Celebrating a Knight of Clio: Robin Law and the Merry-Go-Round of Atlantic Africa[1]

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The Changing Worlds of Atlantic Africa: Essays in Honor of Robin Law
by Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, Eds.
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Since the celebration a few decades ago of the life and work of Raymond Mauny, African historians have routinely withdrawn, almost every decade, from the busy schedule of their daily occupation to pay homage to one of the best among them. Robin Law's is the latest in an already impressive string of celebrations dotting like memory signposts the tortuous path leading to the growth of an authentically African approach to history. But, even though, by the standards of earlier events of the kind, Robin Law may look like a rather young man, this does not affect in the least the meanings traditionally assigned to such congregations of university dons: first, to take stock of the progress so far made by African historians in a particular field of research, and secondly, to draw a road map for future scholarship. Nevertheless, the dilemma facing scholars on such occasions is whether to be forward-looking or backward-looking in the assessment of the contribution of their illustrious colleague. Indeed, depending on the age of the hero of the day, it proves very difficult to strike the right balance between these two approaches. Admittedly, the presence of the frail figure of an elderly professor may easily sway his colleagues into indulging in glib eulogy as they vie with one another in praise for the past achievements of an obviously declining star. On the contrary, the celebration of a teacher in mid-career has none of this inhibition. Rather than closing a chapter, it is a prospective exercise circumscribing clearly the challenges still lying ahead. This is exactly the impression one gets through a perusal of this voluminous festschrift in honor of Robin Law, combining harmoniously at it does retrospection and prospection in a balanced picture.

But let no one be deceived by the relatively young age of Robin Law. He deserves as much as all his predecessors who underwent the same ritual to take his rightful place among the founding fathers of the mighty discipline that African history has become today. Indeed, he has greatly contributed to the growth of this branch of human inquiry of which he became a devotee at the tender age of twenty-seven. Robin Law's long presence in the field has turned him both into an astute student of West Africa and a privileged eye-witness of its recent history; incidentally, he lived in Nigeria throughout the duration of the civil war in the late sixties. This fact explains the range of topics covered in this book as well as the diversity of background of its contributors.[2]

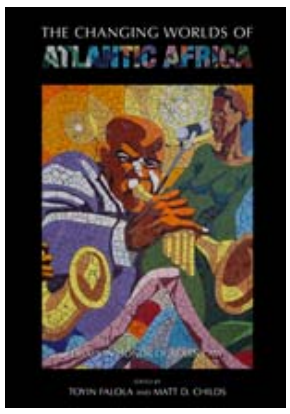
'The changing worlds of Atlantic Africa' is indeed a very fat book both in terms of content and detail. With its 513 pages, it stands as a vivid testimony of the scope and depth of Robin Law's

scholarship. Perhaps, more than one review article is needed for this book, which represents the latest statement on the controversial issue of the Atlantic slave trade.[3] There can be no better tribute to Robin Law than to collect in a book a bouquet of writings on the very question which has exercised his mind since his undergraduate years. It is no exaggeration to assert that all the aspects of this obnoxious trade except perhaps one have been covered in this well bound book. As it is known, the number game has dominated the early debate on the Atlantic slave trade. However, for one reason or another, as time wore on, the matter has become redundant, giving the impression that the last word has already been said on this aspect of the trade. On the contrary, much as one can agree roughly on the number of Africans exported to the Americas, a great deal still remains shrouded in darkness as far as the statistics of the trade are concerned. The late Werner Peukert cogently argued that statistical studies of the flow of European commodities imported into the Slave Coast can shed much needed light on the workings of the African societies.[4] Unfortunately, very few African historians are willing to follow in his footsteps as they are deterred by the widespread opinion that European commodities were just trinkets to lure African chiefs into an unequal exchange.

This opinion is hardly borne out by the contributors to this book who have given a very good account of the manner in which trade had expanded inland in the wake of the Atlantic slave trade. As is evidenced by the study of Lagos, this process of trade expansion predates the inception of the Atlantic slave trade by many centuries and in many respects vindicates the Smithian theory of growth.[5] Actually, the early Portuguese explorers inserted themselves into this well-established trade system as middlemen, carrying *ijebu* cloth from the Slave Coast to the Gold Coast. Later, when the *Akan* began to invest the profit they made from the gold trade into the clearing of the Gold Coast forest, the Portuguese middlemen were still at hand to import labor from the same area. Therefore, one can conclude that, but for the disruptive effect of the Atlantic slave trade, West Africa could have experienced a steady growth based on the exploitation of its own natural resources.

