



**AFRICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
60TH ANNUAL MEETING**

INSTITUTIONS: CREATIVITY AND RESILIENCE IN AFRICA

November 16 – 18, 2017
Chicago, IL

PROGRAM COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Marissa Moorman, *Indiana University Bloomington*
Susanna Wing, *Haverford College*

LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Mark DeLancey, *DePaul University*
Amy Settergren, *Northwestern University*

member of the Social Science Research Council. Her esteemed reputation as a historian of Africa resulted in influential positions in other academic and professional organizations as well.

Berger's influence on the field of African history has been undeniable, and her impact on the fields of both women's history and working class history have been nothing less than transformative. She is one of the preeminent scholars of women's history and also one of the most influential Africanists in the U.S. She is widely respected by her colleagues and has inspired younger generations of scholars to pursue academic excellence. Her innovative research is a model for furthering scholarship on African women and she remains a significant scholar of African history.

Written by Michael Panzer, Marist College, History Department

MELVILLE J. HERSKOVITS PRIZE

The ASA annually presents the Melville J. Herskovits Prize to the author of an outstanding original scholarly work published on Africa in the previous year. The award is named in honor of Melville Herskovits, one of ASA's founders. The winner will be revealed during the Awards Ceremony. The ASA Board of Directors gratefully acknowledges the Kennell A. Jackson Jr. bequest in endowing the Herskovits Prizes. The ASA is grateful to the selection committee for its service. The committee was chaired by Adélékè Adéḡkọ and included Pierre Englebert, Jane Guyer, Martin Murray and Elizabeth Schmidt. The finalists for the 2017 award are:

JEFFREY JAMES BYRNE

Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization and the Third World Order (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Departing from the scholarly norm that considers decolonization and nation-building from the perspective of the Global North, this innovative South-South international history places Algeria at the center of the Third World project that began during the interwar period and peaked in the early 1970s. It reevaluates Algeria's nationalist struggle and examines anew that country's vanguard role in the promotion of decolonization in sub-Saharan Africa and revolution elsewhere. It explores how Algeria, through its support for armed insurrectionist movements, became ipso facto the "Mecca of Revolution." In the process,

the book traces Third Worldism from its origin as a subversive idea—an alternative to the models offered by East and West—to a mode of inter-elite cooperation. It sheds new light on relations between nationalist elites from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, as they sought advantage by pitting Cold War superpowers against both secondary powers and one another. The author shows how the South-South project that formed the basis of the Afro-Asian and Non-Aligned movements weakened colonial states and advanced the goal of a more egalitarian postcolonial political, economic, and social world. However, these dreams fell short as imperialism's collapse led to a new world order of nation-states that reinforced colonial boundaries and favored ruling elites who used their international stature to enhance their authority at home. Moreover, the ideals of transnational solidarity were frequently tested by competitions for resources and power that tore at the fabric of those alliances.

Although it notes the pitfalls and failures, the book is not a eulogy for a withered dream, but instead constitutes the critical historical context necessary for understanding the South-South dynamics that continue to challenge the world's dominant powers today. Postcolonial political leaders in the Global South still hearken to acts of transnational solidarity as markers of their own legitimacy, and they have leveraged their diplomacy into policies that benefit at least some populations in the Global South. The influence of the Third World project is also evident in contemporary nongovernmental movements. Like the Algerian nationalists and their Third World protégés, international Islamist movements today often prize action over reflection. Each group has appealed to the impatient young who want change now—before the "what" and "why" have been fully formed.

Byrne's lucid historical account is eloquently written. Its source base is rich in insiders' perspectives, including interviews conducted in Algeria and archival materials from the Algerian National Liberation Front, the independent Algerian State, and half dozen other countries. A critical contribution to African political history and to international history more generally, this work helps us better understand the world order constructed during the periods of decolonization and the Cold War and has much to teach us about the world today.

JENNIFER HART

Ghana on the Go: African Mobility in the Age of Motor Transportation (Indiana University Press, 2016).

