll's new encompassing study of the inner identity politics of Ethiopia and particularly the sketch of the socio-political trajectory of the regional Tigrayan State that put the historical details right. As far as the book is concerned, I can only marvel at this meticulous handling of sources and the richness of information on the evolution of the formation and conceptualization of identities in Ethiopia. The following war history and identities are described with rare clarity and the book explores the understanding of war and impact of warfare on historical trajectories of enemy images.

The Ethiopian-Eritrean War had a dramatic impact on both rural and urban livelihoods in Eritrea and the regional state of Tigray in northern Ethiopia, the most affected region in the country. Within this complex and contradictory setting, the book aims to answer some questions of research, which it does this quite successfully. In addition, the author questions on the effect of the war on the formation of identities. Despite the common notion of the war impelling and mobilizing a nationalist discourse, Tronvoll supports the view that the Ethiopian-Eritrean War had an opposite fragmenting effect of creating more divisions and distinctions along ethnic, political, and regional lines.

The book's seven chapters of the book, the study challenged and partly modify the assumption that war homogenizes and strengthens a collective national identity in diverse societies such as Ethiopia. The essential chapter four, which is the first empirical chapter of the book addressing the war, it concentrates on presenting discourses on Tigrayan identity and how self-ascribed Tigrayaness is constituted. In chapter six, Tronvoll moves up the scale and focuses on national discourses on identity while highlighting competing national discourses of nationalism.

Based on his own fieldwork conducted in the years of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front's (TPLF), 1991-1993, and an extensive set of interviews from several actors involved during and after the war, Tronvoll employs analytical tools provided by anthropology's classic concept of boundaries, which manage to capture and explain the complex and contradictory process of identity formation taking place during the war. In order to explain the identity shifts more thoroughly a particular focus is on how the Ethiopian state redesigned its politics of identity to fit and manipulate the new political landscape created by the war. Furthermore, the deconstructionist approach supported by many authors to the idea of a "Greater Ethiopia", which argues that the Ethiopian state, culture, and history is nothing but a mirror image of Amharan domination. Thus, Ethiopia is not a naturally given historical entity but an ordinary African state created through colonialism. Nevertheless, the author puts himself within the camp of scholars such as Christopher Clapham (1969) and John Markakis (1974) who balance the opposing views, considering both the deep historical trajectories of the Ethiopian state on the one hand and its Amharization and oppressive characteristics on the other.

Objections, however, can be raised to the approach supported by the author. With regard to the ethnographic representation of Ethiopia (p. 24), the author fails to make a detail historical reference to the emergence in pre-colonial time of the separate socio-political identities on the two sides of the borderland, albeit within a political dialectic which from the 14th century had frequently renegotiated power relations within the Ethiopian empire. In line with his previous work *Brothers at War*, Tronvoll recognizes the importance of the role played by the reinforcement of Eritrean identity in bringing about the Ethiopian-Eritrean War. This theme raises the question of the development of nationalism and how deeply rooted it actually is among the population. And, this is the crux of the debate revolving around Donald Levine's theses regarding Greater Ethiopia, according to which the history of pre-colonial Eritrea is viewed as being part of a continuum, an albeit confused one, of historical events shared with Ethiopia.

To sum up, the book's great strength is its methodology, where, despite the almost exclusive use of English language publications, the author uses news wires, reports, and texts from the Ethiopian language. Nevertheless, the inclusion of pictures and maps would have been quite helpful for a fuller understanding of the players, actors, and communities in the borderlands of the Ethiopia.

Finally, notwithstanding these minor reservations, Tronvoll's expertise and knowledge of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa shines through in *War and the Politics of Identity*, Tronvoll has offered a carefully crafted, nuanced, and intellectually stimulating contribution to the history of ethnicity in Ethiopia and Horn of Africa. As a scholar and an anthropologist, Tronvoll demonstrates that it is possible for outsiders with dedication and hard work to garner truly commanding knowledge of foreign peoples and lands.

Ioannis Mantzikos, *University of Peloponnese, Greece*

William Storey, *Guns Race and Power in Colonial South Africa*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

In *Guns, Race and Power in Colonial South Africa*, William Storey provides a detailed study of a technology that has had a profound impact on the course of history, guns. Guns are formidable tools that had very practical uses for taking control of material resources. Beginning with the arrival of Europeans into South Africa and elsewhere on the continent, they were used extensively to enhance people's ability to dominate the fauna of the region as they hunted for meat, ivory, and other animal products. They were also used to alter relations of power and domination, both within and between societies in the increasingly violent context of colonial South Africa. Of equal importance, as Storey so incisively conveys, ownership and the use of guns also shaped a myriad of human relations covering everything from conceptions of manhood and entitlements over power to constructions of race. This book provides an insightful and rigorously researched analysis of the role that guns played during select periods and places in South African colonial history until end of the nineteenth century.

Storey approaches the proliferation of guns and their use in South Africa from the perspective of the imperial gaze. The narrative emphasizes, for example, a revised (following Lamar and Thompson's *The Frontier in History*) but not wholly altered frontier thesis in examining the ways in which guns, an understanding of them, and of their use progressed in the country. Such an emphasis limits the perspective since it supports only the dominant view of the power of guns and does not allow for the possibility of some on both sides of the 'frontier' eschewing the embrace of guns or seeking to evade the intense violence they wrought. Following another major field of imperial history, military history, Storey covers many of the major fields of conflict between colonial forces and Africans. For those un-initiated in military or technology history, *Guns, Race and Power* does an excellent job of detailing the mechanical and practical applications of a range of weapons. Over the course of the book, Storey shows how innovations in gun type, firing and loading mechanisms as well as ammunition and cartridges all paralleled the overall arc of South African history, and especially developments in the sectors of capitalist-industrialization.

The book opens with an overview of guns in colonial African history and the role that they played as a form of transformative technology. Storey situates his study firmly within the realm of new approaches to science and technology studies. These, he notes, range from 'hard' or more deterministic approaches that impart agency to technology, to the 'soft' determinist ones that see human actions and choices as driving the use of technology. Storey, however, has preferred to apply the newer and more sophisticated approaches to the question that have come from the interdisciplinary field of Science and Technology Studies (STS). As he explains, this approach examines not just a given technology and its impact, but also the ways in which "technology, politics and society are mutually constituted or 'coproduced'" (p.12). He also pays deference to major works in South African history that engage with social constructions and their relation to material objects such as van Onselen's *The Seed is Mine* and the Comaroff's *Of Revelation and Revolution*. These studies, Storey argues, provide a new platform for understanding guns and culture in South Africa in ways that previous studies of guns in Africa did not. In this way, *Guns, Race and Power* provides a welcome new interdisciplinary look at the connection between imperial materialism and the colonial project in South Africa.

The book is divided into ten chapters with a final concluding chapter. The chapters follow the contours and fault lines of the colonial project as it progressed through the imperial teleology, rather than from a multi-regional perspective. The chapters provide an almost encyclopedic range of facts and figures in various well-rendered tables and graphs. It opens with an examination of guns at the Cape and then moves in chronological order through the settler-African conflicts in the Eastern Cape (chapter 3), and hunting and war along the 'Northern Frontier' (chapter 4). Chapters 5 and 6 are perhaps the two most interesting chapters in the book. In Chapter 5, Storey considers what he sees as a parallel relationship between the changing nature of labor relations in industrializing South Africa, and the introduction of new types of guns. Here an interesting feature of Storey's overall argument, that guns and their use transformed people and power relations, bounded by race and class, is the point that the both the use and acquisition of guns required new and less sophisticated skill-sets. As he notes, during the 1860s and 1870s, increasingly easy to use and widely available popular breechloader guns required fewer skills than had older weapons. This change is seen to parallel the same sort

of proletarianization—one that presumably tended toward the ‘lumpen’ end of the spectrum-- that reduced Africans to the largely unskilled migrant workforce serving the demands of industrial mining capital. Still, what is left out of the picture in this discussion is what more sophisticated skills—the capacity, for example, to cope with the dizzying array of other new economic, political and social demands and opportunities- that Africans cultivated both in urban and rural areas during this period. Chapter 6 provides an illuminating reassessment of the Langalibalele Affair made so (in)famous by Norman Etherington (“Why Langalibalele Ran Away” *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, I (1978): 1-24). Here, the focus on guns helps to awaken a new understanding of African claims to some degree of equal treatment and engagement with the colonial project. Chapters 7 and 8 return to more theoretical considerations of the relationship between technology and imperialism. In chapter 7, a consideration of the drive for a uniform policy on guns and Africans in a confederated South Africa begs the questions of whether the imperial strategists wanted Africans to have at least some guns, so as to appear sufficiently menacing and violent to justify full ‘pacification.’ Curiously left out of this chapter is a more detailed discussion of the Zulu and Pedi cases. Similarly omitted from the otherwise most impressive bibliography is Carolyn Hamilton’s *Mfecane Aftermath* which provides an important analysis of both the origins and perceptions of violence in the interior during the nineteenth century. The remaining chapters detail the case of the Sotho and Basutoland and make the important point that, as with other features of the South African political economy, Africans were decidedly undermined in competing with whites by a growing ‘arms gap’ in the arms race.

Overall, *Guns Race and Power* is an important contribution to our understanding of the unfolding frontier in South African history. It accounts for and explains how technology was a critical area of contestations over access to and use of power in the colonial context. In particular it shows how guns not only became a defining feature of power relations among Africans and settlers, but also connected the region to the wider currents of imperial power. Of necessity, the evidence and views of Africans is often indirect and, it would seem, somewhat speculative. While many of the effects of the spreading gun culture associated with the major thrusts of white settlerdom into the interior are accounted for, there is much less discussion of the use and meaning of guns within African societies. It is, therefore, difficult to get a clear picture from the book of exactly what Africans thought about guns and how they may have transformed their world. How, for example, did Africans see the rise of game hunting and the concomitant destructive impact on fauna? Did they debate the value of guns and the violence they wrought as in other societies? Did they see them as an essential feature of the colonial world they were often compelled to enter into? Still, the impeccable research and cross-referencing, clear and cogent writing, and cohesive argument, make *Guns, Race and Power* an excellent contribution to African and South African colonial history.

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Irene Assiba D'Almeida (ed.). *A Rain of Words. A Bilingual Anthology of Women's Poetry in Francophone Africa*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2009.

Kathy Perkins (ed.). *African Women Playwrights*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009.

In this combined book review we discuss *A Rain of Words*, edited by Irène Assiba d'Almeida, an anthology of Francophone African poems, translated into English by Janis A. Mayes, and *African Women Playwrights*, a selection of excerpts of plays written by African women writers, edited and introduced by Kathy Perkins. Both publications are of the utmost importance as they include poems (*A Rain of Words* compiles the work of 47 African women poets) and theatre plays (*African Women Playwrights*) written by female African authors who have thus far been under-represented when it comes to publication of their texts.

In her introduction to *A Rain of Words*, Assiba d'Almeida points out the abundance, variety, and geographical reach of poetic activity among women in Francophone Africa. To ensure that this diversity reaches Anglophone readers, she has collaborated with translator Mayes. By putting a series of published and unpublished female poets in the spotlight, she hopes to establish the existence of Francophone African women as writers of poets. On the other hand, Kathy Perkins makes similar remarks in her introduction to *African Women Playwrights*. She contends that while "African female writers have seen a small increase in the number of published novels and poems [...] dramatic works, however, still lag behind" (p. 5). Nevertheless, "selecting material for the volume proved difficult" as "there was too much to choose from," (p. 6).

Both anthologies seem to suffer from the lack of precise selection criteria. Assiba d'Almeida wanted to be the "town crier" (p. xxiv) through her highly personal selection. Examples of militant poetry, the poems, presented side by side with their English translation, sing, cry over, exalt, or curse all "the great themes of human emotion," such as love, friendship, happiness, pain, solitude, and death. In *African Women Playwrights*, the editor wanted to highlight the fact that theatre in Africa is "as diverse as the people who inhabit the continent" (p. 6) and has therefore included such topics as cultural differences, HIV/AIDS, female circumcision, land rights, women's rights to higher education, racial/colour identity, and the prostitution of indigent young girls.

In *A Rain of Words* the authors are presented in alphabetical order. For each author, a short biography precedes a selection of poems. While bibliographical information about the poems is given at the end of the volume, it would have been more practical and useful to present this information either next to the title of the poem or immediately above or underneath it. More well-known poets such as Tanella Boni and Véronique Tadjó (Côte d'Ivoire), Werewere Liking (Cameroon), Irène Assiba d'Almeida (Benin/USA), or Monique Ilboudo (Burkina Faso) feature side by side to lesser-known authors such as Aminata Athié (Mauritania), Oumou Dembélé (Mali), or Mallai Lélèl (Niger). The translations are of high quality. Mayes uses her own translation technique which she coined TransAtlantic (or sAlt) translation: it functions "like a delayed memory of the past, or, in musical terms, a reverberation of sound and memory emanating from two (or more) speakers with a slight delay of one with respect to the other,

creating an echo-like sound" (p. xxxiv).

In her foreword to *African Women Playwrights*, Amandina Lihamba applauds the publication of the volume: "We celebrate women's creative output as inspired by the cultural milieu of Africa with its socioeconomic restlessness, energies, and the synergy of its people's hopes and aspirations" (p. ix). In this beautifully edited volume, a picture, a quote from the playwright, a one-page biographical note and excerpts from interviews made by Kathy Perkins accompany passages from or full theatre plays written by African Francophone (Nathalie Etoke; her work appears in an English translation prepared by the author herself) and Anglophone authors such as Ama Ata Aidoo, Violet Barungi, Tsitsi Dangarembga, and Sindiwe Magona.

A detailed and quite comprehensive reference list can be found at the end of *A Rain of Words* (pp. 279-286): primary poetry texts precede anthologies and critical works on poetry. *African Women Playwrights* also concludes with a bibliography which proposed a section on selected readings, followed by a section on selected published and unpublished plays by African women (pp. 360-64).

A few minor spelling and/or grammar mistakes can be identified (e.g. the plural -s missing at the end of *griotte* on p. xxvi of *A Rain of Words*), but they never make legibility an issue.

The publication of the present anthologies is highly appreciated. It fills a gap with regard to African female poets and playwrights. Both compilations offer primary texts, which will be used by researchers, academics, and readers in general to further their knowledge. It is further hoped that copies of both volumes will find their way to African libraries and universities, which is probably where they are needed the most.

Karen Ferreira-Meyers, *University of Swaziland*

Thomas A. Hale. *Griots and griottes*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.

