

*This issue of the
Australasian Review of African Studies
is dedicated to*

Cherry Gertzel OA (1928– 2015)

*Former Editor of the Australasian Review of African
Studies; Founding member and former President of
the African Studies Association of Australasia and the
Pacific*

*For your inspiration and dedication to African
Studies.*

THE AUSTRALASIAN REVIEW OF AFRICAN STUDIES
VOLUME 36 NUMBER 2 DECEMBER 2015

CONTENTS

Dedication	1
Obituary	4
Editorial	
Reflections on Africa and African Studies: In Memory of Cherry Gertzel Tanya Lyons, Jay Marlowe and Alec Thornton	8
Articles	
Decoloniality in Africa: A Continuing Search for a New World Order Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni	22
'The Diamond of Western Area is Land': Narratives of Land Use and Land Cover Change in Post-conflict Sierra Leone Solomon Peter Gbanie, Alec Thornton and Amy L. Griffin	51
Development, Witchcraft and Malawi's Elite Thomas McNamara	74
Lexical Borrowing from Arabic to Pular: Context and Features Ibrahima Diallo	93
Spoken English does matter: Findings from an exploratory study to identify predictors of employment among African refugees in Brisbane Aparna Hebbani and Megan Preece	110

Book Reviews

- Juma Abuyi. *African Men's Experience in Australia: Resettlement Processes and the Impact of Service Provision.*
Samuel Muchoki 130
- Franklin Obeng-Odoom. *Oiling the Urban Economy: Land, Labour, Capital, and the State in Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana.*
Thomas Antwi Bosiankoh 132
- Isaac Bacirongo and Michael Nest. *Still a Pygmy: A unique memoir of one man's fight to save his identity from extinction.*
Matthew Doherty 135
- Crawford Young. *The Postcolonial State in Africa: Fifty Years of Independence, 1960-2010.*
Sam Wilkins 137

BOOK REVIEWS

Juma Abuyi. *African Men's Experience in Australia: Resettlement Processes and the Impact of Service Provision*. Tasmania: Mercy Refugee Project, 2014, 185pp, ISBN 9780646920535.

The publication of this monograph, a revised version of Abuyi's PhD thesis, is an important contribution to the practical application of knowledge in service provision for African men and their families in Australia. By investigating the experiences of Acholi men, Abuyi illustrates the challenges of navigating support service by migrant men. The monograph is divided into six chapters and presents two studies; the first study focused on service provision while the second study focused on lived experiences of Acholi men while interacting with service providers.

Abuyi used the first chapter to position himself in the two studies. He presents his refugee journey and talks about his cultural perspective as an Acholi man, a community member, a researcher and a service provider. He also discusses his settlement experience and interaction with various service providers in Australia. This is an important chapter on reflexivity that exemplifies the inside-outside dilemma faced by many scholars researching population groups with whom they share cultural traditions. By acknowledging the multiple roles he played while conducting the two studies, Abuyi assists the readers to understand his analytical framework, and his interpretation and discussion of the research findings.

In chapter two, Abuyi presents the Acholi norms and traditions, and discusses concepts such as personhood, gender relations, marriage and family. He also discusses initiation into manhood and the role of Acholi men in their families and communities. This chapter provides an excellent source of information on Acholi traditional ways of life and how this shapes Acholi's men's interaction with service providers on settlement in Australia. Abuyi presents the research methodology and theoretical frameworks that guided the two studies in chapters three and four. In chapter three, Abuyi examines the challenges faced by organisations while providing services to African men and barriers in service provision. He further explores service providers' strategies in addressing some of the challenges faced by Acholi men on settlement.

Later, in chapter four, Abuyi investigates Acholi's men experience in accessing services in Australia.

Abuyi uses chapter five to discuss the marginalisation of Acholi men in service provision. He undertakes a meta-analysis of the two research projects and discusses settlement challenges of Acholi men in Australia. He also uses this chapter to examine service providers' capabilities in addressing settlement needs for African men. Abuyi discusses why organisations should be culturally responsive to the needs of African men and why it is important to addressing unemployment, language barriers and housing challenges experienced by this population group. He further discusses ways in which organisations can work with Acholi men to change attitudes regarding gender relations, conflict resolution and masculinity roles. In the final chapter, Abuyi outlines key recommendations on strategies to improve the wellbeing of Acholi men and their families. This monograph offers excellent insights on how service providers can improve their response in addressing the diverse needs of Acholi men. However, the book structure could have been improved by ensuring better flow of information within the chapters and from one chapter to the other. Abuyi could have also refrained from making gross generalisation that equates experience of Acholi men with all other African men. Although being an insider, Abuyi should have avoided making assumptions such as "I know that Acholi people do not focus on planning their time and future" (p. 11). Instead, he should have discussed what other scholars have written about Acholi attitudes to time. A good example is given by Joseph Adjaye in the 1994 book *Time in the Black Experience*, on the concept of time in some African communities, including the Acholi people.

