

Everyday State and Democracy in Africa: Ethnographic Encounters. Edited by Wale Adebani. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2022, xxi + 427 pp.

This edited volume by Wale Adebani is a valuable contribution to the burgeoning corpus of works on the anthropology of everyday state and democracy in Africa. The book departs from the widely accepted approach towards the state and democracy in Africa, particularly among political scientists, which portrays postcolonial African states as artificial constructs, disconnected from society, and mere shells where real politics only happen within social formations. Instead of making a priori assumptions about the nature of a (democratic) the state, it takes an ethnographic approach to explore the diverse tapestry of everyday experiences and interpretations of ordinary people across various contexts, spanning West Africa, East Africa, the Horn of Africa, Central Africa, and Southern Africa.

In the introduction, editor Wole Adebani skilfully weaves together a diverse range of literature on the state, democracy, and everyday life, both within and beyond Africanist anthropological studies, thereby setting the stage for the central themes of the volume. Adebani's introduction is both detailed and nuanced. He urges us to explore concrete social processes, temporal and spatial experiences, and the very material dynamics that operate both at the margins and core of state institutions and give meaning to the state and democratic life in Africa.

The book is divided into five sections, each comprising essays based on compelling and grounded ethnographic research and perspectives by authors from diverse disciplinary backgrounds. The first section, *Experiencing the Bureaucratic Machine*, provides a rich examination of the state by focusing on everyday bureaucratic practices in various contexts. Markó's chapter on South Sudan traces the development of citizens' experience with a 'bifurcated bureaucracy,' a Janus-faced administration comprising military and civilian clusters, each with distinct but symbiotic roles (p 50 -56) , using the case of the Citizenship Office in their quest to acquire ID cards and establish legal belonging to the newest African state. Adebani and Obadare analyse marginalised individuals navigating the persistent and arbitrary demand for authentic bureaucratic documentation from both foreign consulates in Lagos and the Nigerian bureaucracy. They also delve into the practices of falsification and subversive tactics employed by young Nigerians within the 'parallel visa economy' to obtain exit permits for the purpose of pursuing better lives abroad (p 75-76). Ikanda adeptly examines how Somali refugees in the Dagahaley camp in Northern Kenya, often neglected by international humanitarian governance and the local state, rely on kinship to establish bureaucratic practices in managing camps. Fouksman's chapter highlights how internationally funded civil society institutions in Northern Kenya mediate state-society relations and influence the scope of engagement in forest preservation projects.

In the *Social Economy of Infrastructure and Shortage* section, the book explores how access to vital infrastructure services shapes state-society relations and the consequences when the state's commitments to its citizens fall short. U. Trovalla and E. Trovalla offer an account of how the Nigerian state emerges through material infrastructure in the city of Jose, yet remains elusive, conjured by the dynamic ebb and flow of services like communal water, fuel, and electricity in daily life. Leonard's chapter demonstrates that shortages, such as the absence of cooking gas in Chad, not only shape the state's image but also trigger gatherings

of energy consumers, compelling authorities to pay attention to the suffering caused by the absence of reliable energy sources.

In the section *Disciplinary, Subjectivity, and Violence*, three essays analyse the processes and practices of violent subjectivation, unveiling the intricate dynamics of state power and state-society relationships in diverse political contexts of Rwanda, South Africa, and Nigeria. Løvgren explores political subjectivity in Rwanda, where citizens are interpellated as compliant and patient actors through disciplinary practices and techniques. Smith's chapter on the everyday policing of South Africa's townships by young men showcases the state's inability to enact meaningful reforms and uphold the democratic image, leading to periodic dependence on excessive violence for public order. This creates a paradox where the state jeopardizes the safety of citizens it should safeguard. Agbiboa's exploration of the Civilian Joint Task Force in northeast Nigeria showcases how civilian communities actively negotiate with the state amidst terror.

The penultimate section on the social life of democracy presents accounts that delve into the subtleties of the concept of democracy within everyday interactions between individuals and state institutions. Pye explores mutual imbrication and construction of state and society mediated through voter's card and surveillance cameras in Kinshasa in the DRC. Orock provides an account of the challenges faced by Anglophone Cameroonians in their daily mobility within a 'Garrison State,' where military or police checkpoints introduce arbitrariness that disrupts expectations and norms (p 296-299). Peace's chapter examines the politically charged meanings of democracy within Mozambique's historical context and its selective interpretation, crafting a narrative that interconnects everyday grievances with stories of exclusion and resistance.

The final section addresses the everyday politics of rights and responsibilities, shaping state-society relations, within the contexts of education and healthcare provision modalities in Ethiopia, DRC, and Burkina Faso. Focusing on Ethiopia's Civic and Ethical Education (CEE) program, Riggan analyses the complexities of the Ethiopian state's attempt to educate its citizens about democratic values, juxtaposing this effort with the authoritarian reality on the ground and the resulting dissonance in the people's democratic aspirations. In his study of two Lubumbashi schools —a suburban high school and a city-center Catholic complex—Quaretta demonstrates how educational institutions in the DRC serve as a "negotiated order," wherein ordinary individuals and institutional actors, including state and nonstate agents, not only ensure the survival of the educational sector but also influence perceptions of the postcolonial state. Samuelen explores the state from below, centering on the village of Keru in Burkina Faso, within the context of limited usage of public health facilities, showcasing not a unified state apparatus but rather a state marked by its "absent-present" nature.

This book provides a detailed exploration of state and democracy in contemporary Africa, shedding light on the intricacies of daily existence within diverse social and spatial contexts beyond what a short review can capture. However, it could have been even more complete with contributions from the Maghreb countries, as their exclusion overlooks experiences that could have enriched the volume, especially given its theoretical significance to the broader Global South. Additionally, although editor Adebawu in the introduction, and Victoria Bernal

in the afterward, address various overlapping themes, the individual chapters in the book exhibit limited cross-citation among each other. Nevertheless, the diverse themes and issues in this book offer fresh avenues for research and provide a useful guide to the study of state and democracy in Africa. As Jean and John Comaroff noted in the preface, the essays within this volume exemplify the 'return' in African studies to approaching the everyday primarily as 'as ordinary activities of world-making' (p xiii). *Everyday State and Democracy in Africa* is valuable reading for scholars interested in African and global South politics.

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