Thomas A. Hale's clearly written, informative work is a comprehensive historical and contemporary account of the griot phenomenon, which originated in West Africa. In a scholarly way, it integrates the methods of oral and written history, comparative literature, folkloristics, and performance studies to create a fascinating portrait of griots. These oral historians, musicians, and poets have such complex roles that it is difficult to confine oneself to a succinct, concise definition of these specialists.

Hale's first chapter, "A Job Description for Griots" (pp. 18-58), explains how much more there is to griot practice than simply genealogy and music. Griots in Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Niger, Senegal and The Gambia variously serve as genealogist, historian, royal advisor and spokesperson, diplomat, mediator, interpreter and translator, musician and composer, teacher, exhorter, warrior, witness, praise singer and key participant at the important village ceremonies such as namings, marriages, installations, and funerals.

In chapter two, entitled "The Origins of Griots" (pp. 59-113), the author sets out to trace and explain some of their thirteenth-century roots in the Malian empire and its founder, Sundiata Keita. The basic tale of griot origins involves blood sacrifice and is used to explain taboos associated with griots and why their caste is distinct from that of other West African

villagers. As Islam came to the region and griot social status became memorialized in epic narratives, their unique social situation was witnessed and reported by outsiders, first Arab and later European.

In chapters three, "The Verbal Art of Griots" (pp. 114-45), and four, "Music Across the Griot World" (pp. 146-71), the author proceeds to explain griots, their culture and how it is they practice their verbal art through praise-singing for example, and to discuss the instruments and techniques used to support these narratives in a highly accessible and informative manner.

Chapter five, "The Making of a Griot" (pp. 172-92), and chapter six, "Would You Want Your Daughter to Marry One" (pp. 193-216), gives the author the opportunity to further examine the traditional social place of the griot, especially in the face of the ever-growing influence of modernity and change. In chapter five, issues of training (early, formal and state-sponsored training), apprenticeship, lineage and knowledge transfer are discussed and exemplified through the description of the lives of three griots, namely Adama Dramé, Al Haji Papa Bunka Susso, and Djimo Kouyaté. Status, power and identity issues within a given society are analyzed in depth in chapter six.

The remaining four chapters, "Griottes: Unrecognized Female Voices" (pp. 217-43), "From the Courtyards of the Nobility to a Global Audience" (pp. 244-87), "The Value of Words" (pp. 288-310), and "New Millennium Griots" (pp. 311-35), describe important new scholarship research trends into the world of women practitioners and performers. While novice researchers in oral literature may have the false view that griots are mainly men, the chapter on female voices sets this straight. Hale clearly spells out the objectives of the inclusion of chapter seven: "to explain why we know so little about griottes, to report on work now being done by the small group of scholars interested in them, to give examples of the verbal art of these women, and to suggest some avenues of research" (p. 217). Hale's conclusion that; "our picture of griots and griottes will remain incomplete until further research is carried out," (p. 241) points to several important themes: women griots share the knowledge base of their male counterparts but convey this in a different form (songs), a sense of community is upheld through work with non-professional women singers, and democratization, new means of communication and opportunities to travel have changed the world of the female griots. Chapter eight brings the griots and their traditions into the twenty-first century. While Alex Haley and his *Roots* may have generated a wave of interest in African griots, it also caused enormous controversy after its publication in 1976. This eighth chapter focuses on pre-*Roots* texts and genealogies, then recounts the link between Haley's fictional reconstruction and the hype that surrounded it before looking at present-day live, musical, print, and electronic (television, radio, and satellite communication) performances. Chapter 9 looks into remuneration of griots from a historical point of view (from early accounts of rewards to today's remuneration for griots' services), from a gender perspective (remuneration of men versus payment of women), from the viewpoint of the sources of rewards (tuition, income from the hospitality industry, from tours and visits, from ceremonies and special events, from the media and from live and recorded performances). The chapter on the modern side of this age-old profession, "New Millennium Griots," underscores its multifunctional character. This last chapter of the book opens up the discussion and offers a multitude of possible research questions to the reader throughout the chapter, but more particularly on pages 324 to 334.

Hale's encyclopaedic introduction to and overview of this ubiquitous and important West African figure is a definite and valuable addition to the literature on both African societies and the African Diaspora as it reveals griots to be much more complex and multifaceted social agents than previously understood. Having had contacts with griots from 1964 to the present day, Hale presents some of his fieldwork as well as the results of his research in archives and libraries in Europe and North America. Along with interviews of over a hundred of these traditional storytellers, Hale summarizes accounts by travellers, explorers, and colonial administrators to create a vibrant picture of the extraordinary activities carried out by griots and griottes. The appendices include lists of names and phone numbers of griots in the United States, lists of films, videos, and sound recordings featuring griots, selected English translations of epics by griots, audio recordings by griots, African music books that include sections on griots, ethno-specific terms for griots (e.g. *guelwel* in Wolof, *jeli* in Mande, *jeséré* in Songhay, *marok'a* in Hausa, etc.), a section on the theories of the origin of the word *griot*, and a selected bibliography. As correctly observed by Barbara Hoffman in her book review of Marloes Janson, *The Best Hand is the Hand That Always Gives: Griottes and their Profession in Eastern Gambia*,¹ and the use of the word *griottes* in English may lead to confusion. The term "griot" has been borrowed into English from French and has attained a remarkably wide adoption in the English lexicon; however, it is typically pronounced differently from the word in French. So, "griot" is commonly pronounced by English speakers (however erroneously) as [griot] with a hard "t". "Griotte", on the other hand, has not been adopted into the general lexicon of English, and for good linguistic reasons (such as phonotactics and morphosyntactics). So the most "natural" monolexemic feminization of the word "griot" (if one were needed) might be "griotess", it may even be more appropriate to use the following terms: Griot = jali of either sex; Griot man = male jali and Griot woman = female jali.

The current paperback version (from the original hardback edition of 1997) has numerous black and white photos and maps which greatly assist the reader in his/her discovery of the world of the griots. While some information has been updated, other data would surely benefit from inclusion of more recent, i.e. post-1997, research findings. This professionally edited and well-written study benefits from the two strategies the author used to prepare it: references to sources are indicated in the text itself rather than in notes at the bottom of the page, the end of the chapter, or the end of the book, and information that is too detailed for inclusion in the narrative is provided in one of the seven appendices. It is, in its entirety, of benefit to a variety of researchers from fields as diverse as history, music, anthropology and sociology, linguistics and literature.

Karen Ferreira-Meyers , *University of Swaziland*

¹ Journal of Language and Popular Culture in Africa 3, No. 2 (2003)

Edith Bruder. *The Black Jews of Africa: History, Religion, Identity.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Richard Hull. *Jews and Judaism in African History.* Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Press, 2009.

*Hath writing ere such
A double book review*

*Ever had such impact on
An Africanist Jew?*

Were it not for the books offered for this review, I would not be spending this Hanukkah in Abuja, Nigeria. Yet so compelling are the historical and contemporary accounts of Jews in Africa, and of African Jews, in these volumes by Edith Bruder and Richard Hull that I could not resist (admittedly in a “use it or lose it” university research grant environment) skipping out on final exam week to arrive in time for the first candle lighting in one of the two (yes, two) synagogues of *Jubos* (my term for ethnic Igbo Jews) in Nigeria’s Federal Capital Territory.

I originally had intended to begin this review by relaying my early Hebrew School discovery of “Falashas,” and the consternation it gave my Ashkenazi mother when I announced (before Bar Mitzvah age, no less) that I would marry an Ethiopian Jewish girl. But enough about me: it is Hull and Bruder who are true experts on the subjects, and need to be given just due.

Despite the similarly-sounding titles and themes, these are very different books. Hull, an American at New York University, is a veteran historian who brings several decades’ worth of research, publication, and teaching experience to the (writing) table. Bruder, a Francophone research associate at the School of Oriental and African Studies, turned her 2006 SOAS doctoral dissertation into *The Black Jews of Africa*. Both books strongly bear the hallmarks of their authors’ backgrounds, and their associated virtues.

For university undergraduates – presumably a target audience for *Jews and Judaism in African History* – Hull’s book is the more accessible of the two books. Hull writes in short, clear sentences, with nary a footnote. (His comprehensive referencing is in MLA style – perhaps as a model for students to adopt in their papers?) His approach – as befits a classical historian – is basically chronological.

Launching his account from classical antiquity (Elephantine, Ptolemaic, and Alexandrian Egypt), Hull takes us up until the seventeenth century in North Africa, relating how Jews fared under successive Muslim regimes (Fatimid, Mamluk, Almoravid, Ottoman, etc.). He then deviates slightly from his dateline, bringing us back to the fifteenth century and the beginnings of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Hull deals with the potentially provocative topic of Jews’ involvement in African slavery in a non-polemical, “just the facts” manner. Jewish participation in the construction of South Africa is the next theme, followed by Jewish immigration to eastern, central, and southern Africa. In his concluding chapter, Hull returns to the north to

assess how Jews of the Maghreb and Egypt have fared from the seventeenth century until after the establishment of Israel. There is no concluding chapter as such, something which this reviewer missed. The half dozen maps, and as many illustrations, greatly enhance the reader's ability to follow spatially and visually the Jewish thread in Africa.

In contrast with Hull's non-interpretative historiography, Edith Bruder's work is infused with theoretical perspectives that invoke sociology, theology, psychology, and anthropology at a level more appropriate for graduate students and beyond. It is helpful, for instance, to be already familiar with Mircea Eliade, Michel Foucault, Rollo May, and Edward Said. This more eclectic approach lends itself to a structure that is at least as thematic as it is historical. In Part I, Bruder grapples with the mythic dimension of African Jewry: Lost Tribes of Israel, King Solomon and Queen of Sheba, etc. Part II explores colonial (most prejudicial) framing of Jewish and African peoples and religion and the relationship between them. The concluding section describes various Black African ethnicities and communities who, either through descent or conviction, stake their claim to Judaism. A nicely rounded Epilogue synthesizes the whole with respect to the otherwise paradoxical finding of "Judaism as a source of black identity."

Perhaps the most important difference between the works relates to their respective ethnic foci. Whereas Hull emphasizes Sephardi and Ashkenazi migration throughout what used to be caricatured as the "Dark Continent," Bruder's interest lies more with sub-Saharan peoples with an abiding identification with Israelite origins, Judaism, or both. For some groups, such as the Ethiopians, the identification is longstanding and descent-based; for others, such as the Abayudaya of Uganda, it is relatively recent, and entirely faith-based; and for yet others, such as the Igbos of Nigeria, the Hebraic faith and descent are being (re)discovered. The Jewish credentials of Hull's subjects are rarely in doubt; but even Bruder feels bound to place cautionary quotation marks around some of them, as indicated in her section heading "Africa, Judaism, and African 'Jews'." For sure, Hull does provide a comprehensive section on Ethiopian Jewish history; his treatment of the Lemba, in southern Africa, is cursory. (Professor Tudor Parfitt, Bruder's doctoral supervisor, has written extensively about the Lemba, and the attention they receive in her book is not surprising.)

Or perhaps the difference in emphasis is less one of ethnicity than historicity: whereas Hull is intent on providing a comprehensive historical account of the Jewish presence on the African continent, Bruder is more concerned with explaining contemporary dynamics in the formation of Jewish identity in Africa. "Why is it," she asks, "that this particular period of African history should witness the rise of Judaizing movements?" (p. 187) If Hull provides the foundation for appreciating the longstanding presence and contradictory roles of Jews in African society, Bruder gives us the springboard for assessing the revitalization of, and attraction to, Judaism in Africa today.

Both books constitute important additions to the growing literature on the historical and contemporary interstices between Africana and Judaica, be it in Israel, Africa, or in their respective diasporas. Neither author sufficiently addresses the question of *why* s/he has been drawn to this particular comparative venture, although intimations of interest in shared status as minority groups at the global level seem to undergird both works. Speaking to different audiences, with different thematic emphases and heuristic aims, Bruder and Hall nevertheless

converge in successfully binding between their respective covers two peoples whose destinies have overlapped in ways that neither Hebraicists nor Africanists have generally appreciated.

To return to my mother, and matrimony: in the end, I did not wind up marrying a woman from Africa, Ethiopian or otherwise. But my West Indian bride does have some African ancestry – as well as a certificate of Jewishness – and became as close to my mother as a daughter-in-law can possibly be. Evolution in Mother's tribalistic feelings mirrors somewhat the expanded notion of Jewishness within North American and Western European Jewry. These fine books by Edith Bruder and Richard Hull are reflections of, and important contributions to, this heightened consciousness.

For their follow-up research, perhaps Bruder or Hull might wish to consider investigating Jews of the African diaspora, including the perception of their romances with other Jewish diasporics. If so, they may begin by interviewing Mom: telephone number upon request.

William F.S. Miles, *Northeastern University*

Maathai, Wangari. *The Challenge for Africa*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2009.

The Challenge for Africa offers a simple mantra: African solutions for African problems. Although she skillfully asserts that the continent's troubles are not just rooted in Africa only, early on, she challenges Africans not to "blindly" follow the "prescriptions of others, [but]... to think and act for themselves and learn from their mistakes"--it is this challenge that permeates the book. Maathai takes the reader on a journey across the African continent, beginning on a steep slope outside of Yaoundé, through her native Kenya, to the Congo Basin rainforest. Along this journey, the reader meets a wide variety of Africans--farmers, leaders, women's groups, and even a state rugby team. It is through this personalization of the African continent that Maathai presents her argument and leads us to her conclusion that while Africa's problems are very much solvable, it is only through the leadership and accountability of Africans that this will lead to fruition.

The Challenge for Africa consists of five sections:. The first provides the contextual background of the challenges facing Africa today as viewed through its cultural and historical lenses. Next offered is the economic, political, and international contexts of the challenges. The third section looks at leadership and good governance throughout African society;. The fourth evaluates the connection between ethnic identity and the African nation-state. The final section brings to the forefront Maathai's position that it is the African environment that is key to solving its developmental challenges. Her final chapter is a personal communiqué of the challenges facing the African individual and family, both at home and abroad. Within these sections, the topics range from unfair domestic and international trade practices, cultural dilemmas, and the national calamities caused between identity with a nation-state and one's tribal "micro-nation," and problems produced by land ownership issues in Africa.

Maathai is a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate; former Kenyan MP; former Assistant Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Wildlife; and founder of the Green Belt Movement.