Abuyi could also have exercised caution in using anecdotal evidence in this monograph. He wrote, for example, that "[t]here is anecdotal 'evidence' to suggest that the rate of domestic violence within the Acholi community in Australia is increasing" (p. 19). It would have been beneficial for Abuyi to acknowledge family violence issues among African communities in Australia and explore this theme among the Acholi people in Australia. Nevertheless, this book is an excellent source of information on Acholi traditions and possible ways of improving services to better facilitate the settlement process of Acholi men in Australia.

Samuel Muchoki
La Trobe University
smmychoki@yahoo.com

Franklin Obeng-Odoom. *Oiling the Urban Economy: Land, Labour, Capital, and the State in Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana*. London: Routledge, 2014, 237 pp, ISBN 9780415744096.

Oiling the Urban Economy, a book project that went through three phases from 2008 until its publication in 2014, is divided into three parts. The first part - the economics of 'black gold' - has three chapters. Chapter one is an introduction to the book in which the author presents the all familiar tune of the resource curse thesis in the oil economics literature, the so called 'Dutch disease', critiquing and repudiating this prism for looking at oil/resource extraction. Chapter two presents the analytical gaze for rejecting the resource curse hypothesis, drawing on the works of Henry George, David Harvey, Hossein Mahdavy, and Chibuzo Nwoke to propose 'a heterodox property rights approach' to political economic analysis in the service of oil exploration/extraction and urban economic development in the twin city of Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana. In chapter three where the book's empirical eminence commences, the author places the spotlight on Ghana's oil industry with discussions on the origin and players in the Ghanaian oil industry, and the (un)certainities of Dutch disease.

Part two (chapters 4-6), which for me constitutes the essential bit of the book is titled 'From fishing settlements to oil city'. Here we find a historicized account of the development trajectories of Sekondi-Takoradi, the changing property relations in the city during the period of oil exploration, production, and development, and the fate of fishers and farmers in the midst of the changes in this Ghanaian city. Sekondi-Takoradi, once "a small collection of dirty reed and thatch huts where the beach ended and the bush began" (Correspondent, 1943, p. 38), is Ghana's 'oil city' (Fletcher, 2011) and West Africa's newest oil zone (p. 9), a booming metropolis, amidst disenchantments and alienation. The city has seen it all: it blossomed socio-economically, politically and culturally, thanks to its ports, harbours, and railway infrastructure, but lost its glory to Tema, assuming such descriptions as "a dead city" or "a sleeping town" (p. 89), and a city that had "seen better days" (Remy, 1997, p. 139).

Since the discovery of oil in 2007, Sekondi-Takoradi has re-discovered its pre-eminence. Post oil discovery development themes - employment, real estate development, urban transportation and changes in night life - are discussed with contested ripostes - a return to the old ('oil is a blessing') and the new ('oil is a curse') orthodoxies. Two

specific work groups – fishers and farmers – and the multi-level forces of expropriation and enclosures at work against them are examined in Chapter 6 where both fishing rights and farm land rights are under threat, oil spillage confirmed, and yields declined. What awaits the city are “dark clouds existing side by side with islands of economic privilege enjoyed by a few” (p. 95).

In Part 3, the book becomes prescriptive (though Obeng-Odoom thinks otherwise, see for example p. 188), charting a pathway ‘towards the good city’. ‘Compensation and betterment’ suggestions embedded in the eminent domain doctrine/theory by Henry George, connected to broad based institutional participation in local development processes and efficient local government property taxation mechanism hinged on David Harvey’s capital accumulation are made in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 is about the ability of the city authorities to use their taxation powers to rake in revenue by taking advantage of land value appreciation and real estate development. Beginning with the question of ‘how can the rents from oil be best socialized?’, Chapter 9 dovetails various policy instruments and government policy on using/sharing oil rents including cash transfers, investments in education and public housing as well as road transport investment.

