Reviews

The Pan-African Nation: oil and the spectacle of culture in Nigeria
by A. Apter
doi:10.1017/S0022278X06211753

Apter is an anthropologist and historian, and has longstanding ties to Nigeria. Indeed, the introduction recounts some of his many harrowing and compelling fieldwork moments from 1977 through the turbulent 1990s. Apter frames his project as a political economy of the sign in post-colonial Africa, using the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC 1977) to examine the particulars of Nigeria’s oil-based society. FESTAC was a Nigerian-financed and Nigerian-dominated cultural ‘spectacle’ held during the country’s first great oil boom.

Key themes of the book include: (1) ‘the historical context of the colonial culture from which FESTAC emerged’; (2) ‘the production of national culture and tradition’ (including the political economy of cultural production); and (3) Nigeria’s bid for pan-African influence (pp. 6–7).

Apter begins by tracing the political economic and cultural changes resulting from the post-Civil War oil boom. He recounts the 1970s, which witnessed the emergence of fabulous wealth without re-investment in productive activities. Oil wealth facilitated political centralisation and federal investment in national cultural unity. He frames FESTAC as a moment of ‘high modernism’ and exuberant faith in a future of Nigerian progress. In chapter 2, Apter dissects Nigeria’s effort to lead a pan-African ‘cultural empire’, as seen through its leadership of FESTAC and its example of a newly wealthy African state. The book’s middle section focuses on the promotion of a Nigerian national culture through FESTAC. This festival provided a grand stage for the presentation of an official national culture, particularly through the arts. However, cultural production also involved key ethno-regional and gender conflicts. For example, he highlights the disproportionate representation of Yoruba traditional rulers’ costumes in FESTAC. The military government’s cultural organs sought ‘pure, precolonial’ ideal cultural types. Chapters 4 and 5 are case studies of FESTAC components: a river regatta from the Niger Delta and an equestrian durbar held in the northern city of Kaduna. Apter’s key argument from this section applies to the durbar and FESTAC cultural production generally: ‘What the genealogy of the Nigerian durbar really reveals is not, as FESTAC proclaimed, a decolonization of cultural tradition based on the rejection of imperialism, but rather the nationalization of colonial tradition by the postcolonial state … The imprint of imperial pasts can be transformed into national tradition, but never fully erased’ (p. 199).

The last substantive section covers the 1980s and 1990s, a period of dramatic economic decline. Here Apter elaborates the cultural production tied to the oil bust period. Specifically, he develops a parallel argument concerning the
emergence of ‘419’ financial fraud (involving confidence tricks and shifting ties between signs and signifiers), and the political illusions of the Babangida years. Chapter 8 recounts the Abacha years, including the familiar story of the Ogoni. The chapter features an excellent section on the rise of a ‘vampire state’, even as Apter insufficiently supports his view of Ken Saro-Wiwa as a widely revered national hero.

The Pan-African Nation has many strengths. The middle section on enduring colonial cultural legacies is particularly worthy of attention (especially the chapter on northern Nigeria and the durbar). Second, the book as a whole is carefully researched and includes excellent graphics; Apter’s expertise on Nigeria is on full display. Finally, the book is a powerful statement on the emergence of a post-colonial national identity; Apter is quite skilled in balancing political economic and cultural spheres.

Apter’s book has at least two weaknesses. First, non-anthropologists will probably struggle with some of its jargon. The outstanding weakness of this book is its inaccessible writing style, especially if it seeks a broad audience of Africanists. The second weakness is the book’s organisation, though this is less problematic. Specifically, chapters 7 and 8 (on the Babangida and Abacha years, and previously published in edited collections) are not sufficiently integrated with the rest of the work, which focuses directly on FESTAC. While these are still useful chapters, it is clear they were once free-standing pieces (unlike chapter 5, which has a similar genesis). That said, The Pan-African Nation is a rewarding read and I recommend it to Africanists and others interested in nationalism, political culture, diaspora studies, and Nigeria.