Although the green-centric perspective of her examination of Africa's problems is evident, she does so with a sincerity and empathy that is rare in partisan literature. Her credibility is beyond reproach and she takes a no nonsense attitude with her readers as she knowingly offers her prescriptions for Africa's woes--notwithstanding her initial forewarning that Africans should think and act for themselves. For example, in Chapter 7, "Moving the Social Machine," Maathai describes the dire circumstances of Kenyan macadamia nut farmers within her constituency. With the farmers caught in a Catch-22 situation—trying to grow (and protect) a crop whose market value drove neighbors to steal the nuts and eventually the trees themselves, directly off the farmers' property—Maathai fervidly declares the whole situation a "form of corruption." As a mother would reprimand her children, she faults Africans themselves for "exposing their own greed and selfishness," which she then acknowledges is the cause of their own problems. Contrary to the prevalent argument that Africa's problems are rooted in the legacies of colonialism, Maathai puts forward that after four decades since independence, it is the African leaders that are to be held accountable for the inadequacies found in African states. And while military options appear to be the "fix of choice" for many African leaders, she rebukes this notion. In fact, as simple as the suggestion may sound, she proposes that an open exchange of ideas and opinions between those leaders and their constituents, as well as the equitable sharing of power and resources, will produce the peace that all Africans have desired since leaving the clutches of their colonial overseers. She goes on to offer a view that again runs contrary to conventional wisdom. Maathai proposes that the still-intact colonial state borders are not necessarily the impetus of Africa's problems. She suggests that the de-emphasis on local, tribal "micro-nation" languages is a greater hindrance to African education and development.

As passionate and exact as the author is, the reader will come away from the book slightly askew as to whether Maathai has realistically presented a cure for Africa's woes. Without a doubt her personal examples are poignant and compelling, but due to the wide range of issues presented (governance, aid/dependency, leadership, social/cultural issues, national identity, land ownership, the environment, and development), at times the book overwhelms the reader with recommendations and solutions. Nevertheless, in her view, one African "natural resource [that] often goes underappreciated" are Africans themselves. This perceptive and heartfelt book is an expression of Maathai's desire to see the African family and all its culture and traditions flourish on the international stage; as it did so many years ago.

Eric M. Moody, *U.S. Air Force Academy*

David Maxwell. *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement.* Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006.

David Maxwell's multifaceted study of the Pentecostal sect Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) complements a growing academic literature on the origins and spread of the global Pentecostal movement. Despite its self-professed mission to return to the original roots of Christianity, Pentecostalism is a quintessentially modern faith heavily dependent on mass media, migration, modern bureaucracy, and networks of conferences, Bible institutes,

missionary activities, and student outreach, bolstered by funding from the American-based Born-Again movement. Maxwell's book proceeds chronologically, following Pentecostalism's American origins in the early twentieth century through the transplantation of the movement to apartheid South Africa and then to Southern Rhodesia. This approach allows comparison of the development of Pentecostalism among the three countries during periods of rapid urbanization and capitalist development. The comparative methodology allows Maxwell to account for differences in socioeconomic and racial environment and political relations with the state. The Southern Rhodesian movement, for instance, was dominated by black African elite rather than by white missionaries to a far greater extent than the South African movement, and consequently developed a more hostile relationship with the Southern Rhodesian government.

At times, the book is as detailed as to the Pentecostal belief structure and moral code that the study nearly becomes a work of theology. Here again, Maxwell's comparative methodology is helpful: he draws sharp boundaries among Pentecostal sects and between Pentecostalism and other Born-Again and Evangelical faiths—boundaries that are extremely important to adherents themselves. The Pentecostal worldview is composed of boundaries. Defining characteristics include personal salvation through a born-again conversion experience; a belief in miraculous signs and the infallibility of the Bible; and a belief in adventism, or the imminent return of Christ. The baptismal experience is the clearest of boundaries, separating one's old life from the new. Pentecostals also possess the "Gifts of the Spirit": divine healing, glossolalia (speaking in tongues), exorcism, and prophecy. The Zimbabwean strand of Pentecostalism is unique in its aggressive proselytism and its radical intolerance toward aspects of local culture, including ancestor veneration, superstition, and traditional religious practices.

In addition, the book is a work of sociology, depicting the rise of a religious sect that exhibits the same racial, ethnic, and clan tensions of the surrounding society. The movement arose in a "cauldron of poverty, social upheaval, and political unrest" (p. 66). In South Africa, the United States, and later Rhodesia, the Pentecostal movement became racially segregated as it matured, although it tended to grow fastest among women, youth, the politically disempowered, and other groups seeking social mobility without regard to race. As in South Africa, the movement's spread in Rhodesia was closely tied to the restricted freedom of movement between rural and urban areas and migrant labor communities. ZAOGA is often perceived to be culturally Shona, and even outside Zimbabwe worship is punctuated with Shona language and reference to Harare, the "Zimbabwean Jerusalem" (p. 177). ZAOGA has gone global as the Zimbabwean diaspora has grown. Conservative Pentecostalism allied itself with capitalist development in Southern Africa, preaching a lifestyle that encouraged self-reliance, marriage, and the nuclear family and discouraged drinking alcohol, excessive leisure activities, costly traditional rituals, and extended family networks. Just as the rise of Pentecostalism was rapid precisely because it complemented early capitalist growth, so too is the sect's current spread complementary with conditions in a deteriorating Zimbabwe. Many of the faith's religious tenets work as survival strategies in an economically ravaged environment. The closely-knit social and professional networks encourage remittances, devotion among migrants and expatriates, and a ready source of business contacts and clients.

Finally, Maxwell's book is a work of political science. While Maxwell does not directly say so, the charismatic, authoritarian nature of ZAOGA and its leader Ezekiel Guti begin to mirror

political characteristics of Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe. Just as both Guti and Mugabe take on almost Christ-like qualities among their devout disciples, so too do the boundaries between faith and state begin to blur. Both have crises of transparency and accountability; both constrain free expression; and both have a very conservative sexual and family ethos that condemns deviation. Pentecostalism, like a revolutionary, neo-Marxist polity, is more iconoclastic than rule abiding, not content with the status quo, and somewhat unstable. In both Pentecostalism and the Zimbabwean state, charisma has waned over time in favor of a more predictable, structured bureaucracy. This comparison is ironic. Pentecostals have often been aloof from government, whether Rhodesian or Zimbabwean, and have endured hostility or indifference from the state for most of the movement's history. While they emphasized black autonomy, they also emphasized respect for authority, and thus were only partial allies of the nationalist movement. In the modern era, as Mugabe's legitimacy as ruler has unraveled, Pentecostals have become a source of strong political opposition to the ZANU-PF government. Economic devastation threatens their social mobility; violent political confrontation threatens their security.

At times, Maxwell's study nearly lapses into palace politics. The history of such a multifaceted religious sect, especially one in which charismatic leadership is so formative, inevitably lends itself to schism, petty doctrinal disputes, personal rivalries, turf wars, and internal patronage politics. Not all of these changes of power or attempted coups are relevant for ordinary believers, however, and the book tends to slow down at times where Maxwell chronicles the rapid introduction or departure of characters. Their presence in such a complete historical work is probably necessary, and Maxwell stresses the important role leadership plays in the sect. Later chapters more explicitly relate the leadership cult to the lives of ordinary believers. One of the best features of Maxwell's book is his awareness of the study's limitations. The importance of ZAOGA's rise must not be exaggerated, he writes in his conclusion (p. 220). Political "noise" should not be confused with influence, and Catholic, Anglican, and Methodist religious hierarchies have more political clout because they have vast mission infrastructures and direct access to government ministers. In his study of the "Guti cult" within ZAOGA, Maxwell notes "the danger in devoting too much attention to ZAOGA's leader," as the purpose of the study was to deconstruct the church's official narratives and highlight the agency of others in the movement's formation. "Nevertheless, by the mid-1990s Guti and the movement appeared synonymous" (p. 138). He is able to concede Guti's importance while critiquing the hagiography around the leader. He avoids other potential pitfalls as well. His description of Pentecostalism as "adaptive" rather than "escapist" helps to recognize the agency of the movement's members in uncertain times (p. 223). Followers are not withdrawing from the world; they actively seek to change it.

The book is an important contribution to the growing literature on Pentecostalism, which often underemphasizes the importance of developing world strains. ZAOGA has essentially sent "reverse missionaries" to the developed world, and now boasts congregations in the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, and elsewhere, challenging the North-South missionary paradigm. The book also helps to place evangelical and Born-Again faiths in the study of African Christianity, which has often focused solely on the old colonial-era missionary denominations. The book complements another recent work by Matthew Engelke,

A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Church (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), which describes the development of a charismatic Christian independent movement, the Friday Masowe Apostolics. But Engelke is studying a specifically Zimbabwean sect; Maxwell's analysis is more complex as he has the advantage of comparison across national and generational lines that help to identify without overstating the unique contribution of ZAOGA. The book is strongly sourced and combines archival research spanning three continents, official ZAOGA publications, over a hundred oral interviews, and a nearly exhaustive list of academic sources on religion in Africa.

Andrew Novak, *U.S. Department of Labor*

Mary- Alice Waters and Martin Koppel. *Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa: Reports from Equatorial Guinea*. New York: Pathfinder Press, 2009.

Excluding an Introduction and a "Reporter's notebook," this book is a collection of six reports by the above authors and a speech by a diplomat (the Cuban ambassador to Equatorial Guinea). The authors are editors of two left-wing magazines, *New International* (Waters) and *Militant* (Koppel). Waters is also the founder of Pathfinder, a left-wing publishing company; Koppel is the Spanish language editor of the company. Both are supporters of the Cuban revolution. The reports are based on the authors' findings in two trips to Equatorial Guinea in 2005 and 2008 and were originally published in *Militant*.

As Mary-Alice Waters wrote in the Introduction, this book is "a spotlight [on] the transformation of the instruments of production and the new class relations emerging today in Equatorial Guinea." The book focuses on the period from the mid-1990s, when oil and gas were discovered in commercial quantity in the continental shelf bordering the two main parts of the country—the continental region (Mbini) and the island of Bioko. But it begins with a brief historical background. This country, they report, was a Spanish colony, and Spain's main activity in the colony was plantation farming. Spain did not bother to develop the country socially and in physical terms. The country became independent in 1968 but was misruled under its first president (Macias Nguema). In 1979, it was rescued by its current leadership, which is headed by Obiang Nguema. Until oil and gas were discovered, it was one of Africa's least developed countries—a country of peasant farmers, illiterate, without modern infrastructure, without industry, and without skilled workers. There are about five ethnic groups in the country. One, the Fang, is predominant. Ethnicity is a politically salient factor in the country's affairs.

Since the discovery of oil, the authors continue, much has changed in the country. Foreign, mainly United States, oil companies were licensed to produce the oil. The wealth from oil is being used to develop massively infrastructure and establish educational and health facilities. It has also attracted large numbers of foreign experts, workers, and business people. Rather grudgingly, the authors acknowledge that the changes wrought by oil have raised the standard of living of the general population and given them hope of a prosperous future. They further

report, however, that activities in the oil industry have widened class differences and established new forms of domination. Concerning class differences, the authors often draw attention to contrasts between the neighborhoods and standards of living of staff of foreign oil and construction companies, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, those of the majority of the citizens of the country, as well as artisans and traders from other countries. They blame such differences on capitalism. But they express the hope that, as the activities of capitalist companies increase the number of the world's proletariat, Equatorial Guinea's workers will help to bring about a global socialist revolution.

Aside from the activities of oil companies, the authors report extensively on the activities of Cuban health workers in Equatorial Guinea. Under an agreement with Cuba, about 160 Cuban health workers serve in Equatorial Guinea's hospitals and train its doctors in the country's newly established university as well as in Cuba. The Cubans are paid just a living wage. The authors report that, unlike the oil workers, the Cubans live amidst those they work for, and are not distinguished from them on the basis of wealth. Cuba, they stress, is not in this country to exploit the country, but to help its people develop their capacity to be self-reliant.

We conclude by stating that this is not an academic study. It belongs to the category of books that would be classified as journalism. It is needful to add, though, that it is good journalism. It provides reliable basic information about contemporary Equatorial Guinea, information that would be of much value to any reader who is not familiar with the country. However, many readers that are not left-inclined would find many of the comments of the authors—comments that downplay the contributions of capitalist firms and exaggerate those of socialist Cuba—rather disquieting.

Okechukwu Edward Okeke, *Abia State University, Nigeria.*

Fred Morton, Jeff Ramsay, and Part Themba Mgadla. *Historical Dictionary of Botswana*. 4th edition. Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2008.

The revised and greatly expanded fourth edition of the *Historical Dictionary of Botswana* is a near encyclopedic desktop reference volume. Nearly 50 percent larger than the third, 1996, edition, each part of the fourth edition (a fourteen page chronology, twenty-two page introductory survey of historical and contemporary political and institutional evolution, three hundred and forty-three page dictionary, ninety page bibliography and three new appendices portraying election outcomes, population figures and indigenous languages) has been reworked and expanded. The three hundred pages of entries in the dictionary itself, including ninety pages of new and revised entries, not only allows for a quick reference on key people and their impact on historical and contemporary political and economic change but also a reference on the history of and change in key economic, social, and political dimensions of society such as "education" and the "economy." A carefully researched and well-organized ninety-page bibliography is a comprehensive list for the general reader and a place of first resort for specialists in a wide range of disciplines.

Each of the authors is an established and well-known historian of Botswana having published important work on specialized eras and topics in the history of Botswana. Collectively, Fred Morton, Jeff Ramsay, and Part Themba Mgadla bring to the dictionary a background of extraordinary breadth and depth. In their acknowledgements, the authors recognize the contributions of Andrew Murray and Barry Morton, also historians, to previous editions of the Dictionary. This collection of expertise accounts for the comprehensive coverage and quality of the dictionary as well as the usefulness of its bibliography.

The fourth edition of the Historical Dictionary of Botswana is a valuable reference tool that should be part of any library, personal or institutional, that includes a section on Southern Africa in general and Botswana in particular.

Jack Parson, *The College of Charleston*

Brigid Sackey. *New Directions in Gender and Religion: The Changing Status of Women in African Independent Churches.* Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2006.