On the contrary, according to certain authors in this collection of essays, the Atlantic slave trade, by resorting to the forceful displacement of people, had impeded the process of economic growth in the sense that it led to both the shrinking of the internal market and the neglect of the endogenous industries.[6] In the assessment of the contributors to the volume, the Atlantic slave trade was a traumatic experience which cannot even be redeemed by the emergence of the state in Africa as earlier historians had assumed. Indeed, the state in Africa played very little role in the development of trade, to the extent that the living conditions of the Africans under state-controlled institutions were no different from those of the Africans in stateless societies.[7]

African states, on the other hand, had the tendency of affecting negatively the settlement pattern in a given region by causing the emergence of a periphery on their marshland. It is thought that by raiding their weaker neighbors with the firearms supplied by their European trading partners, the African states eventually pushed the latter into the mountainous recesses and inhospitable resorts. If states played such a limited and negative role in the development of the market, how then can one account for the procurement of export slaves? Some of the contributors to this collection suggest that the imbalance between center and periphery which resulted from trade expansion was enough to destabilize less organized societies to the extent that their populations became vulnerable to food shortage. They lay great emphasis on the role of kinship in the expansion of trade network. It would appear that it was through the channel of family alliances and trade networks that commodities against which were exchanged the millions of Africans were conveyed. Trade also served as a conduit for the transfer of the technologies and know-how of the populations living in the centers to the communities in the peripheries. Hence the necessity to bring under closer scrutiny these two pillars of any African society: kinship and trade.



The Omani aristocracy of the Indian Ocean relied heavily on trade networking to sustain their hegemony over the centuries and accumulate wealth which they lavishly displayed in conspicuous consumption.[8] The same trade strategy was used by the Oyo Alafinate towards its periphery in Igbominaland by stressing descent from Oduduwa as a claim to leadership.[9] Thus, the ideology of kinship, the second pillar of African social organization, justifies the control of manpower, one of the preconditions for the development of the Atlantic slave trade. Indeed, the status of domestic slaves was a direct outcome of the ideological restrictions on the assimilation of strangers within the extended families. Domestic slaves were said to be protected against sale into the Atlantic slave trade. But the extent to which captives were also sheltered against such a treatment is not known. What is clear though from this collection of essays is that, due to the commitment to family members, it was not uncommon to see a kin entering into bondage or pawnship on behalf of his relation.[10]

Here again, pawns were not immune to sale until and unless the debt was paid. One can, therefore, assert that a substantial number of slaves were the hapless victims of the kinship system. Others were, however, indirectly produced by the breakdown of this system, especially when faced by a subsistence crisis which eventually led to famine and war. Viewed from this perspective, the supply side of the Atlantic slave trade appears to be fully integrated into a system of transfer of manpower and knowledge subsequent to the expansion of the market into the interior of the continent. It was this well-oiled mechanism that Abolition brought to an abrupt end. It remains to be proven whether this momentous event was equally beneficial to the three sides of the famous triangular commerce.

Many of the contributors to this book have tried to assess the impact of Abolition in the economic development of the three continents involved in the Atlantic slave trade. Thus, in contradistinction to all the predictions of economic slump likely to follow Abolition, this decision ushered in Europe an era of tremendous growth in all sectors of the economy. This prosperity can be measured both in microeconomic and macroeconomic terms. It may not be amiss to assert that Abolition paved the way to the industrial revolution, in which Britain took a very decisive lead. The other European powers, which at first did not feel bound by the British decision to abolish the Atlantic slave trade and thus did not follow suit, also reaped some profit from the withdrawal of their British competitors.

Spain, for instance, welcomed the British slave traders and sailors into the country, and these latter continued to operate under a different European flag. In this way, they proved instrumental in transferring to their new Spanish employers all the technologies and business acumen necessary to carry on trade for another half a century. As far as France was concerned it took advantage of Britain's official withdrawal from business to expand its own sugar industry, mostly by attracting British finance with alluring rates of interest and other financial perks.[11] On the American side of the triangle, the conclusions that one can draw about Abolition are in the nature of things much more tempered. Here, the color bar was skillfully manipulated so as to keep blacks away from any benefits which may accrue to them from the new dispensation arising from Abolition. On the contrary, the white settler communities who were by then fully integrated in the world capitalist system were given free range to accumulate capital and invest in other industries. They were, therefore, poised to seize control of the colonial economies by becoming the new property-owning bourgeoisies of Cuba and Brazil. Meanwhile, the most enterprising among their black fellow citizens had to struggle against all odds to keep their heads above water.[12]