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Readings in Gender in Africa edited by ANDREA CORNWALL.
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Selected from works published from 1975 to 2003, this anthology provides a valuable retrospective of scholarship on gender relations in Africa. It features 28 high-standard essays which aptly combine anthropological, historical as well as sociological approaches. The opening chapter is not only a careful definition of this multifaceted term, but also a presentation of the major shifts which have occurred in this research field since the emergence of Women’s Studies in the early 1970s. The editor has divided its compilation into five main sections in order to provide readers with a comprehensive introductory framework.

The main feature of the first and second sections is the social construction of women’s representations and gender categories since colonial times. Josephine Beoku-Betts underlines how, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Western explorers, missionaries and administrators have reproduced in their travel accounts their own social misrepresentation of European women. Nancy Rose Hunt examines how Belgian colonial powers tried to remedy the demographic crisis in Congo by eradicating polygamy on the one hand and by imposing taxation on single women on the other. Obioma Nnaemeka sheds light on the way African
Diasporas have contributed to construct a fragile African and black feminism. By establishing a distinction between ‘hearth-hold’ and ‘household’, Felicia I. Ekejiuba decisively affirms the centrality of women in social reproduction.

Women’s role in African economic, religious and political life is mapped in the last three sections. Jane I. Guyer turns to the successive versions of female farming in scholarship by focusing on the academic reevaluation of women in the division of labour. Opposing the male bias in the economic literature, Nakanyike B. Musisi analyses how women have through their night market activities tried to cope with Uganda’s economic crisis. Iris Berger questions the limited institutionalisation of women in religious possession cults. Contesting some delusive studies on Islam, Victoria Bernal reads the way women have embraced this religion and renegotiated their status in Sudanese society. The volume closes with essays on governance. Laray Denzer explores the significant contribution of women to the decolonisation process through the political careers of three women, namely Mabel Dove of Ghana, Aoua Keita of Mali as well as Wuraola Adepeju Esan of Nigeria. Aili Mari Tripp evaluates the growing mobilisation of women which is positively correlated with the contrasting emergence of multipartyism across the continent.

Though the materials offered in this anthology are simply too rich to be described at length in this review, they demonstrate both the potential and the difficulties of a social history which has been progressively uncovered, and has granted African women the place they deserve. By combining a useful overview with fresh insights, Readings in Gender in Africa asserts the tangled complexities of gender relations in African economic, political, social and symbolic life. This edited volume provides students, teachers as well as scholars with a rich introduction to diverse themes and sets the stage for further innovation in the field.

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Beyond Territory and Scarcity: exploring conflicts over natural resource management edited by Q. GAUSSET, M. A. WHYTE and T. BIRCH-THOMSEN
doi:10.1017/S0022278X06231756

This edited volume is a timely contribution addressing issues of immediate importance across Africa. Neo-Malthusian crisis narratives tend to dominate international perceptions of African natural resource management. Far-reaching policies and interventions are triggered and shaped on that doubtful basis. This thoughtful and thought-provoking volume is a salutary antidote, offering deeper insights and fuller understandings for a series of case studies and overview analyses.

The central issue which this volume explores is the extent to which natural resource management conflicts hinge on territory (in terms of resources being bounded) and scarcity (in terms of population/ resources ratios). The argument of the book overall is that while biophysical and biogeographic endowments, population densities and growth rates are all factors of importance, neo-Malthusian models are of limited value in understanding African rural livelihoods and their
dynamics of change. Many superficially plausible crisis narratives on closer inspection morph into a more complex weave. On the one hand, several case studies show that people often manage intensification and diversification with Boserupian resourcefulness and resilience. On the other hand, the political economy and political ecology of such changes mean there are winners and losers in a shifting mosaic of differentiated outcomes. The particularities of local social, political and economic conditions, and their interplay with national and international networks of power and control, give rise in some cases to vigorous negotiation and contestation driving differentiated change. In others, local, regional and international historical and social particularities have fostered the emergence of altogether darker trajectories of expropriation, exclusion and exaction. In extreme cases, not scarcity but rather a concentration of high value resources has trapped local livelihoods in a sinister and ultimately lethal spiral of exploitation, oppression, violence, terror and genocide. These worst case studies reveal a century-long history of local natural resources extracted by oppressive means and channelled by opaque pathways to international markets. Those commodity chains have in the past both benefited, and drawn support from, the most powerful individuals and institutions of the Western world. They continue to do so in the present, giving the lie to ideas that contemporary localised violent conflicts are neo-Malthusian inevitabilities dictated by local population/resource imbalances.

