Eyewitness to a Genocide: the United Nations and Rwanda by Michael Barnett
DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X03214208

The author, a political science professor at the University of Wisconsin, spent 1993–94 with the United States Mission at the United Nations as a Council of Foreign Relations Fellow. During that time, he became intrigued with Rwanda and observed the UN Secretariat’s and Security Council’s reactions to the mass murders occurring there. Barnett describes this book as an ‘ethical history of the UN’s indifference to genocide’ (p. 4). He claims to follow historian R. G. Collingwood’s ‘empathetic reconstruction’ approach by attempting to understand how individuals at the UN, themselves, perceived events. This is an impossible task. Ultimately, the book is Barnett’s own interpretation of how he thinks individuals perceived, acted and rationalised, and, his assessment of whether they were morally blameworthy for failing to act to stop the Rwandan genocide.

The outbreak of massive killing in Rwanda began on 6 April 1994. Initially foreign observers characterised the situation as a civil war with civilian deaths. Hence, the UN was reluctant to intervene militarily. Barnett himself confesses that he opposed military intervention at that time, having seen UN peacekeeping efforts fail in Somalia and Bosnia during their civil wars. By 21 April, however, it was clear that Hutu extremists were carrying out a genocide against the minority Tutsi. At that point, the UN Secretary General had a strong moral obligation to vigorously propose a UN military intervention force, and the UN Security Council had a strong moral obligation to respond positively.

Instead, Barnett argues, Boutros Boutros-Ghali played down the crisis; France behaved ‘scandalously’ by failing to deter Hutu leaders of the genocide and even aiding them; and the United States, having recently lost eighteen ‘peacekeepers’ in Somalia, saw no reason to get involved. Only three non-permanent members of the Security Council (New Zealand, Nigeria, and the Czech Republic) argued for intervention. None came.

Later, UN officials admitted that ‘mistakes had been made’, that in hindsight, they believe they should have reacted differently. Many ‘democratised’ the blame by pointing out that no one intervened, not even nearby African countries. Barnett writes that ‘the UN staff and diplomats in New York, in the main, were highly decent, hard-working, and honorable individuals who believed they were acting properly when they decided not to try to put an end to genocide’ (p. 21). Barnett does not, however, excuse UN civil servants for their mistakes. He argues that institutional culture can affect a bureaucrat’s mode of thinking and behaving, but that there is room for individual responsibility and action. He concludes that the UN Secretariat and Security Council are blameworthy for having been
intentionally slow to admit that a genocide was in progress, and then failing to take meaningful measures to stop it.


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The Underneath of Things: violence, history, and the everyday in Sierra Leone by MARIANE FERME

Mariane Ferme has written an important ethnography of a Mende community in Sierra Leone. Hers is a difficult task, to make accessible the secret domains in which power is exercised and constrained. Ferme does this brilliantly, giving the reader a view of the tension between surface phenomena and what is concealed beneath them. She provides a historically grounded analysis of the impact on a rural community of several decades of state collapse and a violent political legacy that reinforces the production of secrecy in everyday life.

Ferme’s superbly argued and accessible book shows how people in a Mende community use secrecy to protect their community from the arbitrary dangers of the world around them. In historical terms, this mediation appears in the covert associations and concealed sites where controversial or contested matters are discussed more openly. One of the book’s best chapters shows how women’s residential mobility developed as a means of managing risk, echoing the experience of slavery that lasted in this area until well into the twentieth century. This mobility that plays kin against affines, mothers or friendly co-wives against husbands, offers a very different picture of residential arrangements where ownership and primary authority are vested in males. This context also harbours ‘big women’, independent of supervision of male relatives or a husband.

All of these ‘big people’ contend with a society that views authority in a manner that is sensitive not only to visible status, but also to the potential for sudden and dramatic reversals of fortune. Just as a visitor or low status person may be somebody someday, a powerful person could become a nobody tomorrow. Hedging one’s bets in dealing with powerful people is a sensible adaptation to uncertainty, and gives political power, including leverage of the little people over the big, multiple channels, including esoteric and covert, in which to work.