The new world in which freed slaves found themselves proved to be very inimical to black business which had no leeway except in the gray area between legality and illegality. This is very well illustrated by the case study of a black liberated slave in post-Abolition Brazil. As this essay shows, the white settler authorities tolerated the gainful activities of the blacks as long as there were not yet in place legal institutions aimed at excluding them from a particular economic sector. Thus, in Brazil, the establishment of the saving banks finally pushed into illegality the Yoruba traditional credit system operating among the black Brazilians. Another gray area in this country was the *candomble* confraternities which were frowned upon by many, even though they were tolerated by some well-connected whites who frequented them. This situation exposed the priests of this cult to legal harassment and prosecution at any time the authorities might decide to do so. On the whole, if there was any change in the life of liberated slaves in Brazil, it was in the fact that some of them have been able to use the profits accumulated from their business venture in acquiring slaves themselves or in expanding the circle of their clients.[13] The same attitude prevailed among so-called Abolition merchant princes on the African coast.

Given this background, it is a misnomer to speak of an economic revolution, as far as Africa, the third side of the metaphoric triangle, was concerned. Even though Abolition in Africa is widely praised as the harbinger of change on the continent, this must be taken with a pinch of salt. A very stimulating study of a Lagosian entrepreneur convincingly proves that the Blacks, when given equal opportunities, evince the same foresight as their white counterparts in matters of detecting promising fields of capital investment. However, the big stick of colonialism was always there to beat them out of sight. In the end, this typical Lagosian businessman had no space left for him by the colonial system except extending credit and developing property pending the establishment of the banks which would complete the job of his exclusion from the economic arena of Lagos.[14] One can draw a parallel here between the plight of this businessman and the fortunes of the blacks in post-Abolition Brazil. But even more interestingly, this description of the situation in the mid-nineteenth century sounds like a premonition when set against the predicament in which contemporary Nigerians find themselves.

Today, the same Lagosians had very little room for manoeuvre outside registering as mules or couriers in the bruising drug trade.[15] The lesson of the story is that capitalism entertains no morality when its interests are at stake. Likewise, this is the message conveyed by a study which evoked the antics played by BP Shell in the pursuit of their own interests. The management of this society did not shrink from sitting on a fence throughout the Nigerian civil war rather than taking the costly decision of siding with one of the two belligerents.[16] Given all these counter-examples it would be difficult to adhere to the

conclusion that Africans were the sole beneficiaries of Abolition.[17] Indeed, such a conclusion is based on a careful analysis of the growth of the market economy throughout the four periods of African economic history: Africa before the advent of the Portuguese, Africa during the Atlantic slave trade, Africa in transition and colonial Africa.

In the light of this argument, the vibrant economy before the sixteenth century fueled by an autonomous development of exchange between the areas of West Africa was suddenly brought to a halt after the inception of the Atlantic slave trade. This outward-looking activity eventually stifled all the indigenous industries of the continent. The products of these industries, which were highly acclaimed by the first European traders to the extent that they put themselves forward as middlemen in their exchange, gradually lost in quality and were replaced by European manufactures. Therefore, the Atlantic slave trade contributed very little to the growth of the market economy. It rather shrank into insignificance internal demand through its decimation of the continent's population. The opposite was true of the following period heralded by the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade. Indeed, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by 'legitimate' commerce, many African entrepreneurs responded to the demand of the market by expanding their business. Even though this demand came mainly from international trade, the profit percolated into the internal market pursuant to the rule of the surplus theory.

For instance, in certain regions of the continent such as Hausaland, land became so valuable as to be privately owned. These developments, which were formulated into the theory of 'adaptation crisis' by Professor Hopkins about half a century ago, led to a change of leadership in some of the major African polities and, ultimately, to the colonial conquest of the African continent.[18] However, it would seem that one would be hard-pressed for evidence to prove the case for transition. More often than not, there was no radical change either in the political leadership or in the economic field. The common pattern was that, after Abolition, the ruling aristocracy simply extended control over the natural resources still lying idle and established a rent-based economy not unlike the previous exchange of human resources.

As far as plantations were concerned, they were really few and far between. In the Oil Rivers as in the hinterland of Porto Novo, the produce of the existing natural groves was simply tapped to respond to the demand of the international market. In Dahomey, where plantations did exist, they were a direct outcome of clandestine slave trade, not of Abolition.[19] Contrary to a widespread opinion, in the hinterland of Lagos, slave hands were not used to produce cash crop, but rather food for the large households of Yoruba chiefs and kings. The palm oil export of Lagos was supplied mainly from the Weme valley, the hinterland of Lagos being slightly marginal to the palm oil belt. If, microeconomically, there is no gainsaying that there was the rise of a few merchant princes – albeit their ability to accumulate wealth was restricted by the death tolls – macroeconomically, the domestic economy continued to loom larger than international trade in the GDP of these countries and labor never became free. Transfer and improvement of technologies remained limited except perhaps in Hausaland with its export-driven dying industry.

