

Olumwullah, A. Osaak. 2002. *Dis-ease in the Colonial State: Medicine, Society, and Social Change Among the Aba' Nyole of Western Kenya*. Greenwood Press: Westport, Connecticut. Cloth. Price: US\$64.95.

Cheru, Fantu. 2002. *African Renaissance: Roadmaps to the Challenge of Globalization*. Zed Books. London. Paper: US\$25 Cloth: US\$69.95.

As an academic who has spent most of my professional life teaching and researching at universities and colleges in the United States, I have made friends with and been in contact with a wide spectrum of scholars in other disciplines other than mine. Among these scholars are anthropologists and historians. I am delighted that Dr. Osaak Olumwullah's book: *Dis-ease in the Colonial State* was sent to the *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* in order to be reviewed. This gave me an opportunity to peruse the work of Dr. Olumwullah and I must say that this book is deep in its approach to examining the interpretation of the colonial state's understanding of health concerns in Africa and its dealing with health and healing issues in Kenya and medical matters in Africa as a larger issue. It is an inspiring book for Africans and Africanists in general because of its portrayal of the perceived notions about Africa's place in the history of medicine.

The depth, rigor, specificity and interrogation in this book is superb. The book consists of seven chapters that are well integrated and written. It opens up the debate on the history of disease and medicine in Africa during the colonial era. It is certainly an excellent narrative of the issues surrounding the introduction of Western medicine into Africa and the consequences of its interaction with African therapeutic and belief systems.

In order to write a book like this, the author had to have a clear understanding of how Africans interpret health issues. The multidisciplinary understanding of Africa's issues, perhaps, gave the author the perspective that the study of disease and medicine in Africa must include the perspectives of key people such as historians, anthropologists, biomedical practitioners, state bureaucrats, and nutritionists. Dr. Olumwullah demonstrates his efforts to reflect the visions of the stakeholders or various role players (constituencies) in the issues confronting Africa with regard to disease, medicine and the processes of social change in an exceptional way.

The overarching task of this book in its effort to address the many issues of disease in Africa is perhaps captured by the author's statement in the epilogue (pp: 285-286).

Central to this undertaking is the argument that the importance of biomedicine in colonial Africa lay partly in its fight against the so called tropical diseases, partly in the interest that it had in African bodies as vehicles for defining and understanding the colonized "Other," and partly in its use as a cultural tool for colonial domination.

So long as biomedicine remained integral to colonialism's political concerns, its intents and cultural preoccupations in colonial Africa ceased to be merely a matter of scientific interest. It is within those parameters that African responses to biomedicine and its practices are dealt with in this book.

This book is a welcome addition to the history books because it covers much more than politics and economics; it explores, in great depth, the treatment of the Kenyan colonial state as an "event and a process." Central to the question that the book attempts to address is "what role, if any, did biomedicine as a colonial state science play in enhancing the agenda of the state and in the transformation of social and therapeutic practices in the rural areas such as Bunyore?"

The author attempts to provide the reader with answers to many questions and issues raised through the case study of the Aba Nyole of Western Kenya.

Bunyore, the place where the Aba Nyole live, like the rest of Kenya, became the responsibility of Britain in 1890 and 1895. It is argued that the colonial rule introduced Western development ideas into Bunyore and the rest of Kenya but the British rule also created changes in the Nyole social world. It could certainly be argued that this is how the study of Africa helps to expand the global stock of knowledge. This argument is supported by the fact that the colonial state and medical authorities used Africa and Africans in their pursuit of knowledge pertaining to diseases. The racist attitudes led to many diseases being labeled "African". The author writes:

Colonial medical "experts" used their discourse in this period not only to perceive, interpret, and respond to diseases like plague but also, in varying degrees, to constitute the African rural world as a space in which particular type of medical knowledge could be produced in the process of making colonial order (p.192).

State and medical experts encouraged research that would produce theories to explain peculiarities of the African disease experience. The categorization or naming of new disease entities took on new and unscientific methods. Diseases were not named "according to their biological, epidemiological or pathological manifestations but rather according to their geographical and/or racial incidence" (p.193). For example, names such as African syphilis, African relapsing fever, African hernia were common in the colonial state. As disgusting as some of what the colonial rule did in Africa, there is no doubt that Africa has contributed enormously to human development and global civilization. It should be emphasized that the colonial state and its medical experts envisioned a plan that was intricately linked with overall development plan for Kenya. It was assumed that it was absolutely necessary to maintain healthy population and it was argued that rural poverty and poor economic development and education could be addressed along side health care reforms. At the same time it was envisioned that during the colonial era, the relevant and significant medical knowledge could be produced in Kenya. However, in its effort

to produce this unique colonial biomedical knowledge, colonial administration defined itself as superior to the African societies.