Chapter 10 lowers the curtain, tying the various arguments in the earlier chapters together, calling for a bold or ‘radical leadership’ that is oriented ‘towards progressive social change’ as an important prerequisite for the realization of ‘a dynamic relationship between land, labour and capital’ and ‘undo the vestiges of colonialism’ and further confront the “free market ideology that is the usual part of the policies of international development agencies” (p. 192). This suggestion, when heeded to by the Ghanaian government, could be the possible antidote to the all too well articulated environmental debauchery, land and water enclosures, conflict and ejection concerns, among others that are often associated with oil production, especially in developing societies.

Oiling the Urban Economy exudes several qualities worth mentioning here. First is its focus on Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana’s third biggest city after Accra (the capital) and Kumasi. This makes Obeng-Odoom’s book a good case for understanding what can be described as ‘secondary cities’ and more importantly ‘oil cities’ in Africa. To date, the relationship between mineral resource extraction/development and urban development in Africa has focused almost exclusively on gold, copper, and diamond. Thus, this book makes a worthy attempt to place oil in the equation and on a secondary city for that matter. Secondly, the

author demonstrates how diverse methodological lenses from diverse disciplinary areas can be employed tactically in revealing social reality. In the end, this oeuvre crosses, connects and integrates these disciplinary areas, including economics, sociology, urban studies, development studies, history and geography, thereby creating a unique understanding of Sekondi-Takoradi as an oil city.

Additionally, readers will be confronted with a fascinating analysis of oil economics that makes a useful contribution to our understanding of the early stages of oil politics in Ghana, oil and development in Ghana, and more generally the political economy of (oil in) Ghana. This is a shift away from the extant oil economics literature which over the years has focused exclusively on peak oil/cities after oil. Now with the case of Sekondi-Takoradi in West Africa, we know more about such oil cities just before and during oil exploration, oil discovery, and oil development. This book will also appeal to the theoretically savvy reader for the reason of its heterodox property rights approach to political economic analysis of oil which is both insightful and nifty. If anyone has concluded that the African urban economy has been overlooked in the discussions of oil, or that a focus on oil cities has missed the lenses of social scientists - and perhaps this is never to be recovered, then they must revise their notes. *Oiling the Urban Economy* does a good job in curing this dearth.

Bibliography

Correspondent (1943). Takoradi: A Memory. *Scottish Geographical Magazine*. 59 (1), 37-38.

Fletcher, R. (2011). Disquiet in the Oil City. *African Business*, October. <http://africanbusinessmagazine.com>

Remy, M. (1997). *Ghana Today*. 4th Ed., Jaguar, Paris.

Thomas Antwi Bosiakoh
Macquarie University
thomas.antwi-bosiakoh@mq.edu.au

Isaac Bacirongo and Michael Nest. *Still a Pygmy: A unique memoir of one man's fight to save his identity from extinction.* Sydney: Finch Publishing, 2015, 234 pp, ISBN 9781925048421.

Perhaps the first thing to note about this book is the power of words and of reclaiming individual identity. 'Pygmy' is Isaac's term and he doesn't resile from the use of it. Indeed throughout this book the idiosyncratic – if not iconoclastic – Bacirongo proudly stakes his claim for participation in this world. Indeed as a citizen of the world. It is a compelling case. Bacirongo allows us entry into a life rarely glimpsed. As co-author Nest describes (via Jan Vansina) there have been no texts authored from within this community and the academic fascination with 'primitiveness' is something that is directly combated here. Isaac begins with his beginning; the brutal exchange that saw his mother 'given' to his father – and the unhappy marriage that ensued. He then takes us to the forest, where alongside the attempts at 'villagisation' by Belgian colonists there existed substantial continuity in ceremonial life. Hybridity was a feature of life as individuals would move in and out of the forest as necessary. Bacirongo's vivid descriptions help us see the sociability of life for family camps in the equatorial forest.

The young Isaac leads this double life from a young age; weeks living in towns or villages before the call of the forest is heeded. Isaac is granted his wish to go to school. Yet he is to encounter prejudice and discrimination at every step of the way, from schoolteacher Enoch to his classmates who taunt him with 'don't get upset like a Pygmy!' Isaac describes the visceral response of himself and others to being patronised and, very often, cheated. Among the numerous proverbs littering this book is 'a mouse cannot give birth to a rat,' meaning that regardless of bloodlines a person with a hint of Pygmy heritage is a pygmy. Isaac's experience has been that outsiders - including Bantu peoples - discriminate against those of mixed race. Nevertheless his schooling comes across as a positive experience notwithstanding the consistent bullying. Isaac turns a critical eye to what is being said in the classroom and chapel, and his appreciation grows to the fact that there are problems whose resolution lies beyond the power of prayer.