Admittedly, we tend to put too much weight behind the meaning of the word Abolition. On the ground, Abolition has never been a straight fight between bad and good. As is demonstrated by many contributors to this book, Abolition was a meandering process with a great deal of willing and dealing behind the scenes. For instance, the prosecution of British-born clandestine traders caught red-handed in slave trading was not always straightforward. On the contrary, it was likely to become entangled in lengthy and intractable court procedure. In the few court cases which have survived the ravages of time, it is clear that the law was harder on the African accomplices of these British-born slave traders who were liable to jail, even when they were found to be women.[20]

Perhaps the so-called 'adaptation crisis' is only in the eyes of the historian. Between pre and post-Abolition African societies on the continent, as indeed in Brazil, there was a great deal of continuity. It is symptomatic that the only change noticed in post-Abolition Dahomey in this book was towards the development of kinship ties with the adoption of the *asen,* this portable iron altar designed to celebrate the ancestors of the royal family in Danxome. According to Professor Bay, this was a cult innovation which was later taken over by the families of commoners. Interestingly enough, *asen* predates by centuries the establishment of the family cult as it was found associated with the worship of the local deities in Africa and in the Diaspora.[21] This important discovery raises the question of whether the Africans sold into slavery belonged to the same stock as their captors. Was not the Atlantic slave trade one of the tragic outcomes of the spread of family based land-tenure and farming?

The essay on Igbominaland gives a tentative answer to this question. It described the process of expansion and decline of the family ideology in this periphery of the Oyo Alafinate.[22] It is, therefore, evident that rather than being addicted to any linear growth, the African societies followed a pattern of cyclical development predicated upon the flow and ebb of trade. Indeed, much as family bonds helped integrate its members within a large community with rights and obligations, they could also serve as discriminatory labels to classify and rank people on a social scale. The contradictions of the family institution became apparent when trade, which was the only cement keeping this arrangement together, happened to dwindle. This was the case of the Oyo Alafinate, the slow collapse of which according to one contributor predated by decades the Islamic Jihad.[23] As was indicated later by the cases of the Modakeke revolt in Ifè and the Male revolt in Brazil, Islam operated as a rallying ideology for all the downtrodden churned out by the mill of an unjust society. These latter were not fighting for any Islamic cause, but were venting their anger at the discrimination underpinning the kinship system.

Such are the topics covered in this impressive book. They were written by some of the best minds in Western academia whose prose has nurtured my own formative years as an historian. Indeed, it is a good chance for Africa that the issue of the Atlantic slave trade should be addressed so comprehensively by European and American historians of the caliber of Robin Law. Clearly, there is an advantage in writing about this controversial topic from the vantage point of a foreigner. As many expatriate observers would discover to their amazement, the morality of the Atlantic slave trade continues to affect private behavior and public relations in the African countries that took part in this activity. The nasty aftertaste of guilt felt by many Africans is still a powerful deterrent to many a native scholar to openly engage the issue.

But even when they are bold enough to open this controversial file, they often produce a tepid and biased rendition of this tragic episode of their own history.[24] Expatriate historians do not labor under any such handicap. They can freely apply their intellectual acumen to uncover all the unspoken aspects of the Atlantic slave trade. This is exactly what Robin Law did when he generously collected and edited the writings of former slave traders. But it is the manner in which this information is arrived at that poses a problem to the historian who would like to make use of it as evidence in his reconstruction of the past. More often than not, what later assumed the character of first hand evidence was concocted from hearsay and rumor pieced together from the testimony of their African partners by the European traders. These latter spent much of their stay on the coast within the precincts of their national forts. Such information is all the more unreliable because it could be copied from one author to the other with no fear of plagiarism as demonstrated by Robin Law's study of Jean Barbot.[25] But the rumor which was to become later historical evidence could also originate from false information purposefully spread by coteries having an axe to grind with an African polity, as was the case with Asante and its British protected southern Fante neighbors.[26]

On the whole, the written material on which this history is based appears flimsy both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitatively, this deficiency may be corrected one day by the chance discovery of a new store of evidence, as suggested by David Henige.[27] Where the onus lies is on the quality side, simply because, according to him, historians are firmly in the grip of their *Zeitgeist*, which keeps them enthralled to a particular vision of the world.[28] Indeed, despite all their effort, European historians are not any more objective than their African colleagues in their assessment of the Atlantic slave trade. Domination is an infectious disease which affects to the same degree masters and slaves. That is why no matter how hard European historians may try, they cannot free themselves from the ghost of colonialism which causes their writings to be constantly buffeted between the Charibdis of exoticism and the Scylla of ethnography. I will use two examples to illustrate this point.