This book is of importance to students of African natural resource management at all levels, from undergraduates and researchers to politicians, conservation workers and development practitioners. Of the several fascinating case study accounts and analyses in this collection, some stand out. The introduction by Gaussen and Whyte outlines the theoretical framework neatly for students of population and resources. Michael Mortimore’s overview of intensification and diversification in Sahelian environments shows with great clarity not just the contradiction of macro level analyses by micro level empirical work, but also the energy and efficacy of people’s management of their environmental and other constraints and opportunities. Leif Manger’s critique of new institutional economics is of theoretical and also applied interest given the current policy impacts of this school. James Fairhead’s historical overview of natural resource extraction in the Congo and its linkages to everyday Western consumer demand should be required reading for everyone, everywhere.

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Postmodernism, Postcoloniality, and African Studies edited by ZINE MAGUBANE.
doi:10.1017/S0022278X06241752

This Zine Magubane edited volume of nine essays examines the various ways in which postmodernism and postcolonialism have ‘simultaneously benefited from, contributed to, and been challenged by the developments within African scholarship’ (p. ix). After opening with Zeleza’s essay which dismisses the analytical usefulness of postmodernism and postcolonialism to African studies, the tone of
the book is one of tempered appreciation of the theoretical contribution of the ‘posts’ to African Studies, and the remaining chapters can be divided into two broad groups. The first is composed of those that draw on insights derived from either postmodernism and/or postcolonialism to investigate a specific topic or issue relating to the study of Africa. The second group are those that use a particular topic or case study from Africa to provide insight into either postmodernism and/or postcolonialism.

The former group consists of the essays of Grant Farred, Amina Mire and Olakunle George. Farred problematises Thabo Mbeki’s concept of African Renaissance, arguing, amongst other things, that it fixes Africa in the role of Europe’s perpetually backward Other. Mire’s thought-provoking chapter analyses colonial concepts of rationality to expose, what she argues to be, the masculinist/misogynist and colonialist/racist tendencies within the European scientific discourses that contributed to the colonial project. In his essay, Olankunle George uses Sol Plaatje’s 1930 work *Mhudi* to argue the existence of poststructuralism’s ‘conceptual implications and revisionist possibilities’ (p. 161) in African writing.

The latter group comprises the essays of Tejumola Olaniyan, Alamin Mazrui, Magubane, H. Adlai Murdoch and Joseph Reilly. Although he begins by restating Zeleza’s criticisms of postmodernism and postcolonialism, Olaniyan defends the posts’ contributions to African Studies by stressing the importance of their ‘debunking of the West as universal norm, and the authorization of multiple histories’ (p. 44). Mazrui engages with postcolonialism’s quest to decentralise history by problematising the use of non-African languages by African academics. In her chapter, Magubane uses South Africa’s transition from apartheid to problematise postcolonialism’s analysis of structural inequality and culture. Murdoch demonstrates the cultural, linguistic and ethnic pluralism of the Caribbean through his examination of music and carnival, and in so doing challenges what he describes as ‘traditional’ understandings of hybridity. Finally, Reilly argues that rather than challenging the concepts of culture, ethnicity and identity constructed by anthropology in South Africa in the service of colonial rule and apartheid, postmodernist approaches to anthropology help maintain them.