Isaac goes on to discuss his marriage to Josephine, a Bantu woman. Bacirongo is brutally honest here about the extent of racialised thinking even in his own home. He also describes with seeming resignation the misdemeanours of his mother toward Josephine, with witchcraft being not infrequently invoked (though never by the rationalist Isaac!). An

expanding family soon becomes their reality as Isaac is blessed with a number of children. Bacirongo clearly has an entrepreneurial streak; yet he also describes frustrations that his extended Congolese family do not share this. This includes the ‘Miracle Hen’ whose potential is not seen by his family. Isaac enters the pharmacy business during the Mobutu era and all this entailed for business operators. The lack of a firm rule of law sees Isaac do whatever-it-takes to conduct business, with the bribery and maintenance of strong relationships that this entails. Isaac finds himself on the wrong side in failing to display the required sycophancy toward Mobutu; imprisonment and beatings ensue. Yet Isaac continues to follow his own light, sheltering a business colleague and friend from the maelstrom of Rwanda 1994. The next stage of Isaac’s remarkable life is as an indigenous activist in Bukavu, eastern DRC. Through his organising work an NGO, “APDMAC,” is formed (p. 132). There is also an attempt to write a history of his people, with substantial continuity with the present effort.

The absurdly complex situation of eastern DRC in the mid-90s is met by the only sensible option: a personal narrative. Bacirongo asks “how do people respond to horrible events?” (p. 145). His view is that among people there are the grateful, the sensitive, and the caring; equally he discovers the opposite. This leads him to a weighty decision: to leave the Congo. Bribery is required to get Isaac out of gaol one last time; bribery to obtain the necessary travel documents; even \$20 to get one’s shoes and a belt back at the airport. Thus to the next chapter, Isaac is a refugee and community activist, employed by UNHCR in Nairobi in January 2001. Bacirongo’s refugee status is accepted and he opts for Australia. Gratitude has been an enduring feature of his antipodean existence. Isaac pursues volunteer work. He also regards indigenous Australians and notes their evident pride in being Aboriginal (p. 200); sadly he contrasts this with the Twa people of Central Africa, who are socialised into hating their own identity.

To Isaac, the importance of having an active life means that he is rarely stationary (with or without full-time work). His life stands as testament to the most cardinal virtue: being active, being true to yourself, and finding your own way to authenticity. Being a Pygmy.

Matthew Doherty
dohmatt@hotmail.com

Crawford Young. *The Postcolonial State in Africa: Fifty Years of Independence, 1960-2010*. University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, 2012, 488 pp, ISBN 9780299291440.

The nearly two-decade wait for the post-independence sequel to Crawford Young's magisterial *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (1994) elevated already high expectations for *The Postcolonial State in Africa*, which now joins a set of works over the past decade that discuss trends in African comparative politics on a continental scale (such as those by Cooper, Bates, Chabal, Hyden, and Nugent). In this company, Young's contribution is notable for two reasons beyond the rigour of its historical analysis.

First, it seeks from the outset to construct an historical narrative true to the perceptions of observers at the time, in what he calls an "African mood pendulum" (p. 23) measuring the optimism or pessimism generated at various key moments since independence. This doesn't compromise the book's historical analysis, but it does create a sense of historiography different to other works. Structurally, these perceptions fall into "three cycles of hope and disappointment"; the hope of independence before the disappointment of coups and civil conflict in the late 1960s, the hope of the 'integral' re-energised state in the 1970s before it's collapse into autocratic paralysis in the 1980s, and finally the hope of democratisation in the 1990s, the results of which leave us with a 'mixed' sentiment in the present day. While this explicit focus on the mood of observers is probably a more honest inclusion than other volumes that implicitly (even accidentally) do the same thing, there are some occasions of 'hope' that are surprising even as indicators of mood.

Most of these occur in the second cycle of optimism in the 1970s, which will likely trouble many readers. For example, the 1973 oil crisis, taken by Cooper among others to be the catalyst for the demise of the developmental state, is considered by Young to have "fostered a momentary sense of possible empowerment" among Third World political ideology with "stunning effectiveness" (p. 22). He finds a similar sense of state empowerment ("momentum") in Idi Amin's expulsion of Uganda's Asian community in 1972 (p. 22). Likewise, Young talks of the optimism generated by the growth of military rule in the 1970s due to thinking at the time that the military was well suited to be a 'midwife to modernization' of the state. Again, at no point does Young actually condone racial expulsion or military rule, but the inclusion of the resulting 'mood' context is an interesting variant on

previous historical arcs that would unhesitatingly place these events at the pinnacle of state crisis in the 1970s.