This book addresses a topic of great importance in the popular economies of Africa in the twentieth century.

Ghana on the Go is an empirically-rich study that looks at the history of motor transportation in Ghana starting from the earliest days of British colonialism and ending in the 21st century. In what she refers to as “automobility” and “auto/mobile lives,” Jennifer Hart deftly charts how drivers built on existing commercial trade routes to expand the scale and increase the speed of motorized transport. Weaving together stories of passengers, drivers, and commerce, she offers a nuanced account of the contradictions and tensions that surrounded the growth and development of motorized transportation in Ghana. The text balances ethnographic fieldwork, archival research, and interviews. The strength of the book is that it focuses on the contradictions and conflicts pitting transport workers, passengers, and owners against one another at various times while recognizing their shared interests at others. In what she calls “vernacular politics in the postcolony,” Hart ends with a sanguine assessment of the challenges of automobility for the future.

Hart’s *Ghana on the Go* yields stimulating interpretations of specific trajectories of 20th century modernity and modernization in Ghana. While the automobile transportation system is a 20th century global transportation technology and its facilitation of novel social formations is universal, Hart demonstrates how the unique creativity of what could be called Ghana’s entrepreneurialism quickly appropriated the new technology and developed over the decades around it a vast and deep network of businesses, trades, and professions that grew into decisive factors in every facet of Ghanaian life and socio-political history, from the era of high colonization, through militant decolonization, and up to the period dominated by state driven liberalization. While managers of the production and entrenchment of new commodities—cocoa business at the top—and trade infrastructures like roads and markets—engineers being the most visible—are critical to the history, Hart’s painstaking studies reveals that the globally recognizable expansion of autonomy and mobility that “motorized travel” catalyzed in Ghana took the path it does because the local operators seized the advantages of hitherto existing trade routes and customs, social relations, and markets, and the population at large assimilated automobile presence into daily life, particularly in the expansion of mobility discourses to include motor transportation. For its insistent balance of simultaneously evolving global and national conditions in the account of how motorized transportation shaped the development of autonomy and mobility in 20th century Ghana, this book deserves all the praise it draws.

FALLOU NGOM

Muslims beyond the Arab World: The Odyssey of Ajami and the Muridiyya (Oxford University Press, 2016).

Fallou Ngom’s study is a finely detailed work on the history, geographical distribution, cultural and linguistic composition, ritual practice and continual creativity of the Muridiyya Sufi order of Islam, founded by Amadou Bamba in Senegal in the nineteenth century, with the adaptation of Arabic script to the Wolof language, as ‘Ajami. The creative merging of the two intellectual, spiritual and poetic traditions lies at the center of this work, which makes the book’s arguments and sources a rich source for scholars in several fields: language, history, religion, creativity and practice, much of which comes from local sources on the people’s own brilliant search and finding. The twenty-five pages of footnotes, and almost twenty pages of references, add richness to a text that also includes musical scores, photographs, artistic referents, poetry and maps, offer readers both actual sources and an inspiration to be immersed in key questions about these local creativities.

Ngom’s scholarship is profuse, engaging, accessible to all readers, and offers very rich sources, in five empirical chapters, and a thoughtful conclusion, that can be followed up further, as he identifies in his last section, entitled “What is Missing and What is Needed”, where he encourages next steps of study on this rich history and its continuing creativity. Ngom concludes the book by offering this case as one example of “the various localizations of Islam around the globe” (p.247), thereby inviting an engagement between his own diligent appreciative method and the study of the cultivation of Islam in many other places. Scholars of other world religions, as they have been cultivated in local contexts, without a single central religious authority or strong link to the state, have much to learn from his very close attention to creativity at the interface of classic sources and local archives of oral tradition.