Despite the considerable differences between the topics examined and approaches adopted by these contributors, similar criticisms can be made of each. Firstly, they struggle to develop the debate into which they intervene in any significant way. Too much time is spent rephrasing and recapitulating existing arguments either defending or criticising postmodernism and postcolonialism. Whilst the points made by these essays for or against the posts are well put, they are not new and have been the topics of considerable debate within postcolonial studies for the past 15 years.

The second weakness common to these essays is their lack of definitional clarity. With the exception of Olaniyan, none of the contributors explains what they mean by ‘postmodernism’ or ‘postcolonialism’. This oversight is surprising, given the volume of ink dedicated by those working within the field of postcolonial studies to the issue of terminology, and the importance of this issue to how postcolonialism is understood as a field of study. Indeed, the ongoing debate over terminology continues to cover in far greater depth many of the criticisms levelled by these contributors at the posts. That said, the general eloquence of the writing and the interesting ways in which the contributors investigate the posts’
interaction with African Studies mean that the book should be of interest to
postgraduate students and academics concerned with the ongoing development
of African Studies.

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Apartheid South Africa and African States: from pariah to middle
power, 1961–1994 by R. PFISTER
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This book is a history of South African diplomatic relations with other African
countries during the apartheid era, demarcated by its consolidation in 1961, in the
wake of the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, and its end in the 1994 multiracial elec-
tions. Key actors are the South African Department of Foreign Affairs, the mili-
tary, the national intelligence agencies and the era’s prime ministers and
Selected non-state actors are also represented, among them think tanks, business
organisations, multinational corporations and the media.

The strength of this diplomatic history lies in the wealth of primary sources and
interviews that Pfister creatively brings to life. Interactions between South African
officials and African heads of state, clandestine military and intelligence operations
throughout the continent, and inter-governmental rivalries, as between the military
and the national intelligence community, are oftentimes richly illustrated with
detailed accounts of pivotal events, even if the conscious agency of (white) South
Africans stands in sharp contrast to the ‘minimalistically’, indeed passively, ren-
dered (black) African actors in the story.

However, the very strength of this history also constitutes its primary weakness.
Pfister notes in the introduction that this book relies on a ‘narrative-based rather
than theory-based’ account of South African diplomacy (p.2). He adds, vaguely,
that political scientists need to have their models evaluated by historical evidence.
In particular, Pfister purports to refute ‘political economy’ explanations (those of
Timothy Shaw and Roger Southall are mentioned here) of South African diplo-
matic efforts on the continent (pp. 3–5). Furthermore, the author refers to ‘IR and
Political Science concepts’ and then specifically the ‘bureaucratic politics model’
as guiding his interpretation of events (pp. 3–4). The problem here is that the
discussion of theoretical models of explanation is quite brief and superficial, and
that these theories and concepts do not again feature in any significant way in the
detailed accounts of political events that constitute the majority of the book.

At its best, this book provides the reader with discerning insights into crucial
events in South Africa’s relations with the rest of the continent. At its worst, it
amounts to little more than a selection of events, added one to the next without
being guided by any clear theoretical structure, such as those discussed in the
introduction – perhaps an inherent limitation of relying on agency in isolation
from explanatory framework.

The ultimate conclusion is that despite great efforts and varied strategies, South
Africa’s apartheid governments could never gain fundamental acceptance in
Africa so long as the oppressive apartheid system remained in place. Evidence
from de Klerk’s and the National Party’s strategy anticipating the 1994 elections suggest this was an essential fact of African politics never grasped by the ruling white minority. Diplomatic efforts, military interventions and internal reforms aside, it is not until South Africa gains a government of all its people that the country gains acceptance and standing as a legitimate African nation—a transformation considered a prerequisite by democratic and, ironically, non-democratic African nations alike.

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Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa by Daniel Posner
Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp. 337, £40.00; £17.99 (pbk.).
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Daniel Posner’s book originated from his doctoral dissertation at Harvard University, a dissertation that was based on field research about ethnic cleavages and political competition in Zambia, and supervised by Samuel Huntington, Robert Bates and Jennifer Widner. Posner later made substantive revisions to the work at the University of California at Los Angeles where he took up a teaching position, and at the Hoover Institution in Stanford where he was a National Fellow. The result is a well-researched, rich, sophisticated and lively analysis of ethnic politics in Zambia.