The exotic literature which is aimed at a European audience purports to paint the world in sharp contrast so as to raise the consciousness of the European elite. Its objective has never been to study alien cultures in their own right but with the view of what Europe can learn from them. Caricature is, therefore, the most suitable literary device to make sense of the educational goal of *castigare ridendo mores*. That is why the process of 'discovery' and conquest of Africa by Western Europe, which reached its peak in the nineteenth century with Hegel's sibylline pronouncements about the African peoples, is marked by a string of exotic concepts. A few of them, such as the gun-slave-cycle theory and the slave-raiding mode of production apply directly to the Atlantic slave trade, if not Dahomey.

But it is baffling to realize that an historian of the talent of Robin Law should also find it necessary to coin his own exotic concept: revolution of destruction.[29] For him the rise of Dahomey in the area of the Slave Coast wreaked havoc and desolation on the previously well organized *Aja* states which had to bear the brunt of Dahomey's addiction to the Atlantic slave trade. This interpretation is not original as such. It is entirely dependent on arguments culled from the writings of the Abolitionist authors of the nineteenth century. The opposite view was also held by their Anti-Abolitionist protagonists in the debate. What it failed to explain is why a revolution of destruction could have lasted for about one hundred and sixty-seven years, that is from the conquest of Ouidah by Agaja in 1727 to the French conquest of Dahomey in 1894.

In reality, the closest that one can get to a revolution of destruction in the recent history of the Slave Coast was the relatively short episode of the Parti de la Révolution Populaire du Bénin (PRPB), which was led by the presumed victims of Robin Law. Moreover, in the case of Dahomey, which had incorporated the pre-*Fon Aja* states into a new political organization, should we understand that history moves backwards rather than forwards as is implied in the concept of revolution of destruction? Finally what is the rationale behind the hypothesis of lumping together in his major study of Ouidah two different political dominations: the Dahomean and the French? Should we

understand that there was only a difference of degree and not of kind between Dahomean rule in Ouidah and French colonial rule there? If the answer to this last question is yes, then are we not facing a subtle attempt to justify colonialism posthumously?

Presumably, even in the expression of their empathy for Africa, the European historians cannot help being selective. They are unable to see the continent as a whole because they are trapped in the Manichean world view of colonialism. Here Robin Law openly takes sides with those he considers to be the victims of the Atlantic slave trade. In perhaps the most brilliant piece in this collection of essays, Professor Tom McCaskie, on the contrary, did not conceal his sympathy with the former perpetrators, whose descendants form the Kumasi-based Ghanaian elite and of which President Kufuor is a member. With tremendous dexterity of narrative and considerable mastery of *twi*, he mingles oral and written sources to come up with a comprehensive genealogy that fully justifies, historically, the president's claims to political leadership.[30] But while it is a very convincing account of the historical background to the rise of the two political traditions which compete today for the exercise of power in Ghana, his analysis appears a little bit reductionist and tends to exonerate colonialism in the establishment of this artificial bi-polarization of the country's political scene.

Yet it is known that it is the rent economy fostered by colonialism on the backs of the Ghanaian masses that entrenched the wealth, exhibited today by the so-called bourgeoisie, as passport to political power. Elsewhere in Africa, where there were no proven natural resources, colonialism did not lend its support to traditional rule. If it did at all, it was for reasons other than the promotion of any modern African elite. In any case, to what extent is an elite whose members have to underwrite their credentials by British universities still regarded as representative of the Ghanaian peoples whose political experience it pretends to summarize? But Professor McCaskie sees no prospects for Ghana's political future beyond the 'democratic' transfer of power between these two traditions.

For him, this is the sole condition to ensure the continuation of Western financial support. This is exactly the mirage of development against which Kwame Nkrumah, the founder of the second tradition, was warning the Africans about in his writings.[31] But this limitation of the political debate to the Western-educated elite keeps out of the picture the overwhelming majority of Ghanaians still sharing their African cultural heritage. This presence of the African culture is conspicuous, though in the role kinship played in shaping the psyche of the elite on both sides of the divide. Family ties determine largely the rules of the political game as could be seen in the elegant description by McCaskie of the socialization of the members of the elite. Indirectly, he is pointing the way to bridging the gap between these two competing traditions, which must reconcile with their African heritage.