Ngom’s work offers a richly informative account of an Islam which the current reader can see as continuously creative, and a crucial counterpoint to the present publicized instances of Islam being seen as primarily either a traditional very mundane routine practice or an activist militant force, such as ISIS and Boko Haram. Bamba and his followers inspired a deeply creative, and Africa-infused, dedication to life, thought

and scholarship. This exceptional study, drawing on disciplinary skills and sources in several languages, offers a uniquely rich and exemplary account of the adaptation of Islamic sources, writing, thought and practice, within an African context: by scholars, religious leaders and the people themselves.

PHILIP ROESSLER

Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa: the Logic of the Coup-Civil War Trap (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

In scholarship on African politics, studies of coups d'état and civil wars tend to operate in distinct analytical spheres. In this path-breaking and methodologically sophisticated book, Philip Roessler innovatively bridges that gap to offer a unifying theory of both sets of events.

Roessler starts from the premise that ruling elites in fragile states must strike alliances with elites who can mobilize potentially rival ethnic groups. But such alliances are intrinsically unstable as rulers can ill afford to share real power with these other elites and can thus not credibly commit in the long run to these coalition partners. Sooner or later, the latter are likely to challenge the incumbent. Both coups and civil wars, Roessler suggests, are caused by these struggles. But from the incumbent's perspective, coups represent an immediate existential threat and are therefore of greater concern than civil wars. In other words, rivals at the center are more dangerous than rebellious opponents at the periphery. Coalitions are thus likely to break down and the disgruntled junior partners to fall back on their ethnic or regional constituency and challenge the regime from the periphery, threatening civil war.

Roessler argues convincingly that such logic has underpinned multiple conflicts from the Biafra secession war to South Sudan's civil war. The book's main case studies, based on extensive field work, are the DR Congo and Sudan, but ample empirical material is also offered on Burundi, Chad, Liberia, Nigeria, and Uganda, and the inference is extended as far as Syria. In addition to the case studies, Roessler offers rigorous and original quantitative analysis based on the Ethnic Power Relations dataset.

This book provides an original, coherent, compelling, and theoretically-informed account of civil wars in Africa. It is an innovative study with far-reaching

implications in Africa and beyond, and an excellent illustration of the benefits of mixed methods. The argument challenges more grievance-focused theories of civil war and implicitly reveals the willingness of some rulers to ruin their countries so as to stay in power, with the DRC case study a powerful illustration of this pattern.

Z.S. STROTHER

Humor and Violence: Seeing Europeans in Central African Art: Seeing Europeans in Central African Art (Indiana University Press, 2016).

This book reflects on the machinations of barbarism and civilization during the heydays of colonial occupation in Congo. Strother executes a very rich historical analysis with evidence drawn from a wide variety of media samples and three dimensional objects whose informing aesthetic and social provenance could be clearly established. In addition to tusk carvings and paper engravings the book analyzes standard apparatus like iron and wood. Strother specifies the features—dressing (associated with social status and religion), greetings, quirks (e.g., worrying about little dogs)—on which humor techniques and effects (parody, satire, caricature) are founded by the artists and with which consumers (contemporary or historical) gauge the intention of proportions of representation (exaggeration, diminution, metonymic) and also derive their reactions (laughter, smile, embrace, rejection) to the behavior targeted by the produced object. Strother argues that carved and engraved humor served as a critical factor in variously self-conscious, aesthetic, management of “intecultural dystopia” bred by colonial rule.

In the humor filled objects studied in this book, parameters of European/African interactions were not monolithic. In the era defined by trade relations, either side sought upper hand “by manipulating the other's religious and political symbols;” while European traders addressed their “anxiety, loneliness, and depression” by actively accommodating and even sponsoring carved representations of European follies, African leaders implied superior, confident, tenacious belonging with playful carvings of Europeans. As colonization developed, there grew depictions of merciless war and captivity in newspapers and travelogs that implicitly justify and morally absolve European interventions in Africa. In contrast, elephant tusk carvings of European characters watching disinterestedly the perpetration of violence against African characters spoke of a different attitude. Strother's exemplary historicist approach manifests boldly in the discussion of the emergence of blatantly ideological usage of humor in the interwar years. The analysis clarifies how aesthetic considerations—