The flourishing growth of Charismatic and Pentecostal churches in sub-Saharan Africa has engendered an extensive literature by academic scholars in Africa, Europe, and North America. Just as decolonization in the 1960s inspired researchers to examine African Independent Churches instead of focusing their attention on mission-based denominations, the wide range of work on African Charismatic and Pentecostal Christianity has tended to ignore older churches established by Africans in the colonial period. Furthermore, the new literature on recent developments in African Christianity has often assumed that North American and European models of gender have been accepted by many African churches. Brigid Sackey, a researcher who has studied churches established by Africans since the late 1970s, has written a thought-provoking study that includes both older African churches (that she refers to as Spiritual) and new churches that resemble Charismatic and Pentecostal churches elsewhere in Africa (labeled as Charismatic by the author).

Sackey places African Spiritual and Charismatic churches in a Ghanaian religious and social context. She uses her three decades of fieldwork and her knowledge of the literature on gender and spirituality in Ghana and Africa to support and frame her presentation. Indigenous religious traditions clearly outside of Christianity have long offered women opportunities to act as leaders as healers and priestesses. Many deities in different parts of Ghana are not clearly associated with a particular gender. Many Akan-speaking communities in southern Ghana furnish married women rights to their own property and respect relative equality between husbands and wives in daily household decisions. While the author does not romanticize pre-colonial Ghanaian society, it is clear that long-standing understandings of gender help explain how many women have taken roles of formal and informal leadership within their religious communities. As early as 1914, Grace Tani formed the Church of the Twelve Apostles after having worked with the famous Liberian preacher William Wade Harris. Tani, a former priestess of the river deity Nano Tano, inherited both Harris' mission to destroy evil

supernatural forces and his accoutrements of a white robe, a calabash, and a bamboo cross. Female preachers and healers run many Church of the Twelve Apostles congregations, where they hold healing ceremonies for infertile women that combine ethno-botanical knowledge and Tani's teachings. Tani's important work as a trailblazer in African Spiritual churches has been neglected by researchers, in part because literate men in her church eventually gained formal control over the movement. Tani's lack of Western education proved to be a serious challenge.

In the Pentecostal churches originally established by African and European missionaries in the early twentieth century, women were expected not to take a formal leadership position. However, Sackey convincingly notes how women did both coordinate the daily activities Pentecostal communities and eventually formed their own church organizations by the 1950s and 1960s. One of the strongest chapters in the book gives a selection of short life histories of female church leaders in the late twentieth century from a wide range of denominations. Most of the women shared a dramatic encounter with the divine, even as their experiences were differentiated by class, levels of education, family influences, and theological viewpoints. Interestingly, models of patriarchy supported by North American and European Charismatic and Pentecostal churches have often been reshaped to fit ideals of mutually supportive nuclear families in which married clergy share most aspects of church leadership with one another.

This book offers two separate chapters on women, African Independent Churches, and healing. Again, the author's decision to cover both older Spiritual and newer Charismatic churches allows one to contrast and compare the varied understandings of spiritual illnesses and healing ceremonies. By discussing the financial costs and motivations of individuals seeking healing, Sackey offers insights on how and why Ghanaians select different churches, indigenous healers, and Western medical facilities. One wishes at times that Sackey engaged the broader literature on health and healing in Africa more often, since she remains linked to empiricist approaches and does not seek to make arguments aimed at a wide audience. Also, she could have referenced the rich body of work on Ghanaian societies by historians and anthropologists to contextualize her findings. On the other hand, this book is extremely easy to follow—something that cannot be said of many recent works on healing and Christianity.

This book would be very effective for undergraduates in courses on contemporary religion, African studies, and anthropology. Sackey eschews academic jargon, in marked contrast to many studies that explore African Independent Churches in contemporary Africa. While some might contend the author diluted her analysis as a result, the organization and clear prose of this book lends itself far better to the classroom than works that drew heavily from dense analytical approaches such as Ruth Marshall. Paul Gifford's extensive literature on Christianity in Ghana does not offer much on gender, so this work would compliment his work well if they were assigned together in a class. The author does not assume the reader has any prior knowledge of African Christianity, although instructors would probably need to provide some general background on Ghana's history and religious culture to effectively use this book. It is most unfortunate that there is only a hard-cover edition available at present, since Sackey's study deserves a large audience and is well suited for college students. Overall, this is a solid study.

Jeremy Rich, *Middle Tennessee State University*

Timothy Longman. *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Many specialists on Central Africa have long anticipated Timothy Longman's study of how and why Christian institutions helped prepare the way for the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Few other researchers have his background. In 1992 and 1993, he conducted research on the relationship between various churches and the Rwandan state in the midst of the ongoing civil war between the Rwandan Patriotic Front and the supporters of longtime strongman Juvenal Habyarimana. He left the country less than a year before the genocide, and then returned in 1995 and 1996. Thanks to these experiences, Longman has an unparalleled knowledge of Christianity in Rwanda. *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* was worth the wait.

The question of how churches participated in the Rwandan genocide has been asked repeatedly, especially since the vast majority of Rwandans belong to a Catholic or Protestant church. Longman deftly dismantles those who claim individuals bear entirely responsibility for the killings, rather than churches, or those who argue churches were too divided internally on ethnic and political lines to challenge the ethos and actions of advocates of mass murder. His arguments engage with the broad global literature on Christianity and genocide. Many observers have delineated how Catholic missionaries in the colonial era shaped ethnic identity by promoting the idea that Hutu and Tutsi people constituted two separate racial groups, and that they thus hold some responsibility for genocidal attacks on Tutsi communities in 1973 and 1994. While Longman certainly acknowledges the close connection between conceptions of ethnicity and missionaries, his study centers itself on the relationship between colonial and post-colonial political authorities and church institutions.

From the initial nominal occupation of the Rwandan kingdom by German officers at the turn of the twentieth century onward, Christian clergy have formed close relationships with African and European political leaders and actively participated in shaping ethnic political movements. Longman is careful to note that not all missionaries or African Christians always supported the goal of consolidating state authority over the poor farmers that make up the majority of the country's population. Churches were and remain arenas of social conflict, especially since these institutions have acted as sources of patronage and solidarity that bring together wealthy and impoverished Rwandans. Catholic and many Protestant leaders, however, continued to seek out state patronage throughout the twentieth century, despite changing attitudes towards ethnicity and changes in governments. For example, the new generation of younger European Catholic missionaries in the 1950s and 1960s might have considered Hutu people as an exploited underclass instead of a mass of inferior primitives in need of Tutsi tutelage. Although they inverted older ethnic stereotypes, these missionaries still engaged in promoting sharp divisions between Hutu and Tutsi people and promoted Rwandan intellectuals and political leaders who shared their opinions.

This book's innovative approach really comes into its own in its review of church institution's actions in the post-colonial era. Many Catholic and Protestant leaders accommodated themselves to the growth of authoritarian governments in the 1960s, culminating in the seizure of power by Juvenal Habyarimana in 1973. Church and state

institutions competed with one another in their reach and their influence, which made some officials distrust their spiritual counterparts. The growth of Hutu political movements also put the largely Tutsi clergy in Catholic and Protestant churches at a major disadvantage, since they wished to distance themselves from the aspirations of some Tutsi exiles to regain power and the legacy of ethnic discrimination of the colonial period. Church leaders thus did not provide much clear criticism of violence aimed at supposed enemies of various political factions, whether inspired by ethnic tensions or other issues. Habyarimana's determination to make churches and the private sector dependent on his single-party regime generally succeeded in the 1970s and early 1980s. Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian, and Seventh-Day Adventist leaders repeatedly showed their support for the state, even as some critics of the dictatorship could be found in each church. Interestingly given their importance in post-colonial Africa as a rule, Pentecostal churches receive little attention, in part because of their small size in Rwanda prior to the genocide. Since Longman notes how Pentecostal churches remained distant from the state, it would have been interesting to learn more on how they managed to keep relatively independent.

The rise of democratic politics and the sinking fortunes of the Habyarimana regime beginning in the late 1980s left churches in disarray. While Catholic bishops wrote a series of pastoral letters that vaguely critiqued human rights abuses and corruptions in the early 1990s, they did little to specifically address the mobilization of violence by Habyarimana's loose coalition of supporters against Tutsi people and anyone suspected of political disloyalty. Longman denotes how fear of a loss of state patronage made an impact in two different Presbyterian parishes in the early 1990s. In one parish, leaders of church institutions endorsed close ties to the state and later actively promoted attacks on Tutsi people. In the other parish, church members and institutions remained relatively autonomous from Habyarimana's government and proved to be an obstacle to mass killings rather than an important participant in the murder of thousands of people. These case studies expose varied links between Christian development programs and schools, the state, and ethnic violence in an extremely effective way. They offer a rich vein of evidence for the author's theses on the genocide, and they expose how ordinary people often viewed church institutions as dispensers of patronage.

This book should be mandatory reading for anyone seeking to understand the Rwandan genocide, as well as the interaction between Christian churches and governments in Africa. It is written in a very accessible and well-organized way. It would work extremely well in graduate courses on African history, religion, and politics. It would also work in upper-division undergraduate classes. However, instructors teaching undergraduates should be warned that using individual chapters might be more effective than assigning the entire book, since it is so long. One can only hope future studies of the relationship between Christian churches and the state in Africa will equal this book's brilliance.

Jeremy Rich, *Middle Tennessee State University*

Diana Wylie. *Art and Revolution: The Life and Death of Thami Mnyele South African Artist.* Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008.

Art and Revolution expresses the life history of Thami Mnyele in written and picturesque form and offers a window into the lives lived by exiled South African freedom fighters, their daily struggles, and the choices they had to make to achieve freedom. Mnyele's story shows how the causes and consequences of political commitment vary and presents an interesting perspective toward understanding social movements through private lives. By using a variety of sources: diaries, letters, military files, newsletters, photographs, magazine articles, and oral interviews, Wylie explores Mnyele's childhood years, his artistic works, and how he evolved into a military and social combatant.

Mnyele grew up in a world conditioned by apartheid's racial categorization, violence, and deprivation, but this part of his life was also a time when resistance and protest were gathering storm across the country. One such resistance was to Bantu education. Though Mnyele did not become enmeshed in everyday violence perpetuated by apartheid, he developed a sense of pride and supported the struggle of Africans. During this time, Mnyele was armed only with a dream of becoming an artist until a photo journalist introduced him to a writer, Wally, who would become a good friend. With Wally's help, Mnyele developed a talent to express his emotional life through painting in a time when Black artists were excluded from public view.

In 1972 Mnyele's work was exhibited at Gallery 101 in Johannesburg. The apartheid government had not bothered to ban painters, but works by black artists were absent from galleries and museums (p. 41). Exhibition at Gallery 101 enhanced Mnyele's popularity and he began to gain some recognition as an artist. Unmistakably, Mnyele took to Black Consciousness as a way of building confidence. "We tell people to stop moaning and wake up and start doing something for their valuable black lives" (p. 50). As a youth, Mnyele grew up painting, writing, and acting as well as taking part in useful discussions or what he calls the "feelings of purpose and practical fulfillment," (p.52). As Mnyele matured, he moved away from idealized and illustrative style to experimenting with more abstract figures. Mnyele's new style captured the pervasive mood of heightened hope and fear. In 1979, this anxiety inspired his self-imposed exile to Botswana.

The new arts community in Gaborone functioned as his conduit for information and also served a place where South African exiles expressed their outrage through songs, poetry, drama, and dance. Mnyele joined the African National Congress (ANC) soon after his arrival in Botswana, and through his art he was better able to articulate the relationship between his craft and his ideology. At the same time, Mnyele joined an artist organization (Medu) on the premise that black South Africans needed strong, even heroic, images in order to imagine another possible reality. Graphic arts are one of the ways to reach those who cannot read and write. Medu artists painted posters, produced newsletters, and educated readers about radical ideas on race and African liberation. After military and political instruction from Angola, Mnyele became instrumental in the struggle to recruit and train new comrades, whilst the style and content of his art began to depict militancy typical of grassroots movements. This popular

insurrection met with increasing military operations and infiltrations into the ranks of opposition by the South African government, which resulted in Mnye's death in 1985.

Wylie's appraisal of Mnye's life not only exposes the tensions within the opposition to the apartheid regime such as disagreements between the ANC and Pan-African National Congress (PAC) but also embodies two paradoxes: he was a "gentleman" endorsing war and he championed the community despite the violence he experienced within it (p.167).

A major contribution of this timely book is the author's ability to weave the written words with visual images to capture Mnye's life. Nonetheless, the book lacks a deep analysis of Mnye's paintings. Each painting can be a window through which the reader - especially those who do not have artistic training - can visualize not only the social and political history of South Africa but Mnye's personal economic and financial struggles. For instance, what types of paints, canvases, and brushes did Mnye use? What do these tell us about Mnye's patrons or the relationship between the blacks and whites? More importantly, how did Mnye's paintings contribute to his death at the hands of the South African army? I also think that if the author let the paintings speak, they can permit the reader a more visual understanding of apartheid's brutal past—to see the life lived by Mnye and those of anti-apartheid activists and South Africans who lived in exile.

In spite of these comments, Diana Wylie's book is beautifully written and rich in content. *Art and Revolution* is an important book that chronicles the history of anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and makes a valuable contribution to the historiography of biographies using iconography.

Bala S.K. Saho, *Michigan State University*

Lisa Ann Richey. *Population Politics and Development: From the Policies to the Clinics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Over the past fifty years, as more countries undergo a demographic transition, family planning policies have changed drastically. Lisa Ann Richey's book, *Population Politics and Development: From the Policies to the Clinics* is an in-depth look at how population policies and family planning have evolved in Tanzania. Lisa Ann Richey has a PhD in political science and is Associate Professor of Development Studies at Roskilde University in Denmark. Although Richey has published several articles on reproductive health policy, this is her first book. Based on research in Tanzania, *Population Politics and Development* is organized into seven chapters, with four "intermezzos" or short narratives between some of the chapters, which progress from the history and policies surrounding family planning to her own research on family planning practices in Tanzania. The book's goals are twofold. First, it aims to illustrate that reproductive health decisions are not necessarily founded in individual choice but rather as part of a greater complex global economy. The second goal is to examine global population discourse through the lens of Tanzania, illustrating that the top-down approach of family planning policies often fail to capture the needs of a community and polarizes the "modern" and the "traditional."