To go through these essays is a highly rewarding exercise. One comes out of it a little dizzy as one would from a merry-go-round. African historians deserve this timely distraction even if this means returning to reality with a deep sense of unfulfilled expectations. I would recommend this book as the latest compendium on the Atlantic slave trade after correction of the numerous grammatical mistakes which are an eyesore to its majestic tapestry.

Notes

1 On 22 February 2010, Professor Robin Law honored the entire staff of the Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Abomey-Calavi by paying a visit to the Department. On this occasion, I delivered an introductory speech in French on the contents of the recently published book. This review article is an English version of the gist of that presentation.

2 For a biography of Professor Robin Law, see the introductory chapter of the book.Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, 2009, pp. 1-18.

3 See P. D. Curtin, 1969, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*, Madison : University of Wisconsin Press. See also J.E. Inikori, 'Under Population in Nineteenth Century West Africa : the Rôle of the Export Slave Trade', *African Historical Demography*, 1981, vol. II, pp. 285-313; L. Diop, 1978, 'Le sous-peuplement de l'Afrique Noire', *BIFAN*, série B, XL (1978), pp. 718-862 ; David Henige, 'Measuring the immeasurable : the Atlantic slave trade, West African population and the Pyrrhonian critic', *JAH*, 27, (1986), pp. 295-313.

4 See Werner Peukert, 1978, *Der Atlantische Sklavenhandel von Dahomey 1740-1797*, Wirtschaft Anthropologie und Sozialgeschichte, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, GMBH.

5 See Sandra T. Barnes, 'The Economic Significance of Inland Coastal Fishing in Seventeeenth-Century Lagos', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 51-66.

6 See Obarè Bagodo, 'Transatlantic Slave Trade and Endogenous Technological Backwardness in the Bight of Benin Region: An Archaeological Consideration', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 253-266.

7 See Gareth Austin, 'The State as Help or Hindrance to Market-Led Economic Growth: West Africa in the Era of "Legitimate Commerce"', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 145-162.

8 See Chapurukha M. Kusimba and Rahul C.Oka, 'Trade and Polity in East Africa : Re-Examining Elite Strategies for Acquiring Power, in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 67-88.

9 See Aribidesi Usman, 'Empires and their Peripheries: A case of Oyo and the Northern Yoruba', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 31-49.

10 See Lynne Brydon, 'After Slavery, What Next? Productive Relations in Early Twentieth Century Krepe, and Beyond', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 479-495.

11 See J.E. Inikori, 'The Economic Impact of the 1807 British Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp.163-182.

12 See José Guadalupe Ortega, 'From Obscurity to Notoriety: Cuban Slave Merchants and the Atlantic World', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 287-304.

13 See Joao José Reis, 'Domingos Pereira Sodré, a Nago Priest in Nineteenth-Century Bahia', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 387-407.

14 See A.G. Hopkins, 'A Lagos Merchant and His Money: I.B. Williams, 1846-1925', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 201-219.

15 See Axel Klein, 'Mules or Courriers : The Rôle of Nigerian Drug Courriers in the International Drug Trade', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 411-423.

16 See Phia Steyn, 'Shell-BP and the Nigerian Civil War', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 425-443.

17 See J.E. Inikori, *op.cit*., p. 182.

18 See K. Onwuka Dike, 1956, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885, An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, and A.G. Hopkins, 'Economic Imperialism in West Africa : Lagos, 1880-92', *EHR*, 1968, pp. 580-605.

19 The plantations were established by the ruling slave owning elite in order to feed the slaves awaiting shipment. This situation was not different from that in the Oil Rivers, according to Waddel: see Hope Masterton Waddel, 1970, *Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa*, London: Frank Cass, pp. 315-320.

20 See Silke Strickrodt, 'British Abolitionist Policy on the Ground in West Africa in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 183-200.

21 See Edna G. Bay, 'The Kings of Dahomey and the Invention of Ancestral Asen', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 307-322.

22 See Aribidesi Usman, *op.cit*.

23 See Olatunji Ojo, 'From "Constitutional" and "Northern" Factors to Ethnic/Slave Uprising : Ile-Ife, 1800-1854', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 233-252.

24 See Elisée Soumonni, 'From a Port of the Slave Trade to an Urban Community: Robin Law and the History of Ouidah', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 223-231.

25 See Robin Law, P.E.H. Hair and Adam Jones, *Barbot on Guinea: The Writings of Jean Barbot on West Africa, 1678-1712*, Hakluyt Society, 2 vols.