In the book Posner poses these questions: Why does political competition and conflict revolve around one axis of ethnic cleavage instead of another? Under what conditions do some ethnic identities become politically important while others that were salient cease to carry much weight? How do the masses choose among the repertoire of identities during periods of elections? He answers these questions with this thesis: the ethnic cleavage that gains political relevance is the sum of actors’ individual decisions about the identity that has the most instrumental value. However, the decisions are conditioned by the identity options set from which actors choose, and by the formal rules that define the boundaries of political competition.

Posner develops his case by employing a combination of rational choice, institutionalist and constructivist approaches. Following the constructivist tradition he shows that, in Zambia, policies and regulations implemented by the colonial state, its missionaries and mining companies shaped the emergence of 72 ‘tribal’ groups, and the consolidation of about a dozen languages into four dominant ones. As he points out, ‘tribal’ and linguistic cleavages emerged as important focal points of competition because the colonial state and mining companies made access to state and company resources contingent on identifying one’s self with either a tribe or any of the four main languages. The concept of ‘tribal groups’ occurs repeatedly in the work and the reviewer notices that Posner uses ‘ethnic groups’ when discussing identity groups generally, but switches to the academically discarded word ‘tribe’ when discussing groups in Zambia. His passing remark (on p. 115) that Zambians use the term ‘tribe’ in daily social discourse does not provide academic justification for a revival of the concept.

One of the most interesting sections of the work is chapter 4, where Posner discusses a common practice in African politics: the tendency to denounce ethnicity
publicly while utilising it privately. He presents results of field surveys indicating
that Zambians prioritise national identity over ethnic identity, and would con-
demn manifestations of ethnicity in national politics. Below the surface of these
survey responses, at the underbrush, is a different picture. Posner provides an
inventory of cases in which Zambians perceive ethnic favouritism in appoint-
ments and promotions into key positions of government, and in the provision of
development funds and projects. Political parties are even perceived to represent
the interest of the ethnic groups of their leaders. The consequence of this wide-
spread perception, Posner argues, is voters’ inclination to line behind politicians
from their own ethnic groups, which in turn creates incentives for politicians to
appeal to ethnic affiliation during elections. From this premise, Posner makes
the big claim that ethnicity is ‘a feature of Zambian politics not, as many commen-
tators on Africa assume, because of the passions it inspires or the tradition it
embodies but because of the information it conveys about the expected behavior
of others’ (p. 104). Logical as it may seem, this claim does not square with his
catalogue of cases about ethnic favouritism. The cases actually support Hume’s
derived notion of partiality of the affections.

At the core of the book is the dimension of identity that assumes importance in
the competition for power and resource allocation. In Zambia, Posner shows that
members of each ethnic group are located within a single language category,
while each language category overlaps several ethnic groups. Understandably,
language boundaries present a larger and nationally powerful political coalition,
while ethnic group boundaries present a narrow and local coalition. Posner argues
that the variable – ethnic groups or linguistic – that would gain political salience
will depend on the institutional rules that are in place and the arena of political
competition. Where institutional rules allow for multipartyism, competition is for
national power. In this case, broader language cleavages have more salience.
Where the rules are for a one party system, national political power is a no go
area; instead the arena of competition shrinks to the level of electoral con-
stituencies and narrow ethnic group cleavages that divide the constituency gain
political salience. Those familiar with African politics might not find this re-
freshing.

On balance, Posner offers a fascinating account of changes in the dimensions
of ethnic identity in Zambian politics. His work is, perhaps, the only book
that dwells exclusively on why politicians shift from one ethnic card to
another. The details he presents about ethnic and language group formation and
about perceptions of ethnic favouritism make the book interesting and a must
read.