The first four chapters analyze the evolution of population policy in Africa and highlight the role of international politics and donors while tracing the development of Tanzania's National Population Policy. Richey analyzes key government documents, interviews, and participant observation at policy meetings during her time in Tanzania to present this history and development. The first chapter introduces global population discourse and provides a brief synopsis of the chapters. In the second chapter, Richey begins with the introduction of family planning services in Tanzania in 1959 and outlines the policy development through the creation of a National Population Policy in 1992. In the third chapter, Richey focuses on the role of a local NGO, UMATI, in implementation of the National Population Policy to illustrate gaps between policy and implementation at local levels. Her analysis of key documents to formulate the policy theory is effective, but the intermittent addition of her observations from meetings tends to make the argument seem more personal. The fourth chapter shows women's reproductive needs are lost when translating global population policy to a donor-funded intervention, especially when allowing men to shape the project towards their own needs.

The last three chapters present Richey's research findings on perceptions of "modern" and "traditional" contraceptive methods and how Tanzanian women and their partners respond to family planning messages. For these sections, she collected data through questionnaires and interviews during original research studies in the Morogoro, Kilimanjaro, and Ruvuma Regions of Tanzania. The fifth and sixth chapters focus on whether women utilize "traditional" or "modern" contraceptive methods, how these methods are not necessarily dichotomous, and how women and men respond to the family planning messages they are receiving. Richey conducted one three-region study in Tanzania where she interviewed samples of women who were not currently utilizing a family planning method. She followed the study with one in which she interviewed 250 randomly selected married households to analyze fertility decision making between married couples in the Kilimanjaro Region. The conclusion further explores the local meanings of reproduction in Tanzania to show that a homogenous solution to family planning cannot always be applied to a local setting. Family planning is context specific as reproductive health in Tanzania is largely associated with the ability to bear healthy children, and not necessarily, to prevent pregnancy.

The strengths lie in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters where Richey presents her own research. The work is captivating, as there is a lot to be gained from the author's use of primary sources and women's experiences described in their own words. Richey shows that despite what the global community assumes, traditional and modern contraceptive methods are much more intertwined with women oscillating between the two. She also illustrates that in Tanzania, for both women and men, reproductive health is strongly associated with the ability to bear healthy children. Reproductive methods are utilized for child spacing, which is not necessarily a component of the global family planning message. Richey's Tanzania example shows that family planning is not merely the use of pills or injections; instead, it is a decision for a woman, her partner, the family, and the greater community. The Tanzanian communities have adapted the family planning message to their own culture and needs.

Although, the last three chapters present powerful research and dialogues, there are a few limitations. The first few chapters employ a conceptual or theoretical framework that is slightly overwhelming. These chapters are heavily laden with language associated with policy and

development, which might appeal to policy students or researchers in those fields. The “intermezzos” present anecdotal evidence, which gives the work depth in capturing the cultural specifics of family planning in Tanzania; some readers, however, might find these stories distracting from the flow of the main argument. In addition, although Richey does a great job of outlining her argument through the book, at times, points are redundant and overemphasized. Nevertheless, this does allow for continuous awareness of the argument at hand.

Overall, Richey’s book is an important contribution to the literature on global economics of reproductive health. The book accomplishes her goal of showing how the global population discourse employs itself at the local level. The greater significance is less likely to be in the book’s theoretical conclusions and more so in the original research regarding family planning practices in the local Tanzanian communities. Population Politics and Development can appeal to both those who are unfamiliar with global family planning policies and specialists in the field. Due to the focus on development, those involved in policy, government, public health, and gender and women’s studies might find this book of particular interest. Richey presents a great overview of the complexities of global population policies and provides population policy specialists with a case study that captures the nuances of family planning in Tanzania.

Goleen Samari, *University of California*

Sylviane A. Diouf. *Dreams of Africa: The Slave Ship Clotilda and the Story of the Last Africans Brought to America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Sylviane A. Diouf’s account of the remarkable lives of the last known group of slaves brought to North America adds greatly to our understanding of slavery and its African origins. Smuggled into Mobile, Alabama in 1860, they later founded Africatown, a community organized around African social and cultural traditions. It was the first town established, and ruled, by blacks and black landowners in the United States. While *Dreams of Africa* advances scholarship of the post-1808 illegal slave trade,² its main intention is to detail the story of the deportees from their African lives to their capture and passage, and to the creation of Africatown. Diouf frames the account from the perspective of the *Clotilda* shipmates (who she elsewhere refers to as “deportees” or “Africans”), and the result is a rich, provocative, and fresh excavation of the matrix of African traditions in American society.

The work exhibits an ethnographic passion that reflects the research found in Zora Neale Hurston’s manuscripts on Africatown,³ on which Diouf relies and corrects. The author draws

² Diouf reviews the debates surrounding the quantity of African slaves illegally brought to North America after 1808 in an appendix. The mid-century slave trade was driven in part by demand from plantation owners in Cuba. For further discussion, see Karen Fisher Younger, “Liberia and the Last Slave Ships,” *Civil War History* 54, No. 4 (2008), pp. 424-42; and Joseph C. Miller, “Introduction: Atlantic Ambiguities of British and American Abolition,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Series, 66, No. 4 (2009), pp. 677-704.

³ Hurston, an Alabama native and student of Franz Boas, first wrote about Africatown in a 1927 article based on Emma Langdon Roche’s 1914 book *Historic Sketches of the Old South*. Hurston returned to conduct research in Africatown in 1928. The last draft of her manuscript, titled *Barracoon*, was completed in 1931. See Genevieve

on her background in African Diaspora scholarship,⁴ and employs a variety of original sources, including interviews, publications of the era, and archival records.

Initial chapters address the context of West African community, the mid-century slave trade, and the capture and passage of the deportees. Their origins and lives--primarily Yoruba, Muslim and non-Muslim, farmers and fishermen, mostly town people, equally divided between men, women, boys, and girls--is densely evoked. Plantation and mill-owners Timothy and James Meaher--brothers and Yankee transplants who commissioned the *Clotilda* and instigated the smuggling venture⁵--expected their actions to go unpunished, as in 1858 when the slaver *Wanderer* openly landed 170 slaves in Georgia.⁶ The Meahers retained ownership of the largest number of *Clotilda* Africans, while at least seventy others were sold to work in fields and on steamboats.

Chapters on slavery and freedom highlight differences between the Africans and American-born slaves. Diouf argues that social and cultural practices set them apart, and reinforced unity among the shipmates. After the Civil War the shipmates in the Mobile area reunited, leaving former owners to "go back to their own family." (p. 127) Too poor to return to Africa, the men instead found wage labor in Mobile, the women turned to produce farming--"a third life" after Africa and slavery (p. 131).

The shipmates came to formalize their community following tradition, the one nobleman among them became leader, and two older men were appointed judges. In 1870 and 1872, they purchased several remote acres near Mobile with funds pooled by the community. The deeds recorded the names of husbands and wives separately, indicating that African women "were equal partners in the purchase" (p. 154). Following Yoruba tradition of unclaimed land, parcels were apportioned to each family, and house building respected cooperative custom. Deliberately separate from surrounding society, and cut off from elders or any immigration from Africa, Africatown became "an act of self-segregating," an exercise in "self-affirmation that reflected its founders' attachment to their cultures and modes of living" (p. 157).

The maturing Africatown remained separate, though in 1868 after the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment several Africatown residents became citizens, and many became Baptists. Diouf suggests that this was partially a result of segregation and the depopulation of Mobile proper by the black community, but also credits passive and active accommodations to

Sexton, "The Last Witness: Testimony and Desire in Zora Neale Hurston's "Barracoon", *Discourse*, 25, Nos. 1 & 2, (2003), pp. 189-210. <http://muse.jhu.edu.flagship.luc.edu/journals/discourse/v025/25.1sexton.html>.

⁴ Diouf is also the author of *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*, (New York: New York University Press, 1998); and is the editor of *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003).

⁵ The Meaher family archives were not made available: "The Meaher family, still rich and powerful, has interests in banking, law, and real estate," while "[t]he family has been quite discreet about the brothers' story." Diouf, 237. Meaher State Park, in the Mobile Bay wetlands, includes 1,327 acres of land donated by the family. It is adjacent to Spanish Fort, which fell to union forces on April 8, 1865, one day before Lee's surrender at Appomattox.

⁶ Younger, "Liberia and the Last Slave Ships," p. 432. A sympathetic Southern judiciary refused to convict those backing the *Wanderer* venture. The ship was mentioned in an 1860 report to Congress from President James Buchanan regarding U.S. efforts to halt the illegal slave trade. Prior to the publication of *Dreams of Africa*, the *Wanderer* was considered the last known slaver brought to North America.

societal pressures. A church was followed by an elementary school and, as Jim Crow gathered steam, a high school. The town leader died in 1902, and by 1912 only nine shipmates remained alive. By the 1920s, the original organizing structure had withered. The last remaining *Clotilda* African died in 1935.

The book is an excellent source for advanced undergraduates and beyond, as Diouf is adept at locating Africatown's development in relation to the dissolution of Reconstruction and the re-segregation of the South. Lack of evidence makes it difficult for her to distinguish between differing African traditions that may have been part of the shipmates' identities. Diouf instead points to a more general notion of African "culture" that proves frustrating in its lack of specificity but is nevertheless effective in distinguishing Africatown ways of life from African American and White postbellum society.

Another unanswered problem is the deportees' strong desire to retain and re-impose tradition. The reader is left to assume that the lack of interconnection with slave society preserved portions of their pre-capture identities. But Diouf does not consider why other options were not followed, such as integrating more closely with African American communities. Indeed, if the *Clotilda* shipmates successfully maintained their own subculture, Diouf's study raises the question of how to comprehend other nineteenth century African Diaspora communities.

Eric A. Schuster, *Harry S. Truman Chicago City College*

Salah M. Hassan and Carina E. Ray (eds). *Darfur and the Crisis of Governance in Sudan: A Critical Reader*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009.

In 2009, with the generous support of the Netherlands' Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, Cornell University Press published Salah M. Hassan and Carina E. Ray's comprehensive anthology entitled *Darfur and the Crisis of Governance in Sudan: A Critical Reader*. The 528-page volume includes a visual essay by photographer Issam A. Abdel Hafiez, a well-crafted introduction by Hassan and Ray, five thematic sections by twenty scholars and activists, and appendices with a timeline and significant primary documents and secondary sources. What is particularly notable about this compendium is that the entries are presented by Sudanese and other continental African scholars who attended the Darfur conference in Addis Ababa in February 2008 (which was hosted by President Andreas Eshete of Addis Ababa University and Director of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies Elizabeth Wolde Giorgis). As much as has been written about the Darfur conflict, the *Reader* critiques what has already been discussed in many national and international circles and provides a commentary on the myths, controversies, and legacies.

The audience for this volume can vary widely, because as a whole or in part, graduates or undergraduates in multiple disciplines (history, sociology, environmental studies, economics, and political science) can use it as a text. Moreover, the *Reader* ought to be a staple for anyone, be it activist, policy maker, or scholar interested in this conflict(s) that has received so much attention. A careful reading by the public at large will sharpen the focus on the deeper, more protracted problems and will hopefully discourage Darfur reportage from sensationalizing

often misappropriated targets, such as Arab versus African identities and Christian versus Muslim dogma, and also misunderstood issues, such as ethnic versus so-called “tribal” histories, and war crimes versus genocide distinctions. Although individual articles could be mentioned for special recognition of key historical and political significance, substantive evidentiary reporting, and powerful social criticism, the more important point is that this volume encompasses a range of viewpoints. Although, all conclude that Darfur is indicative of a larger crisis of governance, that the inequities around the center and margin nexus have historical precedents, and that more equitable policies sanctioned by the state must be found. Among the diverse opinions, significance also lays in the overall recognition of the ongoing power of Sudanese civil society.

Of particular interest to an audience wanting to know more about the geographical and historical background of Sudan and Darfur are the details that sections one and two of the text provide about the origin and evolution of the Darfur conflict (s) and its representations. The essays are written by highly capable writers: Khalid, El-Battahani, Yongo-Bure, El-Tom, Ali-Dinar, de Waal, Mamdani and Hassan. Importantly, to impress upon readers the variety in analyses, Carina E. Ray investigates over 1500 articles between 2004 and 2007 published in the English-language African press and points out the differences in reporting “within and between Africa” and Europe and the US. In the following sections, three through five, that address violence based on gender orientation, legal prosecutorial crimes, and civil society’s power, the Darfur conflict takes on a larger scale than what can be documented and interpreted by historical, geopolitical, and military perspectives. These latter sections enlarge the scope of Darfur into more social, environmental, and economic aspects of the conflict and describe the cost for residents, who have been maimed: by sexual violence, by legal misrepresentation, by ethnic polarization, and by construction of false labels. Amidst the scholarly attention to theoretical arguments and political and historical issues, the activism by El Tom, Sharif Harir, Manzoul Assal and Eltigani Seisi M Ateem (p. 156), the brief migration biography of Cecilia Joseph Wani (pp. 207-08), and the rape report of a Disa woman refugee (234) testify to the tenacity of individuals for whom more humane resolutions in Darfur must be possible.

Perhaps it is an affinity for African artists, who have so long remained unnamed or that the “pornography of violence” or “miserablism” is so easily accessed, that my criticism of the photographs by Sudanese photographer Issam A. Abdel Hafiez must be voiced. Not to detract from his “commitment to bringing a human face to the conflict by showing Darfurians in the full complexity of their lives” (p. 25), it is noteworthy to consider the significance of his visual images if he had named individuals in his photographs. For as all the *Reader’s* authors who are respected scholars and activists are identified by name, the individuals behind the emotion-laden faces in the photographs, if named, could establish a better sense of scale, local life, and personal connection. The photographs do tell their own story, a story that divides the text up into its five sections, but also unifies what the audience reads and sees. The photo essays also provide a visualization of boundaries that divide individuals and demand of viewers that their gaze upon their neighbor(s) receive more honest, caring attention and action.

To conclude, several other criticisms deserve mentioning. First, only two maps in the text are to be found: one on page two and the other on page 74, which lacks quality. Second, the page numbers are difficult to find, as they are placed on the inside of each page and are printed

in very small type. Beyond these minor issues, this critical *Reader* is a necessary addition to any library that purports to have an international audience and any sizeable collection of significant international documents. Finally, it is important to mention that the appendices in part two include a chronology of key events, position papers, parts of *The Black Book*, resolutions by the Security Council and United Nations, and the Warrant of Arrest against Omar Hassan Ahmad Al Bashir. A glossary, comprehensive and also selective bibliography, notes on the contributors, and an index round out this volume.

Sonja R. Darlington, *Beloit College*

Allula Pankhurst and Francois Piguet (eds). *Moving People in Ethiopia: Development, Displacement, and the State.* Rochester, NY: James Currey, 2009.

