

# BOOK REVIEW

**Reiland Rabaka, ed. *Routledge Handbook of Pan-Africanism*.** London: Routledge, 2020. xix + 568 pg. Index. \$269.00. Cloth. ISBN: 978-0-367-03066-7.

Reiland Rabaka's new *Routledge Handbook of Pan-Africanism* is an expansive, if not exhaustive, work that provides welcome novelty and important scholarly coherence to the important, complex, and at times contradictory political, social, economic, philosophical, and cultural actions, activities, and ideologies that underpin Pan-Africanism. This enormous volume, organized into seven parts and thirty-five chapters and representing almost forty contributors, is a rich testament to the sustained interest in a dynamic force that not only propelled abolition, anti-colonialism, independence, and contemporary political upheaval, but also continues to shape African and African Diasporic lives into the present millennium. Rabaka's anthology is a welcome addition to the renewed interest in Pan-Africanism, joining such recent works as Hakim Adi's *Pan-Africanism: A History* and Nemata Blyden's *African Americans and Africa: A New History*, among others.

For much of the twentieth century, the significance and diversity of perspectives on Pan-Africanism have been misunderstood by scholars of Africa; this is partly the legacy of academic pigeonholing from the 1970s, and partly a consequence of the mistaken elision of Pan-Africanism with exclusively diasporic enterprise. In the one camp were Anglo-European scholars such as Immanuel Geiss, who, in *The Pan-African Movement*, attempted to squeeze it into movement studies, positioning it alongside other pan-ethnic political movements characteristic of modernity. Within the movement, Geiss and others discerned currents, tensions, and schisms, synthesizing tenets from key spokespersons, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and Kwame Nkrumah, and mapping them onto Eurocentric political frameworks such as radical, modernizer, conservative, and so forth. Against such reductivism, Jabez Ayodele Langley in *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900–1945* acknowledged the role of anticolonialism, nationalism, and the relationships formed within a triangle of trans-Atlantic influences, but tried to shift the focus to evaluating the currents and ideas of Pan-Africanism on their own terms. Langley and others sought to legitimize the

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contributions of elite educated Africans to the liberation struggles while also drawing attention to a distinctive ideological corpus with a distinctly different political agenda.

Rabaka's comprehensive work, which runs over 500 pages (I reviewed an online version), eclipses these pressures and tensions with its original thematic framework. Its seven parts cover: (1) intellectual origins and history; (2) theories; (3) the Diaspora; (4) Pan-Africanism in Africa; (5) literature; (6) music; and (7) contemporary themes. Rabaka allows his contributors to define Pan-Africanism discretely within their respective chapters, which lends itself to multi- and interdisciplinary conversations, while also avoiding some of the clunkier or imbalanced classifications characteristic of late twentieth-century scholarly approaches. Some of the chapters are richly empirical, laying out in an encyclopedic manner key elements, stages, or figures, such as Chapter One by Mark Malisa and Thelma Quardey Missedja on origins and evolution, Ian Macqueen on Black Consciousness, or Tim Murithi's narration of the African Union and its antecedents. Others are written in a more speculative tone, such as Abu Girma Moges and Mammo Muchie on political economy or the chapter by Surya Monro, Zethu Matebeni, and Vasu Reddy on "LGBTQI+ People." Authorship is global, including scholars from the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Europe. A number of preeminent and authoritative voices feature, such as Molefi Kete Asante, who authors the chapter on his own creation, Afrocentricity, and Christel Temple, a leading scholar of literary Pan-Africanism. But Rabaka has also found room for new voices, including graduate students and recent PhDs.

Assembling an anthology is always a difficult task, and invitations to non-Anglophone scholars and the difficulties of identifying authors can lead to lacunae and latent normative framing. It was a disappointment to see the neglect of music in Cuba, Colombia, and Brazil and South African jazz in the Part Six, and a general absence of discussion of Swahili's contribution to transnational Pan-African identities or the contribution of lusophone and francophone theorists, artists, and activists. My instincts tell me too that there is a lot more to say about contemporary Pan-African politics and protest, particularly regarding regional integration, global hashtag activism, and even the role of Pan-African ideologies in violent conflict.

But inclusion is also often dictated partly by external factors and publishing considerations. Rabaka's approach appears to have been liberated from many of the limitations tied to cost and length, which permits him to include some truly creative contributions, such as Babacar M'Baye's reappraisal of African epics, Esperanza Brizuela-Garcia on the historical and normative dimensions of Africanization, and Ashley Farmer on Black women's Pan-African community organizing. These, and others, such as Adriaan van Klinken on queer Pan-Africanism in contemporary Africa and Franco Barchiesi's chapter on African social movements, are innovative and path-breaking contributions that not only stand alone as important essays,

but also speak to the adaptive and creative conduits of Pan-African intellectual traditions into the present day.

Benjamin N. Lawrance   
 University of Arizona  
 Tucson, Arizona, USA  
[benlaw@arizona.edu](mailto:benlaw@arizona.edu)

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**For additional reading on this subject, the ASR recommends:**

- Grosz-Ngaté, Maria. 2020. "Knowledge and Power: Perspectives on the Production and Decolonization of African/ist Knowledges." *African Studies Review* 63 (4): 689–718. doi:10.1017/asr.2020.102.
- Mazrui, Ali. 1995. "Pan-Africanism: From Poetry to Power." *African Studies Review* 23 (1): 35–38. doi:10.1017/S0047160700009033.
- Tsomondo, Micah S. 1975. "From Pan-Africanism to Socialism: The Modernization of an African Liberation Ideology." *African Studies Review* 5 (4): 39–45. doi:10.1017/S1548450500000494.