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Guerrilla Government: political changes in the Southern Sudan
during the 1990s by OYSTEIN H. ROLANDSEN
doi:10.1017/S0022278X06271751

This book appears at an important juncture in Sudanese civil-war history, given
that the South’s longest and most charismatic leader, John Garang de Mabior,
recently died in a helicopter crash. South Sudan is at a delicate historical juncture, having lately signed a peace accord with its long-term enemy, the fundamentalist Islamic northern Sudanese government, after a bloody second civil war dating from 1983. Guerrilla Government analyses South Sudanese politics from 1990 to 2000, and more specifically focuses on the 1994 National Convention (NC). The latter historical event, held by the South’s most powerful political and military organisation spearheading the long civil war, the Dinka-led Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), took place in order to establish a liberal civil government in a war zone.

Although the NC aimed to include new political reforms such as the establishment of civil government structures, democratisation through elections and accountable government in a ‘New Sudan’, it had no intention of loosening control of the Movement. Thus, South Sudan ended up with a one-party state, the SPLM/A under its leader, John Garang. The author contends that ultimately there was a lack of substantial changes within the political and administrative structure of the Movement after 1994 and the National Convention. Thus, as peace was near at the end of 2003, the SPLM/A’s survival as a political force in a post-conflict Sudan could only have continued by non-democratic means.

The strengths of this book lie in its documentation of the recent historical peace initiatives and the stumbling blocks faced by all parties. These include the dilemmas faced by aid agencies which fuelled further conflicts in the last decade. The book also documents well the peace initiatives spearheaded by the United States Senator John Danforth which began with the ‘Danforth Initiative’ in 2002.

The volume however, also suffers weaknesses. By the author’s own admission (he is an historian by training), he lacked time and photocopying facilities with which to obtain minutes and resolutions from three of the four National Liberation Council meetings. He admits to insufficient oral accounts in South Sudan (24) (pp. 19–20, 188) to fully support his research. This reviewer would add that the lack of any high level SPLA/M party member interviews, the failure to consult John Garang’s many articles or books (the latter had a Ph.D. in economics from Iowa State in the United States), and consultation of little South Sudanese history pre-dating 1983 and the twentieth century deprives the author of a deeper perspective on both Dinka and South Sudanese politics and history. Dinka ‘big-mannism’, well represented by John Garang’s actions in this case, has existed for centuries. Thus, in writing about the SPLM/A, a largely Dinka organisation, the author does not fully comprehend the historical context and tensions inherent within Dinka leadership or historical intra-Dinka and Dinka–South Sudanese tensions that date back to the seventeenth century. Thus, the book repeats the decades-old arguments of SPLM/A detractors and lacks much in the way of fresh analysis. This being said, the book is still valuable for its documentation of recent Southern Sudanese political events. As the author pursues further South Sudanese research he will hopefully gain a more nuanced understanding of turbulent politics of the region.

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Structural Adjustment: the policy roots of economic crisis, poverty and inequality by SAPRI
doi:10.1017/S0022278X06281758

The report of the ‘Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative’ (SAPRI) is much quoted as a reference when NGOs and other organisations criticise the social costs of World Bank and IMF programmes for structural adjustment (SAPS) in developing countries. In 1995, an initiative of NGOs and solidarity and advocacy groups challenged the World Bank and its new president James Wolfensohn to analyse such social effects in a participatory process. They engaged their local contacts and their confidence with local groups, to give voice to the views of the poor on structural adjustment.

In ten developing countries, the World Bank and the international network of SAPRI reached an agreement with governments, local authorities and local organisations to collaborate in a unique participatory study. It was to expose the experience of the poor and disadvantaged on the costs of structural adjustment for them. SAPRI emphasised a common approach, to make officials learn about local views in an open and encouraging dialogue. Participants from NGOs regretted that many officials were not able to listen. After the first words of a local peasant they interrupted and began to argue, defending their official positions, instead of trying to understand the views of the poor.