Among one of the first texts to focus on “all the major types of population displacement and resettlement” for an entire country, as Michael Cernea rightly points out in the preface, *Moving People in Ethiopia* is a seminal research effort on this topic worldwide. By scrutinizing Ethiopia’s history in which over 1.2 million people have been displaced in the last 30-35 years in two major state population transfers, the eighteen authors present theoretical arguments, empirical findings, and historical evidence that development-induced displacements require more critical attention to policy considerations and the rights of displacees. Rather than compartmentalize their research by engaging in the divide amidst conflict, disaster and development studies, the unitary approach used to analyze forced displacements allows the case of Ethiopia to be seen as a resource for identifying different forms of displacement--their similarities, differences, gray zones, and morphs. Furthermore, by acknowledging the increasingly significant social impact of displacements, the authors in this volume join the growing international debate on the unacceptable practice of impoverishing people and creating new poverty while striving for development. A major aim of this text is to examine the complex factors contributing to impoverishment risks and to make governments accountable for their role in displacements, which require reform in organizing, financing, and executing resettlement processes. Audiences from policy makers, university graduate and undergraduate students, to interested parties at the regional, national, and international level will find this volume mandatory reading, due to its breadth of issues on forced displacement, in-depth examples of different types of resettlement projects, and theoretical and practical suggestions for future displacement and resettlement attempts for the sake of so-called “development.”

Moving People in Ethiopia is separated into six parts. Editors Alula Pankhurst and Francois Piguet provide an overview and contextualization of the history and geography of Ethiopian pastoralists, resettlers, and displacees, and a conclusion suggesting tentatively that migration for the sake of development, while guarding people’s rights and protecting the environment, can be accomplished. In Part II David Thurton and Chris De Wet investigate the theoretical and international perspectives that support a unitary study of forced displacement and reasons why resettlement projects falter.

Thurton addresses serious concerns regarding refugees and forced resettlers, the latter constituting a group who are forced to move for the sake of a nation's interest in development and social control, as in the cases of Tanzania, Ethiopia, and South Africa. Among the objectives of restoring income-generation by resettlers and promoting asylum in foreign countries, Thurton argues that prevention, containment and repatriation ought not overshadow, as it has since the 1980s, the focus on the reconstruction of refugee livelihoods in asylum and the improvement of the human condition. De Wet builds upon the theoretical frame by arguing that resettlement goes awry because an Inadequate Inputs approach taken by the World Bank, in its initiatives and policies, is too optimistic and does not account adequately for complications. De Wet's Inherent Complexity approach asks a series of provoking questions: what are the main characteristics of involuntary resettlement, why are resettlement projects problematic institutional projects, what aspects of the resettlement process are not amenable to rational planning and procedures, and what are the ethical consequences of resettlement strategies.

Following the theoretical framework ensues a well-organized and well-crafted exploration of the practice of development-induced displacements in Part III. Kassahun Kebede begins the case studies with an analysis of Gilgel Gibe Hydro-electric Dam, an Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (ERPFD) government project, which was initially conceived in the Imperial Period. The Gilgel Gibe project is an example of fifty years of various resettlement activities resulting in many economic and social problems, as identified by Cernea's Impoverished Risks and Reconstruction (IRR) framework. The next chapter by Getachew Kassa and Ayalew Gebre addresses the obvious need for policies that consider resource tenure for pastoralists. Their discussion of the Karrayu and the Metehara Sugar Estate and the Afar and the Amibara irrigation agriculture and settler farm schemes illustrate the results when unlawful seizure of land occurs. Melesse Getu examines the issues faced by the Tsamako who, situated in the Rift Valley in the most southern end of Ethiopia in a semi-arid lowland for more than 350 years, are displaced by development and investment policies that favor large scale agribusiness, such as the Birale Agricultural Development Private Limited Company owned by the current government. His examination of the off-farm effects documents the corrosive aspects: small-scale irrigated and flood-retreat cultivation is disbanded; honey production declines due to pesticides; local communities become powerless to limit access to their land and to outsiders felling their trees; more people exploit marginal lands; and violence increases in the Wayto Valley, due to competition for depleting resources. Urban development and the displacement of rural communities near Addis Ababa are the topics of Feleke Tadele's chapter. His fieldwork was conducted at Yeka Taffo Peasant Association, where a private national company cleared the land and removed 172 households from their property, which in turn created unemployment, food insecurity, homelessness, and lack of sustainable livelihoods.

Part IV is organized around state-organized resettlement projects. In chapters by Gebre Yntiso and Wold-Selassie Abbute the focus is on the failures of the Pawe resettlement in the Beles Valley in the Metekel, because of inadequate planning and unpreparedness of the hosts in the region and not taking into account the social disintegration occurs. Pankhurst concludes this resettlement discussion by drawing comparisons between the 2003 and 2007 resettlements and by providing an alternative model for future resettlements, which promotes healthier

linkages for migratory groups between the highlands and lowlands, while also addressing the need for attention to environmental issues and to a joint approach that keeps both the host and settler priorities at the forefront. Finally, Part V is another set of case studies. Lewis Aptekar and Bhailu Abebe consider Eritrean refugees of Ethiopian origin who were traumatized by their displacement and were able to adjust with the help of mental health professionals and the support of their spiritual traditions. Kassahun Berhanu investigates the refugees who returned from the Sudan to the Tigray lowlands. Behailu Abebe elaborates the issues of the internal displaces from Eritrean/Ethiopian war at the border of Zalanbesa by following the stories of individuals in the area. Yisak Tafere describes the gender challenges in Addis Ababa cooperatives from the perspective of young men and women who became adult civilians. In all, the practices described by the specifics in the numerous case studies provided in this text reveal how difficult the illusive goal of resettlement becomes in forced displacements.

Sonja R. Darlington, *Beloit College*

Jamie Monson. *Africa's Freedom Railway: How a Chinese Development Project Changed Lives and Livelihoods in Tanzania*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.

Jamie Monson's latest book entitled, *Africa's Freedom Railway*, offers an exciting and thoroughly researched historical view into the origins of modern-day Chinese foreign policy in Africa. Since the People's Republic of China first began its aid projects on the continent, critics have been quick to raise the alarm. During the Cold War, the condemnation was based on the West's fear of China promoting communism under the auspices of foreign aid. Today the censure relates to China's disregard for human rights as it scrambles to acquire access to Africa's resources. After the end of the Cold War and the failure of communism to improve African livelihoods, however, the ideological criticism is outdated or inept at best. In light of this, a growing number of scholars and writers praise China's aid efforts on the continent, including Jamie Monson.

Monson, the former president of the Tanzanian Studies Association, documents the history of the Chinese financed trans-African railway, the Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA), which runs from Dar es Salaam to Kapiri Mposhi. The thesis of the book, as the subtitle states, is to shed light on how this railway has benefitted Tanzanians. Additionally, the author "takes on the challenge of writing about contemporary East Africa in historical perspective," (p. 11). *Africa's Freedom Railway* consists of seven chapters, starting with an overview and three subsequent chapters subsumed within part one. The second part contains the last three chapters, including the conclusion, which is followed by the appendix.

Monson's study draws on a wealth of sources, both oral and written. The author conducted numerous interviews with TAZARA employees and construction workers, both Chinese and Tanzanian alike. She also relies on speeches given by African and Chinese national leaders and government officials to document the varying official opinions and visions of the railway. Monson makes great use of newspaper and magazine articles to help capture and portray Western criticisms and fears of Chinese aid intervention. Interestingly, Monson makes productive use of photographs and paintings to reveal how different national governments

perceived the potential of TAZARA and uses them to illustrate how the railway failed to live up to its supporters' grand vision.

Chapters two through four examine the purpose of TAZARA, its planning and construction, and life along the railway. In chapter two, Monson discusses the origins of the African leaders' aspiration to build the train, which explores the Sino-African goal to achieve economic independence from the former colonial regimes and from Rhodesia, South Africa, and the Portuguese colonies. Monson highlights the themes of nationalism, self-reliance, Pan-Africanism, and development espoused by Sino-African leaders, which made Western critics anxious about the prospects of China's role and ambitions in Africa. One of the most interesting aspects of the book is the omni-present theme of how the construction, use, and operations of the TAZARA line mirrored that of colonial administrations, despite TAZARA being an anti-colonial project. More specifically, African leaders asserted that the train would bring development based on the exportation of raw materials, an idea previously promoted by colonial administrations.

Chapter three delves into the construction of the railway and examines the theme of envisioned "solidarity" between Chinese and African workers plus how the Tanzanians were supposed to learn valuable skills as well as "the theme of hard work" (p. 37) from the Chinese. The book accurately describes the segregation of Chinese and Africans in their work and social environment. In fact, there was not much of an effort made to increase interactions between the Chinese and Africans from either government. The author mentions this lack of integration, but does not examine why these divisions might exist outside of barriers formed by language and culture, as well as why they still persist today in many Chinese development projects in Africa.⁷ With respect to the Chinese "hard work" ethic the Africans were supposed to adopt, the colonial vs. subject theme is reintroduced by revealing the paternalistic and condescending nature of the project, something Monson fails to engage critically.

Chapter four explores how resettlement alongside the railway was both forced and voluntary; regardless, TAZARA became a part of the community and livelihoods of rural settlers. Monson reveals how the train was transformed into a national symbol due, in large measure, to the Tanzanian dependence on and protection of it. The author's research implies that Tanzanians viewed TAZARA as their own because it was not just another railway inherited from the colonial administrations but something built by and for Africans. What makes this sense of ownership important, as Monson points out, is that when TAZARA's operational capacity was being diminished, Tanzanians demanded that their train serve their respective community's needs.

Part two of the book examines how the passenger service or "Ordinary Train" as Monson labels it, has changed the lives and landscape of Tanzania. In chapter five, the author offers a compelling explanation of how the train transported goods and people between rural villages and therefore stimulated the development of rural Tanzania by opening new markets and

¹ See Serge Michel, Michel Beuret, and Paolo Woods. *China Safari: On the Trail of Beijing's Expansion in Africa*. New York: Nation Books, 2009.

forcing the resettlement of Tanzanians to the scarcely populated west. She points out that these relocations echo a similar colonial strategy, which advocated people living in villages for the purpose of development and a supply of labor. Chapter six examines how the anticipated vision of rural development and industrialization never materialized. Monson explains how the grand industrialization plans and visions of rural economic growth never came to pass. Nonetheless, the overwhelming sentiments of villagers today are that the train has been a blessing. She makes an important point of highlighting the contradictory nature of the train's existence with development, in that although the train brought economic opportunities to the TAZARA corridor, it also brought forced resettlement, the deterioration of local customs and traditions, and overdependence on the train. So when the "freedom railway" came into town to supposedly liberate the people of Tanzania and Zambia from their nations' economic dependence on Rhodesia and South Africa, it actually brought along resettlement plans similar to those implemented by these exclusionary regimes. The book concludes with a chapter summarizing the main themes of the book including development and ideology, and hypothesizing the relationship China hopes to solidify with Africa.

Africa's Freedom Railway is an insightful and well-informed book that bares testament to the experience of those Tanzanians and Chinese who worked on TAZARA railway as well as those whose lives have benefitted from its presence. By documenting the experience of those people affected by TAZARA, Monson effectively illustrates how the railway benefitted the majority of Tanzanians. Similarly, the book's wealth of sources enables Monson to write about contemporary Tanzania in a historical context, as TAZARA has shaped the present.

Undoubtedly, what gives the book the most credibility is the abundance of Monson's extensive interviews and research in both Tanzania and China. However, for the Pan-African project that TAZARA is, the inclusion of a more prominent Zambian perspective would be valuable. Monson overlooks the paternalistic nature with which Africans were treated by the Chinese and the segregation between the two groups. Considering that their respective leaders were espousing ideas of solidarity, it is difficult to negate the teacher vs. subject relationship that the project perpetuated then and which continues today. Monson sells her research short by highlighting these issues but failing to critique or question them.

Monson's book should be of great value to any student or scholar interested in learning more about China's foreign policy in Africa. Those interested in a case study of a large infrastructure project in Africa might also find this work enlightening. Monson's *Africa's Freedom Railway* serves as a great reminder that China's foreign policy in Africa is not and does not strictly revolve around the discussion of extracting resources and supporting disreputable regimes, but can also be one of mutual benefit and friendship.

Nicholas T. Smith, *University of California*

Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi and Tuzyline Jita Allan (eds). *Twelve Best Books by African Women: Critical Readings*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009.

The early generation of African literary discourse was dominated by male authors and their critique of the colonial and postcolonial state. Few devoted attention to issues surrounding gender. In response, a new voice emerged as female writers began to express their own concerns within the larger discourse. In *Twelve Best Books By African Women: Critical Readings*, twelve female African literary scholars provide critiques of the twelve best literary works by African women writers. The selection of these twelve books come from a larger list compiled for "Africa's Best 100 Books of the Twentieth Century," following the Zimbabwe International Book Festival. This book has two main goals that are clearly stated and accomplished. The editors, Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi and Tuzyline Jita Allan, aim to increase interest in literature by African women writers (p.12). In addition, the book seeks to increase the scholarship devoted to building a greater understanding of African women literature.

The editors state that "[t]his fine literature forms the core of the female literary canon which includes other books by these same women writers and many others that did not make the '100 best' list" (p. 5). The twelve best literary works include the following: Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*; Assia Djebar's *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*; Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*; Nadine Gordimer's *Burger's Daughter*; Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*; Yvonne Vera's *Butterfly Burning*; Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*; Aminata Sow Fall's *The Beggar's Strike*; Mariama Ba's *So Long A Letter*; Tsitsi Dangaremba's *Nervous Conditions*; Sindiwe Magona's *Living, Loving, and Lying Awake at Night*; and Ken Bugul's *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*.

Twelve Best Books presents well crafted analyses of the twelve literary works that challenge the reader to look more closely at particular themes in them. The book is divided into three sections: reconfiguration, resistance, and regeneration. This review will highlight essays from each section that draw on some prevalent themes in African literature and more specifically the literary work of African women, such as tradition versus modernity, domination, and definitions of womanhood.

"Reconfiguration: Rewriting the Script" speaks to the "early, internal migrations, fueled by wars and economic deprivations, across borders, which have remained porous (p. 3)." In "Modernity, Gender, and Agency in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*," Nana Wilson-Tagoe finds fault with the traditional definition of modernity typically used in analyses of the play. She suggests that scholars should instead view the culture clash and the way it "ultimately shaped the character of modernity for both Africa and Europe" (p. 18). Tagoe-Wilson also provides a reading of the play that explored the ways in which an analysis of the relationship between the husband and wife in the play also represents tensions in "the larger community" (p. 19). She examines gender as a prism into other aspects of society relations, for example, the political and social. Throughout, her analysis takes further the scholarship on Ata-Aidoo's work by other African literature scholars.