26 See Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry, 'Rumor of the Human Sacrifice of Two Hundred Girls by Asantehene [King] Mensa Bonsu in 1881-82 and its Consequent Colonial Policy Implications and African Responses', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 97-122.

27 See David Henige, 'The Lessons of the Rawlinson Correspondence', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 89-96.

28 *Ibid*.

29 See Law, quoted by Toyin Falola in the introductory chapter of this book, p.7. Actually, no revolution can endure if it is not based on some degree of popular consent.

30 See T. C. McCaskie, 'Asante, Apagyafie and President Kufuor of Ghana: A Historical Interpretation', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 445-477.

31 See Kwame Nkrumah, 1964, *Consciencism*, London: Panaf, pp. 72-77.

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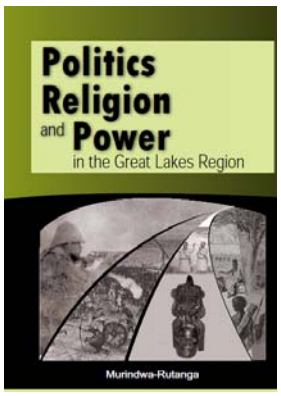
Murindwa Rutanga



Politics, Religion and Power in the Great Lakes Region covers the political, religious and power relations in the contemporary Great Lakes States: Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Tanzania, Kenya and the Sudan. The work is important because of the nexus between these countries' shared present and past - their political, socio-economic, cultural and historical aspirations. In terms of regional cooperation, they are the countries, save for the DRC and the Sudan, which form the current East African Community (EAC). The book reflects on the complex dynamics and strategies of the ensuing power struggle, bringing forth a unique set of fascinating revelations of patterns of primitive capital accumulation, resistance, human rights violations and the political compromises between traditional enemies when confronted by a common (foreign) enemy. A critical analysis of the political distortion the region suffered brings to light the relevance of these divisive tools on the current trends in the African countries, drawing inferences from the African Great Lakes Region (GLR). The study highlights how the conflicts were finally resolved to avert a serious war, thus bringing about new reforms. This history is instructive to the contemporary reader because of the frequent skirmishes caused by ethnic and religious differences, political and territorial conflicts as well as resource and leadership disputes in the GLR.

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Pratiques d'accompagnement et performance
Très petites et petites entreprises camerounaises en phase de demarrage
Emmanuel Kamdem

Cet ouvrage présente les résultats d'une enquête menée auprès des promoteurs de 250 très petites et petites entreprises camerounaises par le Groupe National de Travail (GNT) Cameroun du Conseil pour le Développement de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales en Afrique (CODESRIA). Les résultats de cette enquête révèlent quelques tendances dominantes (fort potentiel humain des promoteurs camerounais, niveau de scolarisation élevé, forte expérience dans le secteur d'activité, rôle déterminant de l'engagement personnel des promoteurs ainsi que des structures informelles dans le processus d'accompagnement des très petites et petites entreprises, importance considérable du capital social (famille, amis, tontines, réseaux de proximité) dans l'activité de ces promoteurs. Cette réalité camerounaise confirme la particularité de la très petite et petite entreprise africaine dont l'insertion dans des réseaux sociaux de proximité constitue une stratégie forte de contournement des difficultés institutionnelles, sociopolitiques et économiques caractéristiques de l'environnement des affaires au Cameroun et en Afrique. Les résultats de cette étude sont révélateurs d'un modèle camerounais émergent d'accompagnement entrepreneurial à forte prégnance du capital humain et du capital social. Par ailleurs, ils sont une source d'interpellation des principaux acteurs du marché de l'accompagnement entrepreneurial quant à l'efficacité des pratiques d'accompagnement des promoteurs et des porteurs de projets d'entreprises.

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Décentralisation et gouvernance locale
Appropriation des instruments de la fiscalité : élaboration du budget de la commune rurale de Kalabancoro
Moussa Djiré, Amadou Keita, Rokia Traoré Dembélé