Ferme does not fall into the trap of presenting covert techniques as idealised ‘weapons of the weak’, or women’s strategies for managing uncertainty as a harmonious idyll. The feature of Mende society that emerges most clearly in this book is stratification, context-variable and relative though it may be. Women of low-ranking lineages, for example, are also found at the bottom of the ritual totem pole, occasionally with dramatic negative consequences.
Ferme’s findings apply more generally to other social settings that feature cultures of indirectness. It is an unpleasant fact that people in several other West African societies face present-day disorder, arbitrary exercises of political power, and enfeebled states, not only memories of violent and uncertain pasts. Sierra Leone has been ravaged by a civil war that began in 1991 (and hopefully ended in early 2002) that produced a massive refugee crisis and regional instability.

This book provides path-breaking analysis of how people in Mende communities deal with uncertainty. But do these communities also contribute to uncertainty and instability? Her rural community, like many in West Africa, seems to grow little, while the country’s population increases by something like 2.5 per cent each year. What happens to people, especially young men, who leave rural communities, who bleed out of locally contextualised systems of social control? Recent history in Sierra Leone shows that some leave to join the rebels, then return to wreck their communities. Ferme’s subjects lower down the social stratum use covert knowledge and practices to adjust or ameliorate their situations. Yet at least some of these young men perhaps concluded that they had no hope or realistic prospects in their home communities and in the country as a whole that cut them off from opportunities to improve their lot.

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Witchcraft, Power and Politics: exploring the occult in the South African lowveld by ISAK NIEHAUS with ELIZAAR MOHLALA and KALLY SHOKANE
DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X03234200

The growing literature on modern witchcraft in Africa has received a key addition with this rich and thought-provoking study of witchcraft in the northeastern part of South Africa (among Tsonga and Northern Sotho-speaking inhabitants of the Northern Province). Confronted with the spectacular rise of witchcraft accusations in the 1985–95 period, Niehaus demonstrates how contemporary witch-hunts are deeply embedded in local symbolic systems, fast-changing social structures, and a volatile political context. He uses a two-fold strategy, by presenting first a careful diachronic analysis of the successive social traumas experienced by the South African lowveld from the enforcement of the 1960s agricultural betterment schemes to the rise of ‘comrades’ (ANC young local activists) as political arbiters in the 1990s; and second, proposing an in-depth structural analysis of witchcraft perceptions and manifestations.

Although the author modestly claims to follow an empirical agenda combining interpretive and structural analysis, chapter 1 provides an exhaustive discussion of witchcraft as a historical, symbolical, and political social drama. In addition, Niehaus frames his own approach in relation to early ethnographic studies of witchcraft in South Africa, and recent debates in anthropology and political science. A considerable methodological innovation lies in Niehaus’ use of an impressive array of data from social surveying, participant observation and in-depth interviews, court cases, therapeutic consultations, to the reconstruction of several witch-hunts.

Chapter 2 seeks to identify the historical dynamics that explain why witchcraft emerged in the lowveld as an explosive political issue in the 1980s.
Niehaus’ characterisation of the period from 1864 to 1959 as a single era of subsistence agriculture remains open to debate, his focus on 1960 as a major turning point is quite convincing. In 1958, the agricultural betterment schemes imposed by the apartheid regime started to fragment and disperse corporate agnatic clusters (metse), leading to the relocation of unrelated households in new residential villages, and to the rise of wage labour due to a sharp decline in local resources. Second, as neighbouring conflicts started to increase exponentially, the decline of the arbitrating powers of chiefs and of dingaka (ritual specialists and healers who can diagnose and cure witchcraft with the help of ancestors through the mediation of taboos) left these conflicts un-mediated. Third, the 1960s witnessed a rapid christianisation of the lowveld through the diffusion of Zionist churches brought from migrants from the Witwatersrand. In contrast with earlier mission churches that never addressed witchcraft as a serious issue (and had therefore failed to Christianise the lowveld altogether), Zionist churches actively sought to structure popular perceptions of witchcraft as a major source of affliction. In the Zionists’ dualistic perspective, the Holy Spirit appears as the only power that can counter affliction and protect people, while dingaka and alleged witches alike are stigmatised as the bearers of evil forces.