Briefly, the chapters are broken down into the following discussions. In chapter one, the author attempts to address the question of how the study of medical knowledge has been enhanced through the study of Africa and Africans in the last century or so.

Chapter two examines the body of work which discusses the historiography of medicine with respect to the political economy of medicine and the evolution of medical pluralism. The deteriorating circumstances of health care are explored. The Nyole healing practices are discussed extensively.

In chapter three, matters of symbolism in Nyole healing practices become center stage in the discussion of medical science in Kenya. The author discusses the centrality of physical features as significant symbols of solidarity. The author engages the reader in the issues of primal unity and harmony, and the meaning and management of affliction.

In chapter four, the author deals with the advent of Christianity in Kenya and the role it played in the making of a biomedical social formation in Bunyore while chapter five covers matters concerning colonial oppression. This chapter concentrates on issues pertaining to the problems of epidemics and how they impacted the African populations.

Chapter six examines how the colonial state deals with health problems in rural areas and there is an attempt to address the question of how the ideas produced in the process of state self-understanding. It is argued that the articulation of the ideas are the net result of the political economy of the colonial state. This chapter is concerned with the construction of a new medical discourse.

Chapter seven is an exploration of the specific role of biomedicine in the contribution of the colonial order in Kenya. Overall, this book presents penetrating discussions about medicine, healthcare and healing issues in Kenya. It is a deep, revealing, enlightening, thought provoking and a power discussion about the role of colonialism in shaping the pattern for medical practice or healing in Kenya. The generalizations about Africa is very accurate in many cases but caution must be taken in a few cases. Overall this book is highly recommended to Africans and Africanists who are interested in the deep discussions on the history of colonial involvement in Kenya's healthcare system.

The second book, *African Renaissance*, by Professor Fantu Cheru, chronicles the challenges of globalization in Africa. The author has extensive knowledge about the subject of development in Africa and is quite familiar with the issues that he was addressing in the book. The book consists of a brief introduction and eight chapters.

It is written in language free of jargon and this reviewer presumes that because of this strength, the book can be used by non-academics and scholars as well. Development specialists and

those interested in the development issues of Africa might find this book to be a good source of reference.

Many books on development in Africa have concentrated on providing a recipe for the development which is pivoted upon state-led or market driven strategies for development. The governments of African countries remain the primary employers of the citizens and to a large extent, people look toward to the governments for gainful employment. The development efforts are also championed by the public sector. Recently, the idea of privatization has been discussed in both domestic and international arenas as the solutions to Africa's development problems. It is argued by many donor agencies in the industrialized world that in order for the "African renaissance" to occur, the private sector must play a major role in Africa's economic development. This will, in turn, give rise to tangible social and political stabilities

In his book, Dr. Cheru contends that Africa's economic and social problems are complex and so they require sophisticated approaches as remedies. He suggests that both state and market approaches are necessary. In order to take hold and be meaningful in African societies, such approaches must take into consideration, the uniqueness of each African country. Mobilizing the invisible markets that come about as a result of the urbanization patterns and unauthorized settlement phenomenon in Africa is important. The unconventional or informal economic sector that is mainly private must be captured in the equation that deals with the development of Africa. I believe this is the author's argument when he notes.

What is needed in Africa today are more "common sense" approaches that open up new avenues for increased productivity, by laying the conditions for development through improved governance, increased investment in education and infrastructure and improved access of the poor to productive assets and information. In order to sustain African communities economically and socio-politically, the transformation strategies for urban and rural Africa must be integrated within local, national, regional, and global contexts. Development policies must recognize the strengths and weaknesses of individual countries (pp. xiii - xiv).

The chapters in the book are as following:

- 1) Africa and Globalization Challenge
- 2) Renewing and Restoring Democracy in Africa: A Herculean Task
- 3) Reforming African Education for the Twenty-first Century
- 4) Agriculture and Rural Development
- 5) Rethinking Regional Economic Integration From Rhetoric to Reality
- 6) The Urban-Rural Interface: Managing Fast-growing Cities in Africa
- 7) Rebuilding War-torn Societies and Preventing Deadly Conflicts
- 8) Concluding Remarks: A Wake-Up call to Fellow Africans

The above chapter headings are all central to the debates on sustainable development in many recent publications about how to gain successful development on the continent. Cheru's book is a welcome addition to the discussion on development in Africa.

Aside from inconsistencies in the projected population of Africa on pages 153 and 159, this is a good book for development studies scholars.

Valentine James

Southern University

Baton Rouge, Louisiana