

many associations as before. As these networks are vital to business, to labour recruitment, and to accumulation, they are opportunities for those who can participate. For those who cannot, they become liabilities of exclusion, and non-participants must focus instead on networks of survival.

Network analysis goes beyond the separation of the world into formal and informal. By linking groups and actors, associations and unions, businesses and government agencies, a dense grid of connections is established. However, it is only when 'power' is added to the grid that clear light is shed on the political economy of small-scale producers. Networks are not inert. They are live wires of opportunities and liabilities.

Meagher details the power dynamics of segments of the networks by adding layer by layer of ascriptive, affective, business and political dimensions. However, while the structure of networks is portrayed with authority, the internal dynamics of discipline, control, hierarchy, segmentation, inclusion and exclusion in different networks are, regrettably, treated more sporadically, with a focus on the emergence of the vigilante groups. In fact, it might well be the resource mobilization, the rule making and the discipline *within* these networks that tell us how and why some are maintained and others erode. In her seminal example from another garment sector (Manhattan, NY), Sally Falk Moore (in *Law as Process*, Routledge, 1978) develops her idea of a semi-autonomous social field capable of producing norms and rules and securing observance and enforcement. A stronger focus on the *process* of construction, maintenance and destruction of the networks in Nigeria would allow us to see not only the enormous energy expended in the process, but also their inherent fragility. A processual perspective on the most important networks would have been a good complement to the fine analysis of the structural conduits of social interaction.

The 'take-home message' is that the restructuring of the networks to meet new economic challenges does not appear to promote economic dynamism in the small-scale industries of Aba. The dominant structural tendency is differentiation, exclusion and network fragmentation. Meagher argues that the inability to create economic dynamism and organizational strength in the shoe and garment sector is a result neither of the dearth of networks, nor of cultural inability to organize; instead it is the combined result of dramatic economic liberalization and state neglect. Entrepreneurship has been stifled by predation and the parasite practices of local government.

Identity Economics is a contemporary archaeology of real institutions. Without romanticism or essentialism, Kate Meagher uncovers the structures and dynamics of a political economy which too often is out of focus. The licence plates still proclaim Abia to be 'God's Own State'. But if the meek stand to inherit the earth, it doesn't look as if it will happen anytime soon.

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CHARLES GORE, *Art, Performance and Ritual in Benin City*. London and Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute (hbk £65 – 978 0 74863 316 6). 2007, 256 pp.

This seminal book on the urban shrines of Benin City, Nigeria, is a densely composed work of anthropology. Gore adds an important study of Benin shrine arts to the corpus of available research, hitherto concentrated primarily on court arts.

The text provides a foundation for future scholars 'to understand and account for this dynamism and diversity of visual traditions' (p. 202). Gore compiled the book after multiple visits from 1989 to 1998, with 20 months engaged in intensive research between 1990 and 1992.

The introduction presents the main themes of the text. Gore utilizes Arthur Danto's concept of 'artworlds' (1964), as a 'means to explore the visual and performative world of urban contemporary shrine configurations' (p. 6). Eight chapters follow. The first provides an excellent summary, though perhaps unnecessary, of the history of the Edo kingdom of Benin and contact with Europeans. Gore's deconstruction of the complex historiography of Benin studies, provided in the first chapter and revisited in the last, is a strength of the text. He relies heavily on A. F. C. Ryder, R. E. Bradbury, J. Egharevba and Paula Girshick Ben-Amos – to mention just a few of the numerous anthropologists who have researched Benin. He is critical of the overdependence upon European documentation and of attempts to assign stylistic trajectories in art.

The second chapter broadly defines different kinds of household, urban and community shrines in villages surrounding the city, and the relationship between them and the *oba*, or king. The materiality of the shrine is central to constructing the artworld, for the placement of objects in the assemblage signifies social and ritual relationships. Sculptures representing the deities are part of this artworld assemblage. The role of the priests (*ohen*) and the agency of the spirits are introduced in this chapter, and further explored in Chapter 3, which outlines the organization of the *ohens* and their shrines along with their strategies to increase status and reputation.