Chapters 3 to 6 explore the structural dimensions in the popular visions of the actors of witchcraft (the witches, their allies, and the victims), and of witchcraft accusations as elaborate social dramas. As witches are commonly believed to associate with a group of animals, Niehaus reveals how new familiars are associated with modernity and sexuality (tokolotsi: the ape-like familiar), money and wealth (mamlambo: the snake-like familiar), and combine with ancient ideas about unity and duality, disorder and pollution. Chapter 4 examines the intricate relationships between witchcraft and whites from an innovative perspective. For Niehaus, witchcraft narratives did not seek to reject or overcome the white domination, rather they recast political domination in local terms. Although colonists were not identified with witches before 1994 (they belonged to the realm of wealthy outsiders, not envious subordinates), the end of apartheid started to blur such racial/political distinctions. But the chapter’s main contribution is to explore how whites are credited with the capacity for furnishing new forms of witchcraft. Hence witches are responsible for appropriating sekgowa (ways of whites), and allowing newer forms of affliction to invade the village from outside.

Niehaus confirms a number of current hypotheses about modern witchcraft in Africa (in particular Geschiere & Meyer’s Globalisation and Identity: dialectics of flow and closure, 1999). According to his findings, witches of the lowveld are targeted among envious subordinates, predominantly non-kin. Popular perceptions privilege the levelling function of witchcraft, but do not allow it to transgress the racial divide between blacks and whites. Whites however were identified as external providers of occult technologies during apartheid, thus connecting local actors with the global circulation of money, technologies and commodities. Finally, violence resulting from witchcraft accusations is enhanced by a context of acute economic crisis, social and spatial de-structuration, the decline of local authorities, non-intervention by the State, and the influence of Christian Zionist dualism.

A demanding reader may be tempted to ask a bit more from Niehaus’ wealth of information in the first section of the book. For example chapter 1 suggests a particularly innovative inquiry when proposing to examine witchcraft as a
changing formulation of indigenous concepts of power, in which the local concept of *puso* (reign, govern, dominate) and *maatla* (power, strength) would have diverged through time. Yet the book does not really examine this promising idea at length. Similar frustration is palpable in chapters 5 and 6 when the author tends to privilege the description of somewhat repetitive case-studies over a firmer analytical perspective.

Besides this caveat, an unusually large array of specialists will benefit from the last part of the book. Niehaus’ engagement with contemporary politics of witchcraft is superb. Chapters 7 and 8 give fascinating insights on how witch-hunts changed dramatically from the 1930s to the mid-1990s. Specialists of South Africa, as well as readers interested in the issue of witchcraft and modern politics, will find Niehaus’ discussion of the ANC’s problematical position *vis-à-vis* local mobilisation against witches especially informative. In the same vein, the book concludes with a detailed discussion of the Ralushai Commission report (1995) on witchcraft, giving Niehaus ample opportunity to reflect on the difficulties experienced by contemporary regimes when dealing with witchcraft and local dynamics of popular violence. Thanks to its wide-ranging reflection and solid information, Niehaus’ engaging study will contribute to a better understanding of the new political and cultural ethos that are fast emerging in contemporary Africa.

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The *Congo from Leopold to Kabila: a people’s history* by Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja
DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X03244207

Despite Nzongola-Ntalaja’s on-and-off participation in Congolese politics since the 1960s, and his scholarly study of his country for several decades, this book makes an argument surprisingly resistant to empirical evidence, in which the author’s ideological preferences seem to play a greater role than a rigorous analytical assessment of Congo’s political history. That these preferences consist in a rather simplistic and rigid version of Marxist class analysis does not help either.

The *Congo from Leopold to Kabila* is a historical account of Congo’s politics from the perspective of the alleged class struggle of the Congolese people against forces of domination and exploitation perceived as mostly foreign. The largest part of the book deals with the period to the late 1960s, including the ‘Congo Crisis’ and the ‘Second Independence Movement’. Mobutu gets one chapter, as does the non-violent struggle against his regime in the early 1990s and the subsequent Great Lakes conflicts.

Nzongola-Ntalaja generously interprets the occasional revolts by colonised Congolese, the politics of the late 1950s, Lumumbism, Mulelism, the ‘Simba’ rebellions of the early 1960s, the FLNC invasions of Shaba in 1977 and 1978, the formation of the UDPS in the 1980s, and the Sovereign National Conference of the 1990s, as different manifestations of an underlying historical popular struggle for democracy. This struggle’s repeated failures (32 years of Mobutuism immediately followed by Kabila’s disdainful repression of independent political organisations speak poorly of the alleged pro-democracy movement’s record) are blamed on the
limitations of Congolese leadership (deemed too self-interested) and on foreign interventions. Yet, the author’s systematic recourse to the ‘betrayal’ explanation for the failure of all the instances of ‘democratic struggles’ he identifies, weakens the explanatory power of his methodological framework. A reading of most of these events as factional elite struggles for control of power and resources, within the Cold War and post-Cold War dynamics, would probably do history greater justice and fit the evidence better. For the truth seems to be that the Congolese people (if this is even a legitimate analytical category), having either been victims of state predation, participants in it, or both, have by and large failed to challenge their state and leadership over the last forty years, preferring to establish some level of accommodation with its domination.