Although it was planned for two years, the process took five years. Three of the countries withdrew from the process, two others were added with slightly different arrangements. A broad workshop in Washington discussed the reports from the nine country teams and summarised the results. When the World Bank withdrew from the process, SAPRI wrote a final report on its own, integrating the nine country reports and drawing general conclusions. The report was circulated on the Internet in 2002 as the SAPRIN report. It received an enthusiastic response among NGOs, but also much criticism, especially from economists, for allegedly quoting official statistics selectively or even manipulating figures, and for drawing conclusions that were too generalised. In addition, to prove their case, the critics also quoted individual figures that were isolated from their context.

The authors rejected such criticism. They argued that SAPRI was first of all a process to allow World Bank and government officials to meet the poor and understand their experience of SAPS. Second, it took four years from when the first country reports were written to the final report. In the meantime, official statistics underwent international aggregation and adjustments to correct for inflation, exchange rate and internal fluctuations. Also national statistical offices frequently adjust their statistics, because they find sources of error or because of political pressure. More importantly, figures showing national averages often hide key details. For example, average income does not show distribution. The SAPRI process was intended to overcome such limitations, and to expose the situation of the forgotten and marginalised minorities.

The most important conclusions of the report cannot always be documented with statistical figures. It exposes a human reality among the poor in developing countries, which may belittle or even falsify official statistics. Consequently, it is high time that the report is finally available as a book. The present edition is a
slightly revised version of the SAPRI report. Basically, its short introduction is updated and the concluding chapter on ‘Shaping a different future’ is extended, to show that the report is intended to be a political document, rather than an economic argument. The text itself has not changed, apart from a few corrections of obvious errors and spelling mistakes. The most important addition is the insertion of short highlights and conclusions in bold letters throughout the text, on almost every page. This makes the text easily accessible for the reader who does not have specific economic knowledge.

I wish SAPRI had put more weight on reproducing the reports and witnesses of the poor, instead of producing economic arguments in an attempt to prove that SAPS have failed. This could provide an even more powerful document about the predicament of the world’s poor, made worse by the rich world’s attempts at structuring the world economy in its own interests. In addition, it would seem important to distinguish the SAPRI summary report from the SAPRI process in the individual countries. The process had a profound effect on communication and understanding, both in the countries and in the World Bank. For example, in Ghana, it is reported, the World Bank director corrected his recommendations after hearing the reports of mine workers.

One can not expect that SAPRI would change the World Bank or alter its policies. But SAPRI has increased sensitivity and the will of individual officials to take the plight of the poor into account. The ‘Poverty Reduction Strategy’ tries to supplement SAP with poverty orientation. There are new problems involved, especially when national governments hijack the envisaged ‘participatory’ process. But there can be hardly any doubt that SAPRI has contributed substantially to generating policies aimed at poverty reduction.

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**Human Rights, the Rule of Law, and Development in Africa** edited by PAUL TITYAMBE ZELEZA and PHILIP J. MCConNAUGHAY
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Democracy is more than the functioning of effective representative institutions. It also means upholding fundamental principles, particularly the rule of law and respect for human rights. The rule of law, and its preeminent condition, equality before the law, is the platform upon which the edifice of democracy rests. Respect for human rights is vital for the democratic edifice to stand. There is a symbiotic relation between the two in that human rights are necessary for the functioning of democracy, and a functioning democracy is essential to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights.

Such is the loud message that *Human Rights, the Rule of Law, and Development in Africa* seeks to convey. Human rights and sustainable human development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The book has 17 chapters divided into three parts: Part I (1–6) represents the discourse on universalism and relativism in human rights, Part II (7–12) explores the economic and political dimensions of human rights, and Part III (13–17) exposes NGOs’ struggles for human rights. In a brilliant introduction, Paul Zeleza sets the tone of the book through his plea for a
holistic view of human rights. He argues that ‘the construction of human rights norms is a continuous and dynamic process, foreclosed neither by the exclusivist claims of an imagined western progeny and universality nor an equally fictive African or Asian cultural uniqueness and relativity’ (p. 17).