Waves of Resistance: The Casualties of Difference discusses literary works that depict women's struggle against colonialism and its aftermath. Amira Nowaira explores the voice of the marginalized woman in "Nawaal el Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* Within the Context of

Arab Feminist Discourse." Nowaira posits El Saadawi's novel in relation to the work of early feminist writing that focused on the plight of upper-middle class women (p. 60). *Woman at Point Zero* brings to the forefront the voice of women on the periphery of Arab feminist discourse. In addition, El Saadawi tells the story of a prostitute, a topic rarely addressed since Arab feminists saw acknowledging such topics as undermining their agenda, "an emphasis on negative aspects was probably deemed inappropriate and unhelpful to their cause" (p. 61). Her novel thus challenges the already established notions and ideas put in place and held up by earlier women writers in Egypt.

Regeneration: Labor Pains and Tentative Steps Toward Independence represents women's efforts to move forward despite the challenges of the past. Mugambi's Reading Masculinities in a Feminist Text, asks two main critical questions in her analysis of Tsitsi Dangaremba's *Nervous Conditions*; how is masculinity performed?; and how is masculinity constructed? Mugambi acknowledges that there is a range of masculinities presented in the novel, offering a diverse set of understandings of masculinity within a particular space and time. To Mugambi, the text offers more than the typical "male/female dichotomy that contributes to gender polarization" (p. 202). Mugambi argues that both masculinity and femininity are constructed in relation to each other. *The essay* contributes not only to literary studies but also addresses a common critique of women and gender studies, where the focus is most often on women but rarely is masculinity examined. Here, Mugambi offers a fresh perspective in reading the characters of *Nervous Conditions*.

The well selected categories offer an even deeper understanding of the twelve books, but at the same time one wonders if the books could have even been placed in other sections. Many literary enthusiasts of African literature may gripe about the selection of books. This is a limitation the book's editors acknowledge in the introduction. *Twelve Best Books by African Women* accomplishes its goal in successfully contributing to the body of scholarship. In addition, it remains true to its second goal of creating interest in the books listed that may be unfamiliar to some readers. It is also enhanced by the editors' candor about the process associated with the book's creation. Ogunyemi describes the selection of the books along with the selection of African women scholars who were responsible for completing critical readings of the texts.

This is an important work for those interested in gender studies and literature, specifically those who wish to learn more about African women's representation of themselves and their realities. As a student of African literature, each essay was extremely thought-provoking and provided additional insight into the books I had previously read. The book also piqued my interest in books that I have not had the opportunity to read. *Twelve Best Books By African Women: Critical Readings* is a celebration of African women writers whose "...revisionary history and storytelling demonstrate that women have always actively participated as citizens, daughters, sisters, wives, other mothers, and mothers in the reproduction and evolution of the self, family, community, and nation" (p.4).

Shanique S. Streete, *University of California*

Chris Coulter. *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers: Women's Lives through War and Peace in Sierra Leone.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009.

The story of Aminata embodies the experiences of many young women who survived living among the RUF rebels during Sierra Leone's civil war (1991-2002). As a bush wife, she had been abducted from her village as a teenager, forced to perform domestic duties, repeatedly raped, impregnated, and then left to navigate tenuous post-conflict social relations when she returned home. Relying largely on interviews conducted with women like Aminata, Chris Coulter shows how women were both object and agent, even simultaneously. This book makes a significant, qualitative contribution to our understanding of how women's experiences in conflict are often expressed in relation to their social environment and their gendered choices.

Forging a new path in scholarship generally dominated by political scientists, Coulter first offers succinct background on the historical and political factors leading to the outbreak of the civil war. She juxtaposes this background with ethnography of gender relations before the violence began (Chapter 2). She posits that women's exploitation during the war, particularly the sexual violence, highlights dynamics that already existed in peacetime. This is why she views war as a social construction that creates its own social orders; she refutes the claim that war is outside the social world. Sierra Leonean society is decidedly hierarchical, with women generally subordinate to men and dependent on their status as wives and sisters. At the same time, however, diversity is at the core of social relations there. This combination of hierarchy and changing diversity produced a highly fragile social order in Sierra Leone that manifested itself during the fighting.

Chapters 3 and 4 offer a powerful depiction of the lives of women and girls serving in the RUF. Although some said they had joined voluntarily, the majority of girls reported to have been abducted and been offered to rebels as bush wives. The degree of abuse girls suffered depended on the rank of the fighter they had been given to—the lower his rank, the worse their fate. "Bush wife" may be considered a euphemism for sex slave, as the girls often had no choice as to when or who they would "sex." The gendered division of labor in the rebel camps reflected that of peacetime Sierra Leone, with females performing the cooking, cleaning, portering, and childcare duties necessary to support the rebels. However, some women's responsibilities extended beyond the domestic sphere. Some were trained to use firearms and fought on the front lines to the same degree as their male counterparts. Overall, respondents in Coulter's interviews expressed that their time with rebels was wrought with perpetual fear, regardless of their role in the group.

According to Coulter, while the wartime experiences of RUF women and girls were characterized by fear, their post-conflict lives were of shame. This shame of having been a part of atrocities was one of several reasons that females were largely absent from rehabilitation programs. Many women were reluctant to publicly identify themselves as former rebels to access rehabilitation benefits due to the social stigma attached to such an identity (as well as fear of being legally charged with crimes). Such identification would have required the women to recount their traumas, which to them meant reproducing the hurt and shame derived from their actions. This public identity as "rebel" was incompatible with Sierra Leonean expectations

of feminine behavior, thus making these women less than women do in the eyes of their communities.

The final chapters of the book narrate the difficulties ex-RUF women faced in securing an income and becoming a part of families post-conflict. Many of these women and girls returned from war with “rebel babies” and no education. Coulter provides an illuminating description of the numerous educational and vocational training programs implemented for these women, programs that were limited in scope and created almost haphazardly. This section provides lessons to all humanitarian workers who aim to create post-conflict education programs. It seems that although these programs did not substantively help most women support themselves, the training often had a psychosocial function in that they acted as a form of trauma healing. Women reported feeling an increased sense of confidence and validation from their families because of their new skills. Surprisingly, the “Girlfriend Business,” which was various forms of prostitution, did not entail the shame one might expect, since families of ex-RUF women were simply grateful for the income. Perhaps the most poignant part of the book, Coulter sensitively portrays the ways in which these women struggle for acceptance by their families and seek husbands. In a society in which unmarried women “don’t exist,” the task of rebuilding their lives post-conflicts rests on their families’ approval of their bush husbands or their good fortune in finding a man who will not view them as “damaged goods.” Their acceptance by husbands, families, and communities was problematized by perceptions of their masculinity and the danger they posed to community members.

There is a fine balance between depicting victimization and robbing women of their agency. The author maintains this equilibrium, achieving her task of comprehensively describing the distinctive experiences of Sierra Leonean women who survived life with rebels. Coulter is the first analyst of the civil war able to identify fully the false binaries (war/peace, masculine/feminine, victim/agent, etc.) that have characterized so much of the scholarship on African civil wars. This is not a recommended read for those who are well-versed on the topic of non-traditional combatants, however, because it does not provide many new details of the war that cannot be found in policy reports. Neither does it create an analytical framework through which to study other conflicts. Ultimately, its greatest contribution is that it is a cohesive study covering all aspects of female service in the RUF from an anthropological perspective, giving voice to the very actors best suited to narrate their experiences.

Laine Strutton, *New York University*

Steven Nelson. *From Cameroon to Paris: Mousgoum Architecture In and Out of Africa*. Chicago, Illinois: Chicago University Press, 2007.

This book is based on fieldwork in Cameroon and Japan. Nelson uses an interdisciplinary approach combining written and oral sources. Drawing on archival research in Africa, the USA and Europe, Nelson explores how Teleuk (domed house, beehive shaped structure) has been understood by various groups—contemporary tourists, Cameroon’s government, and, most importantly, today’s Mousgoum people of northern Cameroon and Chad. He engages in

Internationally-minded and sophisticated arguments, skillfully arranged, and brilliantly explained. Nelson's willingness to interrogate notions of civilized and uncivilized is refreshing. Such interrogation is significant in helping readers understand dynamics of power and inequality.

In four well researched and richly illustrated chapters, Nelson sets a clear agenda and adheres to it, thus accomplishing his stated goals brilliantly. Using Teleuk as a three-dimensional symbol of Mousgoum culture, Nelson convincingly demonstrates how (teleuk) a building's meaning has the capacity to change over time and in different places. In doing so he moves effortlessly in and out of Africa to showcase a changing Mousgoum culture, and to explore how both African and Western peoples use the built environment to advance their needs and desires. Indeed, as Nelson points out, "this book teases out the intricate links between built environment and other forms of communications," saying much in this process about "the relationship of architecture to different groups of people," (p. 9).

The book is organized into four chapters. Chapter one, "Performing Architecture" explores "historic Mousgoum architecture" and the role of the teleuk in the larger family homestead, combining form and functionality. It serves as a foundation for understanding the great changes during the twentieth century in meaning. Chapter two, "Parabolic Paradoxes," focuses on Mousgoum teleuk encounters with European travelers (Barth, Macleod, Gide, Allegret), and how for a brief moment such encounters forced these travelers, some of them experts like Barth with "extensive travel experience and understanding of architecture as being one of the paramount tools for defining cultural advancement" to question notions of "the primitive" and "the civilized". To quote Gide on Mousgoum teleuk, "A beauty so perfect, so accomplished, that it is almost natural," (p. 82).

Chapter three, "A Pineapple in Paris," investigates the appropriation of the Mousgoum teleuk for the French Equatorial Africa Pavilion at the 1931 International Colonial Exposition in Paris, France. It demonstrates through architecture the meeting of the primitive and the modern, showing how architecture as representation of the civilizing mission became an integral part of the construction of France's imperial identity.

Chapter four, "Present Tense" takes the reader back to Cameroon, where contemporary Mousgoum teleukakay and wall murals are central. We hear Mousgoum voices and get glimpses of struggles as this examination and analysis demonstrate the ways in which wall murals, objects and structures address the importance of Mousgoum agency, women's creativity and ingenuity. Indigenous values, Western perception and tourism, and religious conversion come together to create synthetic narratives that have been projected on to the teleuk by Mousgoum people, Westerners, and Cameroonian government officials alike. The past as articulated by the Mousgoum becomes a set of codified texts and imagery read as ancestral symbol and contemporary identity (p. 148). "The teleuk is a vehicule for connecting past and present; as such, it is imbued by the Mousgoum with the qualities--progeniture, protection, etc.--that were the same as those historically connected to the family homestead," (p.174).

An added strength of Nelson's book lies in the treatment of the underlying theme of gender as a category of analysis that runs through the book. Specifically in the loaded sub section titled "Telling Herstories? -- Gender" Nelson incorporates an insightful analysis of the changing role

of women, thus bringing to the forefront of the discourse, the age-old struggle between genders. For example, among the Mousgoum people, “men articulate values in three dimensions; women articulate them in two,” (p.178). Gender roles are clear in Mousgoum country, and have always been clear: men largely, have built homes while women have covered (with mud, etc.) and decorated them non-representationally. The coming of exterior mural painting brought with it a nuanced change in Mousgoum women’s roles as artists. On painting the outsides of homes, many artists see this new change as “a process of evolution in house decoration,” obviously part of women’s duties. As Nelson puts it, “understanding this change in artistic practice as a complex process that weaves together the threads of the past and the present as well as an individual and the community, I would like to turn to the mural of Mme. Daniel Mainiazanga, exploring what such a change means with respect to gender relations and the primacy of the seemingly all-pervasive male voice among the Mousgoum,” (p. 178). Such exterior mural paintings beg an examination of the changes in the role of the artist within existing social constructions. I could not be happier, and I know my fellow feminists and womanists will be also!

This book will appeal to scholars and students of African Art and Architectural History. By emphasizing the impact of African architecture and clearly showing Western interactions with Africa over time, the potential audience becomes global. Nelson considers--and conquers one of the key moments of African architecture: Mousgoum Teleuk in Northern Cameroon. This is a welcome addition to the growing literature on African architecture, and I highly recommend it. An intellectual *tour de force* journey through colonial and contemporary architectural landscape, *From Cameroon to Paris* should have a major impact on how we explore meaning making through African architecture and art. It is most valuable for its insightful arguments and wide-ranging citations. It is also a fascinating and engaging book with interesting images capable of captivating a general public interested in Western interactions with Africa as well as a non-specialized audience.

Bridget A. Teboh, *University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth*

Frank M. Chipasula (ed.). *Bending the Bow: an anthology of African love poetry*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009.

It would seem scholarly interest in love as depicted in African imaginative projections has lately begun to witness sudden resurgence. Indeed, the idea that love is a frivolous affair needing little scholarly attention is perhaps beginning to wane. Frank Chipasula’s latest edited volume of love poems, *Bending the Bow: An Anthology of African Poetry*, comes after Ama’s Ata Aidoo’s edited volume of short stories on love, *African Love Stories* (2006). As Chipasula argues in his illuminating and poignant, if polemical introduction, preoccupation with “overtly political themes and texts” has often led to the diminution of interest in or the lack of acknowledgment of the corpus of Africa’s rich love poetry (p. 1). His edited collection therefore, fulfills a number of objectives, not the least among them being to revalue love poetry and revive interest in it, or

as he puts it “reclaiming and reinstating into African literary discourse a poetic genre that is indigenous to Africa,”(p.1).

This text is a comprehensive anthology bringing together in one volume about 180 love poems, encompassing various aspects of love and composed in different cultural surroundings in different places in Africa over the last three thousand years. The anthology demonstrates both evidence of extensive and patient research, especially from secondary sources. The collected verses exhibit tremendous variety and diversity in form and thematic emphases, and range from poems by anonymous Egyptians to love songs from different African communities, to contemporary and modern love poems. In love poems and songs by anonymous and known composers, both male and female personae express their love sentiments, extolling love, lamenting, beseeching, cursing, fantasizing, despairing, hoping, avowing, disavowing. Unlike Aidoo’s *African Love Stories*, which is exclusively the product of female writers, Chipasula’s text is nearly equally balanced between male and female contributors. Therefore, although the vastness of the continent would make any attempt at coming up with a truly representative anthology futile, Chipasula succeeds in at least making the tacit point that the creation of love poems is neither the exclusive gift of men nor women as both genders fully partake of it. The same would not be said of Aidoo’s collection of love stories that regrettably leaves out men writers.