The author is also systematically biased in assessing what qualifies as democratic struggle and bona fide insurgency. While the Stanleyville government, the Simba rebellion and the Mulelists get high marks, the Katanga secession is little more than an evil Western ploy. Yet, it could conceivably be argued that the Katanga secession represented a more radical, albeit ideologically more conservative, challenge to the post-colonial state than either one of these other insurgencies (whose purpose was merely the control of the state by other – also foreign-backed – factions). The author’s ideological preferences seem to be the only distinguishing criterion here.

Nzongola-Ntalaja’s other emphasis – on the responsibilities of the international community – while well taken, brings little added value to our knowledge of Congolese politics. The roles of the United States, Belgium and France, whether in the murder of Lumumba, the propping up of Mobutu’s regime, or the failure of the 1990s transition, are well known. Too often, Nzongola-Ntalaja’s ‘international community’ is invoked as an intellectual exoneration from analysing the domestic dimensions of Congolese politics, and a political exoneration of the responsibility of the Congolese for their own predicament.

To his credit, Nzongola has written a dense, detailed, and factually informed book, which conveniently brings decades of Congolese history into one very readable volume. He also brings interesting personal insights into the Sovereign National Conference process, in which he participated, and the early rebellions against the AFDL in 1998, in which he was apparently asked to participate. These accounts certainly represent useful raw material for researchers and make for entertaining reading. They are unfortunately clouded by Nzongola-Ntalaja’s apparent settlement of scores with Archbishop Monsengwo, Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba, and even Etienne Tshisekedi, which somewhat dilutes the scholarly nature of his work.

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Dynamics and Diversity: soil fertility and farming livelihoods in Africa edited by IAN SCOONES
London: Earthscan, 2001. Pp. 244. £40.00; £16.95 (pbk.).
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The aim of this book is to provide a more nuanced picture of declining soil fertility and soil degradation in Africa than the crisis narrative that underlies international
initiatives like the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. This is not the first book that addresses the issue; in 1996 Leach and Mearns edited a book called *The Lie of the Land*, in which Ian Scoones produced a chapter but it is a useful addition to the debate. *The Lie of the Land* mainly analysed how the crisis narrative emerged and was sustained, quite effectively questioning the assumptions underlying it. *Dynamics and Diversity* looks for counter-evidence in the present, by providing detailed case studies of how local farmers’ soil fertility management practices actually affect soil fertility. Furthermore, the volume directly addresses policy-makers and practitioners by suggesting new approaches to research, policy-making and intervention strategies. The authors do not deny that soil-fertility problems exist, but argue that these are local, specific, differentiated and dynamic, and require local solutions.

The book is the result of a research exercise involving thirty-eight researchers in three different countries, twenty-two of whom participated in the writing of the three case studies presented. The first, on southern Ethiopia, is the least detailed. It contains a very interesting analysis of the ‘green famine’ in Wolayta, but the cases on individual farmers’ strategies are quite lacking in detail. The case studies on Mali and Zimbabwe are much richer and more convincing. They also provide some insight into the research methods used. The Mali case study deals with different regions, which helps in demonstrating effects of certain macro-level policies (e.g. structural adjustment, decentralisation), and yet still leaves room for differentiation within the selected regions, between sites and on-site. The Zimbabwean team provides a very interesting historical background to soil fertility policies and changes in soils and landscapes. Furthermore, it provides some very interesting examples of experiments conducted by local farmers to deal with fertility problems.

Chapter 5 (Defoer & Scoones) proposes a new approach to soil-fertility management. This involves closer relations between researchers, extension staff and local farmers, adaptive experimentation, and joint learning exercises, as well as making use of farmers’ networks to spread knowledge and experience. Chapter 6 (Toulmin & Scoones) proposes a sustainable-livelihoods approach to policy design, analysing the different capital assets (natural, physical, financial, human and social) that interventions might affect. But they take into account that soil-fertility management is but one part of a broader set of livelihood activities that rural people pursue, and realise that these activities are influenced by policies at different levels, ranging from the local to the global.