Chapter 4 conveys the variety of backgrounds and different paths that led some of the *ohens* to priesthood. As an art historian I found Chapter 5 to be the most intriguing. Gore provides the life histories of several artists who produce works for the urban shrines. Of interest is the interactive approach between the *ohen*, spirit world and the artist. The artist makes sacrifices to the deities of the shrine and negotiates payment with the *ohen* – who initially directs the artist, perhaps by designating the pose. While the artist crafts the clay sculptures, the *ohen* adds certain medicines. Furthermore, the *ohen* decides which colours are to be applied to the final work and whether alterations are needed. It is vital that the artist avoid the danger of incorporating his or her own features. In order to avoid harm by the spirit, the artist must dress and act differently to conceal his or her identity.

Gore points to the fluidity of the artist's trade: practitioners are not attached to a particular guild or location in the contemporary situation. Patronage has also altered to include a wider elite circle than one confined to the court and chiefly institutions. The styles of different sculptors are not compared or discussed, and the lack of correlating illustrations within the text make it difficult to find a visual matching Gore's discussion.

Chapters 6 and 7 explore specific aspects of the performative artworld of the urban shrines – the first investigates songs and the second scrutinizes the use of the red tail feather of the African gray parrot, which adorns the heads of the *ohens* as a marker of their initiated status. This artefact is symbolic of the conceptual implications of privileged access to power and knowledge. Gore states in the Introduction that the imagery of the red feather 'has implications for other artefacts and also for the more customary objects of Benin art history such as, for example, the plaques and other leaded brasses' (p. 7).

Gore utilizes the terms 'art' and 'artefact' interchangeably throughout his text, giving the reader the impression that the two words have similar meaning. In the strictest sense, artefact is an archaeological term signifying an object used or shaped by humans. Art is a more subjective term used in the Western sense to

denote an exceptional work crafted by humans. As an art historian, I am concerned that while Gore utilizes Danto's theory of artworlds, he does not incorporate Danto's later arguments regarding 'art and artifacts' from the exhibition *Art/Artifact* by the Center for African Art (1988). In fact, Gore makes no attempt to define his usage of the terms, nor to incorporate a discussion of the paradigm, even in his last chapter entitled 'Art History and Artefact'. Instead Gore begins the chapter discussing the 'four main bodies of evidence' outlined by Ryder (1977). While this establishes a link to Gore's first chapter, I was hoping for art historical comparisons and implications of these artworlds. In short, Gore's book is important for its detailed study of numerous contemporary shrines, *ohens* and artists, as well as its historiography of the field of Benin studies.

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CAROLA LENTZ, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*.
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African Institute (hb £45.99 – 978 0 74862 401 0) 2006, 384 pp.

Carola Lentz has written a scholarly work that is an important addition to the history of northern Ghana. Contemporary politics as well as the relatively short period of documented colonial and post-colonial history are recorded here in careful and extensive detail. She raises issues in her analysis which are fundamental to an understanding of society in this region of Ghana. The treatment of her theme raises questions as well. The north-western town of Wa has an ancient mosque and is a centre of Muslim culture unparalleled in the north-east. The first Christian mission established in northern Ghana was the Catholic Mission in Navrongo and this distinguishes north-west from north-east, where mission activity and its associated education arrived later. The north is little known to southern Ghanaians, who frequently assume that the region is simply an underdeveloped version of their own social world. This is relevant to the task Carola Lentz has undertaken, because the political history of Ghana as a nation state has been dominated by southerners, and the southerners' assumption of superiority with respect to the north is part of a wider context in which the creation of northern ethnic identities occurs.

One important point made by Lentz in the early chapters relates to indigenous notions of territory. Highly significant in the organization of north-western communities is the concept of 'first-comers' to a particular territory, who are contrasted with later arrivals. This is both a religious and political distinction: certain ritual powers over the earth are held by priests drawn from descendants of first-comers, who give permission to new arrivals to cultivate and build on land associated with the shrines of which the priests have custody. These 'earth shrines' were, according to Lentz (p. 20), 'perceived not as a flat homogeneous territory, but as a field of ritual powers . . . earth shrine borders were not imagined as linear boundaries but as a series of meeting points in the bush marked by hills, rivers, rocks, ponds or specific trees'. The boundaries of shrine land were and continue to be negotiable as population increases and moves through the area, opening new land for cultivation, and abandoning older land and settlements.

According to Lentz, residence in the same shrine land unites peoples of different languages and cultural backgrounds in solidarity *vis-à-vis* those of other regions. She sidesteps, however, the important political mechanisms of 'fission