BOOK REVIEW

Benjamin Rubbers and Alessandro Jedlowski, eds. *Regimes of Responsibility in Africa: Genealogies, Rationalities and Conflicts.* New York: Berghahn Books, 2020. 256 pages. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. $135.00. Cloth. ISBN: 978-1-78920-359-2.

Regimes of Responsibility in Africa: Genealogies, Rationalities and Conflicts is an edited collection of nine essays focused on various regions in Africa during the 1990s and beyond. In the Introduction, editors Benjamin Rubbers and Alessandro Jedlowski frame the period as a time when the continent engaged once again in democratic elections, which at times resulted in insurrection. It was also an era which saw the application of neoliberal policies, the birth of numerous religious movements, novel migration patterns, and the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. With "responsibility" as the key theme, each author examines how the social, economic, and political phenomena shaped and reshaped the ways in which societies imagine and "act upon" their "present and future" (1).

It is argued that the birth of "liberal governmentality" is best understood through a political and historical lens. The *Regime of Responsibility* is presented as a means by which to understand power in relation to responsibility. Moving away from prioritizing a western Foucauldian analysis on "the social," the analyses offered here center the African experience. While some authors frame arguments from a largely institutional and public perspective, others begin within the private sphere of family care, while still others analyze social welfare programs. Religion is also addressed as way to understand motivation and responsibility in spiritual and anthropological terms.

In the Introduction, Jean-François Bayart argues that the demarcation of "pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial" to understand how dependency developed is insufficient; he nudges African studies scholars to seriously consider how Africans participate in such processes. This chapter shows that governance in independence and the implementation of structural adjustment policies and their subsequent failures need more interrogation in order to understand the way that responsibility is understood and enacted. However, Bayart suggests that periodization itself should not be the main rubric by which to understand current political instability.

In Chapters Two and Three, Stylianos Moshonas and Rozenn Nakanabo Diallo evaluate the effects of neoliberalism on The Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique. Moshonas' contribution focuses on the DRC and its relationship with international financial institutions (IFIs), the United Nations (UN) system, and other global donors from 2001 to 2011. He argues that the ruling class in the Congo and international arbiters co-produced the conditions in which they acted out "state 'responsibility' and sovereignty even when problematic" (40). Moshonas notes that it is normative for international partners and donors to claim success when enjoying positive outcomes, but when failures occur, parties begin to descend "into the politics of blame" (49). It is within this discursive space that responsibility, success, and failure come into question.

Diallo, on the other hand, addresses the nature of the relationship between Mozambican civil servants and international actors, likening them to co-governors or "half servants of the state, and half project managers of international organizations" (63). Because conservation efforts and forest and wildlife management are largely executed by non-Mozambican entities, mainly non-governmental agencies, Diallo centers her argument on the responsibility of "discharge" and those who are the implementors of policy. Under Frelimo governance, the analysis rightly shows how Structural Adjustment Programs produced a level of outsourcing that weakened the administrative sector as it aimed to achieve a measure of modernization. However, in the governance that followed Frelimo, she argues that it was more of a matter of personal pride to serve the state, thus making "responsibility" a personal goal.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six focus on the human condition, with emphases on reproduction in Côte d'Ivoire and healthcare and social responsibility for those with disabilities in South Africa. In Chapter Four, Giulia Almagioni and Armando Cutolo discuss family planning pamphlets and discourse set forth by the Association Ivoirenne pour le Bien-Étre Familial (AIBEF)—a product of the international neoliberal sway toward centering one's personal responsibility as a representation of the shared responsibility to the community during the 1990s. Highlighted is the tension between the Dyula ethnic community, where "traditional" forms of family planning endured, and the more "modernized" populations, resulting in forms of discrimination and social destabilization.

In Chapter Five, Dinah Rajak examines the relationship between the sphere of private sexual behavior, family relations, and "the political economy of global corporate capitalism." By mapping out Anglo Americans' HIV intervention, Rajack shows how the intersection of European corporate involvement and South African governance with access to labor sites and housing came to administer antiretroviral therapy (ART) and make health insurance more widely available. As one of South Africa's more lucrative industries, mining demands high levels of human capital, making healthy-bodied laborers essential. Thus, multinational firms touted social responsibility as *the* goal, and they sought new forms of international support and

donors. However, Rajak exposes how the emphasis on human capital—the laborer—renders intimate and dependent relations invisible. This analysis casts social welfare as a tool by which people can be divided into unequal classes.

Chapter Six offers an interrogation of how disability is dealt with in South Africa in the context of "moral practices" and "responsibility." By engaging with discourses inherent within interpersonal relationships, Marie Schnitzler argues that forms of "responsibility" are born out of interconnected histories, geography, and the "new multiracial democracy" from the 1990s onward (141). In light of *The White Paper for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2015), Schnitzler analyzes how the application of human rights discourse opens avenues of care beyond the home. Through the use of case studies, she identifies how individuals come to expect and demand care.

Chapters Seven, Eight, and Nine take on Africa's religious and cosmic realm with case studies based in Kinshasa, Southeast Cameroon, and regions from which Africans are seeking asylum. In Chapter Seven, Katrien Pype explores linguistic understandings of "responsibility" in the Pentecostal church community. Through the use of case studies and religious television shows, Pype shows that "responsibility" is internally ascribed to in addition to any number of external forces, human or spiritual. Her evaluation shows how the tension between one's own agency and spiritual forces (good or bad) outside human control create notions of individual moral obligation.

In contrast, Peter Geschiere offers an overview of how responsibility, or the lack thereof, among the Maka in Southeast Cameroon illuminates how society views and understands witch behaviors. In a very interesting discussion on *djambe,* described as an internal spiritual force that can be directed for good or evil, Geschiere underscores how the discourse on witchcraft makes it impossible to delineate clear-cut distinctions between good or evil actions or intentions. In the context of the World Bank's neoliberal approach to exacting resources from Cameroon, the reification of slavery lineage, exclusion from profits, alienation from urban elites, and bouts of jealousy with outside intervention all reinforced village inhabitants' understanding of their predicament, in occult terms.

In the final chapter, Roberto Benedict offers an epistemological analysis of asylum seekers' testimonies and anthropologists' roles in giving those testimonies context, especially when the cultural, political, and religious context cannot be neatly filed according to a specific tangible threat or injury. Benedict emphasizes that the spiritual unknown and references to vernacular terms such as "'curse,' 'mystical powers,' 'sorcerer'" are not readily understood by those hearing their testimonies. Thus, his argument that it is incumbent upon anthropologists to serve as intermediaries and as reliable interveners is a strong one.

Regimes of Responsibility contributes to a growing number of histories in anthropology, political science, religious studies, economics, and history. This volume is unique in that it spans sub-Saharan Africa with a focus on

neoliberal periodization and the way its effects are understood by local communities, with "responsibility" as its discursive frame.

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For additional reading on this subject, the ASR recommends:

Rabinowitz, Beth S. 2018. "More than Elections: Rural Support and Regime Stability in Africa." *African Studies Review* 61 (3): 27–52. doi:10.1017/asr.2018.36.
Robinson, Pearl T. 1994. "Democratization: Understanding the Relationship between Regime Change and the Culture of Politics." *African Studies Review* 37 (1): 39–68. doi:10.2307/525113.
Zeff, Eleanor E. 1981. "New Directions in Understanding Military and Civilian Regimes in Ghana." *African Studies Review* 24 (1): 49–72. doi:10.2307/523910.