The book makes very interesting reading. I do, however, have some points of critique. There is quite a lot of repetition, especially between the introduction and the last two chapters (some of the boxes appear twice). The last two chapters could have provided more examples, and details of how to go about changing research and extension as well as policy-making. This might have been easier, had the case studies provided more detail on the relations between the researchers, local farmers, NGOs and government institutions involved in the research projects described. In chapter 5 it is argued that not only researchers and extension officers may benefit from a closer interaction with local farmers, but that farmers can also benefit from interactions with researchers and extension officers. The book provides ample evidence for the first part of the argument, but data to illustrate the latter part is lacking.
I highly recommend this book, though, to all those interested in the soil fertility and livelihoods debates. Let us hope that it will indeed contribute to an alternative vision on the problem, and that for once policy-makers and practitioners will react to evidence of positive trends evidence that for their sake is not only provided through interesting descriptions of farmers’ strategies and choices, but also through ‘hard technical’ data in the form of nutrient balance figures and crop yields.

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The Selfish Altruist: relief work in famine and war by TONY VAUX
DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X0326420X

This is a fascinating book. It is a highly personal perspective on the challenges of humanitarian aid provision, written by a very experienced practitioner. Tony Vaux joined Oxfam in 1972 as an idealistic Oxford University graduate, and from 1984 was a coordinator of Oxfam’s global emergency programmes, managing aid programmes in Ethiopia, Sudan, Mozambique, Somalia and Eastern Europe, until in 1999 he left the organisation, disillusioned and doubt-ridden. This book is a personal reassessment of his (and Oxfam’s) experiences, in which he critically engages both with his reports at the time and with his own beliefs and assumptions.

The book works on a variety of levels. It is a provocative reassessment of Oxfam’s work over the last twenty-five years, but also raises important questions about the transformation of the humanitarian sphere since the end of the Cold War. The book’s starting point, and the focus of Vaux’s self-doubts, is the Kosovo war. The draping of NATO bombing in the mantle of humanitarianism (and Oxfam’s complicity in this, ‘remaining silent until after the bombing had finished’), brought home to Vaux the moral ambiguities and political dangers implicit in humanitarian intervention in other people’s affairs. As he confides: ‘An increasing sense of profound uncertainty about the motivation for the Kosovo intervention made me ask whether everything I had done was similarly tainted with “spin”. The value of my life’s work suddenly seemed fragile and brittle. Was there any purity in humanitarianism at all?’ (p. 202).

Looking back with a critical and introspective eye, he wonders whether organisational self-interest rather than altruism equally tainted earlier Oxfam interference. In Ethiopia in 1984, was Oxfam reluctant to raise the dangers of famine because ‘developmentalism’ was the new vogue? In Mozambique, did Oxfam turn a blind eye to the problems of government food management because the focus was political opposition to South Africa? In Afghanistan, did the withdrawal of Oxfam from vital aid projects lead to thousands of unnecessary deaths because the agency, for internal reasons, wanted to demonstrate a high profile commitment to women’s rights? In Somalia, was the agency more concerned with media profile than helping the needy? Time and again, Vaux’s self-doubts lead him to question the policy and the assumptions behind Oxfam’s work. At times this can lead to a highly individualised view of the problems; regarding Eastern Europe, Vaux wonders if his concerns ‘might appear as a form of racism. Did I respond to suffering among white people differently from suffering among black people?’ (p. 161). Despite a
tendency to lapse into personal psychoanalysis, in his desire to ‘minimise the self’, his rich empirical insights from personal experience carry the book through.

At a broader level, he analyses how the renegotiation of state sovereignty in the aftermath of the Cold War has meant that governments have taken the lead in humanitarian intervention, with the ‘independence’ of aid agencies being manipulated for political ends as they become ‘contractors for governments’. He advocates that aid agencies defend the ‘fundamental principle’ of impartiality, otherwise humanitarianism will lose credibility and ‘the pursuit of altruism will be lost. Aid will become a tool of self interest’ (p. 204). The book attempts to end on a positive note, with guidelines to ‘correct’ the shift away from impartiality and towards politicisation and ‘self interest’. However, in resigning from Oxfam, Vaux seems well aware that this view is at odds with current thinking within the organisation. It seems likely that his challenge can only be met by a new generation of ‘idealists’, untainted by the disillusioning experiences so acutely analysed here.