A second factor that makes *The Postcolonial State in Africa* stand out, and probably the book's strongest attribute, is the careful way that comparative political theory is woven into historical storytelling throughout the text. Young returns to the conceptual matrix of statehood from *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*, based on nine attributes (government, territory, population, sovereignty, power, law, nation, international actor, and idea) and six imperatives (hegemony, autonomy, security, legitimation, revenue and accumulation). These are discussed at length in an early chapter aimed at the 'conceptual capture' of the state, and are revisited three times throughout the course of the book, corresponding to changes over the three cycles outlined earlier. Amid reviewing these theoretical perspectives, Young's own opinion is often secondary, and often introduced with a very on-the-other-hand set of caveats. Perhaps his most significant theoretical expression comes with his re-assertion of the Gramscian 'integral state' model he first advocated decades ago. In this model, the state seeks "perfected hegemony" via the "unencumbered domination over civil society", and a monopoly of the visionary claims of the polity just shy in capacity of totalitarianism (p. 55).

There are also some interesting inclusions and omissions in this theoretical review. Young makes only passing mention of the geographical features of nation building and state capacity, even though these have become popularised since Herbst's work on the subject (2000), and he leaves untouched the non-penetrative institutional weakness posed by Cooper's gate-keeper model, and the effect that its dependency has on state legitimacy. There are also times when the parameters of his theoretical review seem a little odd, like the measurement of the varying 'intensity' of ethnic identity, which seems a little half-baked considering the depth of existing scholarship on ethnicity (p. 324).

The theoretical component of the text that I was most interested in pursuing was its evaluation of the impact of colonialism on the contemporary African State. Young's 1994 account of the history of colonialism historicised the retention of the 'Bula Matari' *raison d'état* - a stand in device for white self-legitimising conquest - as the governing psyche of the colony's immediate postcolonial successor state. While very little of that book's analysis was set in the post-independence era, its purpose was to address the enduring question of colonial legacy so

fundamental to African comparative politics, and in this debate the theoretical clarity and rhetorical ingenuity of 'Bula Matari' has been invaluable. But considering that in the interim the author has written that the postcolonial era of the state in Africa might be over (2004), the book's 'postcolonial' title led me right to this question, which is explicitly addressed in the final chapter.

Although Young does re-assert the efficacy of Bula Matari as an explanatory factor in the immediate postcolonial years, he continues his 2004 argument by explaining that alternate governing logics had since built on it, but eroded it – first by the personalisation of power and legitimacy in the 1970s integral state, which contained ambitions far beyond the colonial project, and then by the logic of neopatrimonialism, which eroded this personal loyalty system and reduced the legitimacy of governance to material ends (pp. 338-339). I was disappointed by this conclusion for two reasons. First, neopatrimonialism itself is conditioned on the non-institutionalisation of the distribution of governmental resources: Bula Matari (or any other device which contextualises the state's self-legitimising authority) is useful in this capacity because it anchors the citizens lack of entitlement to the power of the state, wherein it is the elite's prerogative to allocate state resources rather than the citizens entitlement to receive them. Bula Matari, in other words, is not only compatible with neopatrimonialism, but foundational to it. Second, Young dispenses with Bula Matari largely because of its inability to explain the logic of governance from the elite perspective, i.e. the erosion of self-legitimising power by loyalties based on material benefit. Whether or not this is true, it reveals a very top-down, elite centric approach to the question of *raison d'état*, which is much weaker than approaches (like those by Bayart and Mbembe) that look from the ground up.

Overall, *The Postcolonial State In Africa* is a valuable contribution to the list of volumes of comparative political reviews. Along with its rather novel approaches to mood and its inclusion of North Africa within the continents historical trajectory, the book is written with great clarity even for all its detail, and its interwoven use of theory makes it a great choice for new students of African studies.

Bibliography

Bates, Robert. (2008). *When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Bayart, Jean-François (1993). *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*. London: Longmann.
- Chabal, Patrick (2009). *Africa: The Politics of Suffering and Smiling*. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Cooper, Frederick. (2002). *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Herbst, Jeffrey. (2000). *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Hyden, Goran. (2006). *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mbembe, Achille. (2001). *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Nugent, David. (2004). *Africa Since Independence: A Comparative History*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Young, Crawford. (2004). The End of the Post-Colonial State in Africa? Reflections on Changing African Political Dynamics. *African Affairs*, 103 (410), pp. 23-49.

Sam Wilkins
University of Oxford
samdouglaswilkins@gmail.com