Avec la gestion de proximité, les ressources ont été transférées aux communes. Ceci leur permet de prendre en charge leur fonctionnement et d'assurer l'investissement. Seulement, les ressources dont une commune peut disposer peuvent paraître insuffisantes si les besoins ne sont pas hiérarchisés dans l'optique de lui apporter une solution appropriée. C'est ainsi que les collectivités territoriales ont la possibilité d'établir des priorités dans la résolution des problèmes. Les ressources sont destinées à alimenter le budget de chaque commune (emprunts, subventions de l'Etat, impôts et taxes) pour subvenir aux besoins de fonctionnement et au développement. Donc, la gestion de ces ressources doit naturellement se faire dans la logique des principes de la décentralisation et de ceux de la comptabilité publique à travers les différentes structures en charge de la question. La décentralisation postulant la responsabilisation des communes, celles-ci doivent mettre l'accent sur la mobilisation des ressources fiscales pour ne pas continuer à dépendre des ressources venant d'autres acteurs comme l'Etat et les partenaires techniques et financiers. C'est donc la question de la gouvernance de la décentralisation qui est interpellée et qui requiert l'implication de toutes les composantes de la commune pour une mobilisation effective des ressources et de leur utilisation judicieuse. Tout ceci se pose en termes de défis que doivent relever les collectivités territoriales, notamment les communes. La présente étude se propose d'analyser ce processus à travers l'exemple de la commune rurale de Kalabancoro.

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Contextes locaux des conflits et de la reconstruction de la paix
Migration et tensions sociales dans le sud du Mali
Bakary Camara, Bakary F. Traoré, Bréma E. Dicko, Moro Sidibé

Suite au phénomène de l'appauvrissement des populations, la rareté des terres cultivables et la manipulation des élites politiques et intellectuelles, la crise ivoirienne a éclaté le 19 septembre 2002. Malgré le ralentissement du flux migratoire par la crise économique des années 1980 et 1990, le nombre de maliens en Côte d'Ivoire au début des hostilités est évalué à près de 2 000 000. Une partie de ces migrants revenaient souvent au Mali pour y investir ou pour rendre visite à des parents restés au village. Suite à la conjoncture économique depuis les années 1980 et à l'exacerbation des hostilités contre la communauté dioula, la communauté malienne en Côte d'Ivoire n'était plus la bienvenue. Après l'éclatement du conflit ivoirien, les ressortissants maliens ont été victimes de xénophobie, d'arrestations arbitraires, d'exécutions sommaires et de spoliation de leurs biens à Abidjan, Daloa, Bouaké et d'autres localités de la Côte d'Ivoire, provoquant ainsi le déplacement de milliers de rapatriés vers le Mali. Cette situation constitue une nouvelle forme de « migration » ou de mobilité au Mali. Par ailleurs, depuis bien avant le conflit ivoirien, les conflits libérien et sierra-léonais avaient provoqué un important mouvement migratoire de réfugiés vers le Mali qui a contribué à la prolifération des armes légères et créé une situation d'insécurité dans ce pays. La présente étude ne s'intéresse pas spécialement au conflit ivoirien, elle étudie plutôt ses conséquences socioéconomiques sur le Mali. Elle analyse uniquement le rapatriement en masse des immigrés maliens de Côte d'Ivoire suite au conflit ivoirien et la problématique de leur réinsertion dans le tissu économique malien.

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Appropriation des instruments de gestion des ressources naturelles par les acteurs locaux de la commune de Madiama, cercle de Djenné
Bréhima Kassibo, Boureima Touré

Conçue comme un élargissement du pouvoir de l'Etat du centre vers le niveau local, la réforme sur la décentralisation est perçue comme un processus qui permet de faire participer les populations à l'élaboration et à la gestion des politiques qui concernent leurs territoires. Au niveau local, sa mise en oeuvre met en rapport direct et indirect plusieurs « acteurs » relevant des catégories variées et ayant le plus souvent des intérêts divergents. Ce faisant, son appropriation constitue un enjeu fondamental pour ces derniers, notamment pour la « société civile », si cette dernière doit jouer un rôle de contre-pouvoir face aux autorités communales afin d'établir un équilibre entre les acteurs de « l'arène locale ». C'est cette dynamique analysée dans la présente étude qui se réfère au cas de la commune de Madiama, cercle de Djenné. Ainsi, à travers l'intervention des bailleurs de fonds et des ONG, il s'agit d'évaluer le niveau d'appropriation des instruments de gestion environnementale par les acteurs locaux et l'impact de leur intervention sur les plans social, politique et économique. Ceci amène à analyser les relations entre les institutions communales et la sphère de la gestion environnementale à travers l'implantation des projets de gestion des ressources naturelles. Ainsi, il s'agira d'évaluer l'effectivité des instruments de gestion des ressources naturelles transférés aux acteurs locaux dans la phase actuelle de post-projet, et de voir ainsi comment la création et le renforcement d'organes parallèles de gestion, tels que le Comité communal de gestion des ressources naturelles, peuvent avoir un impact sur la gouvernance démocratique locale.

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