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Africa in Crisis: new challenges and possibilities edited by Tunde Zack-Williams, Diane Frost and Alex Thomson
DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X03274206

The so-called African crisis that exploded in the early 1980s seems to have defied donor imposed neoliberal prescriptions. Civil wars, child-soldiers, refugee flows, the AIDS pandemic: all these have become additional faces of what was initially regarded in the development literature of the time as either economic crisis or the crisis of the state. These new faces, which emerged in the 1990s, complicated the crisis, rendering it more difficult to solve. It is this long-drawn, increasingly complex, and seemingly insurmountable issue that the newly edited book by Tunde Zack-Williams, Diane Frost and Alex Thomson dwell on. The contributors seem to answer a question similar to that posed by economic analysts from the World Bank and the UN’s ECA: can Africa claim the twenty-first century? Their answer is yes, it could, if the root causes of the continent’s problems are properly analysed (Paul Richards’ contribution), and if the solutions are Africa focused (Lionel Cliffe’s chapter), but also entail adjustment by the West (Ankie Hoogvelt’s essay).

In all, the book has thirteen chapters that analyse Africa’s global marginalisation. Some employ the theoretical perspectives usually encountered in the literature on development. For example, contributions by Zack-Williams, Ankie Hoogvelt, Rob Dixon, and Julie Hearn employ the approach that draws attention to external constraints. There are essays by Bruce Baker, Jimmy Kandeh, and Christopher Clapham that use the perspective that faults African governance. Donna Pankhurst reflects a theoretical approach that emphasises the intersection of internal and external factors. There are others, like Cliffe, whose analytical thrust is slightly independent of any of these perspectives.

Among the first set is Hoogvelt’s essay that presents donor-imposed neoliberal prescriptions as contemporary imperialism. She suggests that the West should begin to recognise that ‘what is wrong with Africa is what is wrong with us’
(the West), and that this recognition will be the first step toward changing from the ‘dependency on rapacious extraction of wealth from that continent’ (p. 22).

The argument receives concrete treatment from Hearn’s analysis of democratic consolidation in Ghana. According to her, the United States has invested over $400 million in political aid to remould civil society and build local government capacities in the liberal image. She notes that this intervention at the district level is profound, for it goes beyond putting institutions in place to creating the supports that will sustain liberal values. This argument is appealing but has the danger of equating democracy-building with the entrenchment of liberal values. The example she gives of primary education reforms that entail participatory decision-making and management by local communities (p. 105) does not square with the argument about liberal values. Dixon’s view that Western powers educated a political class and administrative cadre to accept European rules and norms regarding the primacy of state sovereignty is helpful (chapter 5). But the problem was/is less of state sovereignty (for states are by definition sovereign) than that of the imposition of Western notions of universal and undifferentiated citizenship on societies with different notions of belonging.

A strong and very good critique of African governance is Baker’s dynamic chapter on ‘horizontal and vertical accountability’ (to use O'Donnell’s elegant phrase) in the new democracies. The chapter argues that government institutions are minimally accountable to each other and to the people. Unable to call the government into account, the people express subtle contempt by operating their social and economic activities outside state rules, and by evading taxes, civic duties etc. He concludes that African democracy is not ‘likely to roll along the teleological slope of progressive consolidation’ as theorised by academics (p. 94). Political developments in Ghana may prove this to be wrong. Somewhat related is Cliff’s chapter that presents African Renaissance as a long-term project, given limited democratisation in the continent and the continuation of violent conflicts. But he is optimistic that the Africa-focused solution will eventually triumph.

Paul Richards’ piece on the ‘violent youths’ of Sierra Leone is very humane and dignifying from the standpoint of the young. Van der Laan’s article, which questions the use of the term world market, emerges as a very technical chapter. But his argument that Africans should brand their produce to make for stable earnings and greater profit is a hard sell, given three major changes in the global economy, namely: the dematerialisation of production, biotechnology, and the shift from physicalities to invisibilities (i.e. a service driven world economy).

On balance, the chapters are well selected and complement each other, but a piece on the World Bank’s much advertised HIPC initiatives I and II would have filled a missing link – the African debt.

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