Nonetheless, it bears stating that Chipasula is less bothered by the question of gender representation than the elision of love in considerations of Africanness. In his introduction (a highly significant aspect of the text which demands commentary), he takes particular exception to both Africanist and Western scholars who characterize Africa and its people as incapable of love. Identifying the connection between poetic expression of love and the sense of humanity, Chipasula argues that anonymous Egyptian composers inaugurated love poetry, as we know it today, thereby affirming their humanity. Yet, he laments, that point has gone largely unacknowledged by those who regard Africans as too backward to understand, express, or enjoy love. With the diverse geographical and historical dimensions and diversity of the poems he has collected, Chipasula intends to counter efforts to deny Africa and Africans both love and love poetry. Moreover, his optimism in the power of love poems to transform Africa’s turbulent political reality is quite telling. He writes:

“Historically, African oral poets as mediators in conflicts have sung their strife-torn societies... Legendary Somali poets mediated in clan conflicts, cooling flaming hearts with their songs, no matter how irreconcilable the differences appeared to be between warring clans. Are contemporary African poets singing love enough to perform similar peace keeping role?” (pp. 9-10)

Clearly, Chipasula articulates an idealized and romanticized African past where love poetry reigned supreme and dictated terms of existence. This is what prompts him to challenge modern African poets to take on the same task as the Somali poets of old. But if truth be told, this audacious optimism is too unrealistic, overrating the efficacy of the poets of generations gone by in peace making and remaining blind to the fact that in Africa today when the poet sings nobody listens, particularly the political leaders responsible for conflict, unless the poetry is in their praise. For instance, when Abdilatif Abdalla wrote in Jomo Kenyatta’s regime in Kenya he was imprisoned, and so was Jack Mapanje in Kamuzu Banda’s Malawi. For other

poets such as Christopher Okigbo and Ken Saro-Wiwa in Nigeria death was the ultimate price for their poetry and activism.

There is however, yet a different price that the poems in Chipasula's collection pay but about which he says little or nothing. The bulk of the poems save for a few including, David Rubadiri, Gabriel Okara, Lupenga Mphande, and Chipasula's own, were originally composed in languages other than English. These languages range from Arabic to French, from Kipsigi to Kiswahili, from Lang'o to Acholi. The poems have no doubt reached us through translation with its concomitant limitations and challenges. While it is reasonable to acknowledge within the politics and poetics of translation what is gained by translation, we should never lose sight of what is lost as well. Inevitably, these poems have lost some of the authentic nuances, connotations, and musicality of their original languages and cultural contexts. Perhaps, more research and endnotes would have shed light on some of the aspects lost in the translations. How do you, for example, explain the absence of rhyme and meter in the English translations of Muyaka bin Haji or Juma Bhalo's Kiswahili verses or the lack of ideophones from the English renditions of certain songs from any number of African communities?

Yet, evidently, *Bending the Bow* is quite a unique and enthralling cocktail of trans-historical love poems from across Africa. It goes a long way in not only affirming African humanity as expressed in love poems but also proving the heterogeneity of African love and love poetry. This is indeed a welcome addition to the corpus of African literatures in translation capable of quenching as it does our rekindled interest in love.

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Richard Reid. *War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa: The Patterns and Meanings of State-Level Conflict in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: James Currey Publishers, 2007.

War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa combines careful archival research, with a comparative assessment of pre-colonial nineteenth century war in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania. Reid develops well archival material found in the UK, Kampala, and Rome to tell a story of conflict, diplomacy, economy, and culture in the decades when literate Europeans were present, but colonizing powers had yet to assert political control. Reid's analysis is engaging and interesting, although it does assume that the reader has some prior knowledge of nineteenth century east African history. For such readers, familiar figures like Mirambo of Tanzania, Tewodros of Ethiopia, and the Kabaka of Uganda are cast in a new light. This is done by providing a fresh comparative assessment in the context of the broader social, political, and economic issues of the region.

Beyond the new formulation of regional history, though, Reid's book is valuable for how the issues of war and violence are developed, and as such should be of interest to a readership, which goes beyond Africanists. As a historian Reid starts from a particularistic viewpoint of each of the three societies studied. He tells the story of the large armies developed in Ethiopia, the establishment of trade monopolies by the Kabaka in Uganda, and the more diffuse state-building and conquest undertaken by Mirambo in Tanzania. But, because Reid does go one

step further and asks what the contrasting cases mean about the nature of defense, state-building, urbanization, diplomacy, peacemaking, violence, banditry, and military science, the book is of broader utility. His analysis is particularly fascinating, as he compares what he calls the “culture of fear” that dominated Tanzania in the late nineteenth century, and the role that the more stratified Ethiopian system provided for both conducting war, and enforcing peace. Thus, despite the fact that Reid is reliant on the written sources of Europeans, he develops a story rooted in Africa, and not only in Europe.

If there is a weak point in this book, it is in its over-reliance on archival data collected by literate Europeans. Alas, this is a problem shared with most other historians of Africa. And until there is more development of Arabic, Amharic, Tigrayan, and Swahili manuscripts; development of oral data; and the slow analysis of archaeological materials; such biases are likely to remain. But until this happens, *War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa* is likely to remain among the best studies available for understanding the nature of eastern Africa’s politics on the cusp of European intrusions.

The strongest point of *War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa* is that Reid’s comparisons allow him to make conclusions about African warfare that reflect Africa. He does this in a fashion which I think can inform understanding of more general studies of warfare on any continent. I have long thought that African cases need to be developed which will inform understandings of social change in all parts of the world—the works of great comparativists like Karl Polanyi, Max Weber, William McNeill, Daniel Chirot, Steven LeBlanc, and others, are too often weakened through the absence of African material. This book can, I hope, be put to good use by scholars studying the nature of horticultural societies, incipient kingdoms, the evolution of the state, the nature of violence, and other subjects which have long attracted them. Indeed, Reid himself implies that his study could be a basis for introducing a more *longue duree* approach to African history, *a la* Fernand Braudel. I think Reid is right and believe that this book will be a rich source of data for scholars integrating an African perspective into the broader corpus of social history.

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Lewis R. Gordon. *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Lewis R. Gordon’s *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* faces the daunting task of giving an introduction to the whole of Africana thought. By “Africana thought,” he means the philosophical writings of Africans and those part of the African Diaspora, although the bulk of the text is devoted to thought of the African Diaspora. The book begins by giving a background of African thought and some of the reasons why it is not as established as European thought (conquest) and reasons why it is not always properly recognized as African, as in the case of the half Berber St. Augustine (appropriation of thinkers by conquerors). For Gordon, the idea of an Africana philosophy does not really take shape though until the establishment of the slave

trade. It is with this that “the clearly modern moment of Africana philosophy begins . . . with the conquest of the Americas and with the Atlantic slave trade” (p.28). Next, Gordon discusses the three pillars of Africana philosophy: the works of Anna Julia Cooper, W.E.B. Du Bois and Franz Fanon. He then discusses Africana movements in the US and Britain, Afro-Caribbean philosophy, and African philosophy.

Gordon gives us a narrative through which to understand Africana thought. I suspect, though, that his narrative will not be uncontroversial. One of its key features is that Africana philosophy begins to take shape with the rise of the slave trade. Perhaps this is true, but Gordon does not say enough to support it. As I see it, part of this book’s contribution to the literature is to supply us with a narrative to help us understand all these different thinkers and movements that supposedly fall under the heading of “Africana philosophy.” If the narrative is to be a contribution to the field, then surely such a central idea of the narrative--that the birth of Africana thought arose with the birth of the African Diaspora--needs a full defense.

One of the strengths of the work is that it covers much ground. There are many thinkers and ideas mentioned and described in this book. However, sometimes-crucial ideas are in need of a fuller explanation. At times, crucial concepts go unexplained and the reader is merely pointed to other works. Here is just one example.

Collins argued that the proper method for black feminist thought was engagement with postmodern thought and standpoint epistemology, (p. 103).

The phrase “standpoint epistemology” is not explained. The reader is simply directed to the work of Collins. This term actually occurs a few times in the book and the reader is never given a good sense of it. Such practice makes the ideas in the book difficult to grasp for someone who is not already familiar with them. In addition, it is not just terms that could use more explanation. Gordon could provide more exposition to help his readers understand arguments and ideas in the book as well. For example, Gordon writes,

“African thought always presupposes other kinds of thought, whereas European thought often denies the existence of those beyond its own,” (p. 31).

This thesis, as interesting as it sounds, is never fully explained. And it should have been. For what does it mean to say that one form of thought presupposes another? What are some reasons for thinking that European thought denies the existence of systems of thought that are not its own? These heady ideas are far from clear to those who have not yet mastered them. Like my comments about terminology, this point suggests that this book is at times difficult for the beginner to understand. At times, it goes into too much detail too briefly to be worthwhile to anyone but those most familiar with this material. Here is another example.

“The main criticisms of Africana existential phenomenology are from several angles. For critics who cannot see phenomenology as anything other than a European enterprise, the charge of Eurocentrism is unleashed. For those who reject the idea of non-discursive dimensions of reality, a reassertion of discursive, even textual, idealism would be their retort,” (p. 149).

What is a non-discursive dimension of reality? What is discursive idealism? The author does not give us much help in understanding these concepts.

Perhaps it would have been more effective to focus on major themes in Africana thought and let those themes drive the narrative. Of course, Gordon mentions reoccurring themes: DuBois's notion of double consciousness, for example, is a theme often mentioned. However, had the book been organized around the major themes of Africana thought, the ideas might have come across more efficiently. As it stands, this book would not serve a beginner well. It is more suitable for a graduate course or an upper level undergraduate course in Africana philosophy. There is plenty of material in the book to foster discussion, plenty of ideas to be fleshed out and argued over. The book assumes a certain familiarity with critical theory, though, that is worth keeping in mind as well.

The book ends with a useful guide to further reading. The denseness of the text and the general assumption that the reader is familiar with a great body of critical theory and thereby in no need of an explanation of what phrases like "non-discursive reality" mean makes this book not so much an introduction to Africana thought but a certain articulation of it, an articulation from a certain theory-driven framework. The project of providing an introduction to Africana thought is most certainly a worthwhile one. While working through this book would help students to get a better grasp on Africana thought, there is probably a better introduction to Africana thought yet to be written.

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Katherine Homewood. *Ecology of African Pastoralist Societies*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2008.

There are a number of books written over the years that discuss the links between ecology and pastoralism in East Africa. What makes Katherine Homewood's volume on the ecology of African pastoralist communities stand out is the breadth and depth of information and how it is synthesized in such a succinct manner. In less than 300 pages, Homewood manages to pack in a wealth of knowledge about the origins and spread of African pastoralism, the relationship between pastoral livelihoods, ecology, and biology, and recent changes in the trajectories of pastoral communities in Africa.

Homewood is a well-known human ecologist and pastoral scholar. She draws on the depth of this knowledge to create an easy to read and comprehensive book on African pastoral systems that multiple audiences can enjoy it. The breadth of the research that Homewood conducted to compile this book is clear from the 35-page bibliography included at the end of the book. The synthesis of this range of information is one of the main strengths of the book. Homewood draws from numerous case studies, as well as multiple empirical data sources to paint a comprehensive picture of the diversity and complexity associated with African pastoral systems.

The book consists of nine chapters. The introductory chapter sets up the academic context

for the volume, and includes an important discussion of the history of pastoralist studies. It frames the discussion of African pastoralism by comparing the ways that ecosystem dynamics, land tenure, and diversification theory have been used to understand and predict patterns of change among pastoral communities. The second chapter utilizes a range of archeological, historical, and ethnographic data to provide an overview of the emergence and spread of pastoralism across the African continent. This is a particularly useful chapter for students and scholars because it brings together a diverse set of empirical resources to succinctly describe the migration of African pastoralists without marginalizing the sociopolitical and historic factors that have shaped modern distributions of African pastoral communities across the landscape. Chapter 3 begins the ecological, economic, and demographic component of the book. Chapter 3 discusses the ecology of African pastoralism, including the 'equilibrium' vs. 'non-equilibrium' debate that has been central to discussions of pastoral economies since the 1960s. She then goes on to discuss the ways that different communities use mobility as well as social and political systems to adapt and respond to their biophysical environments. Chapter 4 builds on this foundation and provides examples of the main pastoral systems in different parts of Africa. It uses case studies to explore the relationship between the features of the biophysical environment to and strategies of resource exploitation used by pastoral communities in different regions. By doing this, the author sets up the background to later chapters that examine unique aspects of pastoral livelihoods and synthesize the material on household economy (Chapter 5), herd biology (Chapter 6), pastoral food systems (Chapter 7), and demography (Chapter 8). The concluding chapter of her book draws on the information provided in previous chapters and combines it with discussions of globalization, development and the impact of aid. The final chapter summarizes what is known about the current processes of change that are impacting pastoral societies in Africa including, commercialization of livestock and livestock products, diversification of economic activities, land privatization, and sedentarization. Homewood highlights the role of the state in exacerbating issues of resource security through exertion of authority over land tenure and the conversion of key resources from pastoral holdings to agricultural management. The book concludes with a discussion of the role that the adaptability of pastoral economies (as identified in earlier chapters), will have on the trajectories of pastoral communities in Africa.

What is refreshing about this book in relation to previous volumes is that Homewood moves away from the pastoral typecasting that occurs in many overviews of African pastoral systems. Instead, the author shows that while there are themes that crosscut many pastoral communities, there is no "one" pastoral example. Instead, African pastoral communities are dynamic, responsive, and historically contingent, a point that is made especially clear in the range of empirical examples and case studies from East, West, and Southern Africa.

Finally, the attention to detail and breadth of knowledge on African pastoralist systems that is covered in Homewood's book make it relevant to a range of audiences. On one level, the book can be used as an overview of the current literature on pastoralism in Africa and provides a clearly written, balanced, and comprehensive synthesis that is excellent for both undergraduate and graduate courses as well as for advanced scholars. On another level, the book is detailed, yet appealing enough for a general audience that is simply interested in understanding the broader context of pastoralism in Africa. In either case, this is an engaging work that is carefully

organized and well thought out. It makes a clear contribution to our understanding of pastoralism in the African context.

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