After the first chapter in which Bonny Ibhawoh tackles the traditional debate about whether human rights conceptions are of universal character or depend on socio-cultural contexts, arguing that while cultural differences may justify some deviations, ‘cultural relativism must function as an expression and guarantee of local self-determination rather than as an excuse for oppression, arbitrary rule, and despotism’ (p. 38), subsequent chapters explore the complexities of human rights practices in Africa through case studies.

Among other things, this book exposes the tensions associated with the lack of genuine universality of human rights movements, and shows that ‘human rights rest upon the rule of law; international promotion and protection of them depend upon a global community able to extend across frontiers’ (p. 198). Establishing the rule of law in Africa is un travail de longue haleine that NGOs seem to be getting better at. However, ‘the advocates and promoters of human rights are unlikely to make any impact unless they themselves follow the standards by which they judge other actors’ (p. 255).

Human Rights, the Rule of Law, and Development in Africa is a book that combines academic analysis with social concern, and intellectual discourse with civic engagement, to make a compelling case for a comprehensive approach to human rights, the rule of law and development in Africa. This book clearly urges for an interconnection between regional human rights regimes in Africa and the quest for peace, security, and development, pluralist democracy, good governance and the rule of law. I recommend this book wholeheartedly to scholars, students and advocates of human rights in Africa. This is definitely a refreshing book that sheds new light on the ongoing debate about fundamental rights on the African continent.

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Waiting to Happen: HIV/AIDS in South Africa: the bigger picture by
LIZ WALKER, GRAEME REID and MORNA CORNELL
doi:10.1017/S0022278X06301759

As the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to devastate Southern Africa, researchers from various academic fields have struggled to come up with coherent accounts. Utilising a social scientific approach, the authors of Waiting to Happen debunk simplistic explanations of the spread of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. The book, which draws its material from the AIDS in Context Conference that took place at the University of the Witwatersrand in April 2001, is written in a lucid and informative manner. The great strength of the book lies in its willingness to take the indigenous cultural context seriously. The authors correctly observe that, ‘Indigenous knowledge systems provide an alternative way of making sense of life-threatening conditions such as HIV/AIDS’ (p. 105). Unfortunately, the authors do not appear to take this conclusion seriously, as they do not proceed to indicate
how indigenous beliefs and practices could be harnessed to combat HIV/AIDS in Africa.

One of the major challenges facing researchers on HIV/AIDS has been how to give the epidemic a human face. In too many instances, statistics are bandied about, effectively erasing the suffering of real people. The authors made the commendable decision to include photographs of people affected by HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, the voices of people living with HIV/AIDS are accorded space in the book. This is a welcome development as HIV/AIDS is about the trials and tribulations of women, children and men in concrete life-settings. The value of the book could have been enhanced by analysing the agency of people living with, and affected by, HIV/AIDS in South Africa. Although the focus on the Treatment Action Campaign is helpful, there is a need to highlight the everyday activities of individuals and communities as they confront HIV/AIDS.

The sheer impact of HIV/AIDS has led some people to categorise it as a unique epidemic. While acknowledging that in a number of ways HIV/AIDS is distinctive, the authors seek to illustrate continuities between HIV/AIDS and other epidemics in South Africa. They maintain that earlier epidemics ‘show some significant parallels with AIDS’ (p. 87). This is a critical observation, as there is a tendency to regard HIV/AIDS as something totally without precedent in human history. Such a reading of the epidemic glosses over fault lines that lubricate the spread of HIV/AIDS, especially in Southern Africa. The impact of colonialism and labour migration, poverty, gender inequality, government policies and other factors have contributed to the speed with which the virus has travelled. Waiting to Happen eschews narratives that reduce HIV/AIDS to the issue of personal morality, and highlights the importance of historical antecedents.

In sum, this is a useful piece of work on a topic that is extremely urgent. It should be of value to researchers, AIDS activists, politicians and general readers. They will all have to respond to the question that the book poses: what is to be done? (p. 130).

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