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Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the
Diaspora since 1787 (review)

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(Review)

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Chapter 5 offers a remarkably strong justification for the fact that Africans were forced to accept whatever the industrialized countries wanted of them. But then Ratsimbaharison completely misses the point that these countries realized, by the middle of the 1980s, that SAPs were not easing their economic troubles. Indeed, Africans regarded SAPs as a way to make them pay their international debts, and nothing more. They tried to use UNPAAERD and the UNNADAF as desperate attempts to resist the irresistible forces that were determined to get every penny that could be squeezed out of them. It is hardly surprising that these schemes failed as development programs, although there is some evidence that they succeeded in convincing the Bretton Woods organizations at least to pay lip service to African priorities. From the African perspective, this was a step in the right direction.

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Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood. *Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787*. London: Routledge, 2003. xi + 194 pp. Index. \$28.95. Paper.

Profiles of political and cultural leaders from Africa and the diaspora are still a largely undeveloped genre. The best examples so far are Robert A. Hill's *Pan-African Biography* (California, 1987), Norbert C. Brockman's *An African Biographical Dictionary* (ABC-CLIO, 1994), and Ralph Uwechue's *Makers of Modern Africa: Profiles in History* (Africa Books, 1996). Volume 3 of the ten-volume *Encyclopedia Africana* project, initiated in 1961 in Ghana under the editorial directorship of W.E.B. Du Bois, was to comprise biographies written by W. Alphaeus Hunton. Unfortunately, that project did not survive the death of its initiators. It eventually was revived by the Harvard University team of Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, in a much watered-down and truncated version; the result, the one-volume *Encyclopedia Africana* (Basic Civitas Books, 1999), generally reflects a woeful ignorance of all things African and hardly does justice to the memory of its illustrious initiators. In these circumstances, *Pan-African History* could even be viewed as some sort of rescue operation.

Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, two British-based academics associated with the Black and Asian Studies Association, provide in condensed fashion the profiles of forty major political figures in the history of pan-Africanism, by which they mean "women and men of African descent whose lives and work have been concerned, in some way, with the social and political emancipation of African peoples and those of the African diaspora" (vii). According to them, "Pan-African history... includes chronicling a variety of ideas, activities and movements that celebrated African-

ness, resisted the exploitation and oppression of those of African descent, and opposed the ideologies of racism" (vii). The earliest entries are devoted to three antislavery and antiracism activists of the eighteenth century: Toussaint L'Ouverture, the leader in St. Domingue of the only successful slave revolution in history; and two British-based abolitionist activists and pioneers of the slave narrative, Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoano. In the nineteenth century, pan-African history was characterized by the need to refute the pseudoscientific racist ideologies of social Darwinism and to "vindicate the race." Some, like Martin R. Delany and Edward W. Blyden, called for an actual return to Africa, while others, such as Frederick Douglass, were determined to struggle to end slavery and achieve their human and civil rights in the country of their former enslavement, the United States. At the turn of the century, a number of prominent West African intellectuals—among them, Blyden, Joseph E. Casely Hayford, and James Africanus Horton—began to promote African nationalism and to advocate African self-government with the motto "Africa for the Africans."

The authors trace the birth of the organized pan-African movement to the founding of the African Association in London in 1897 and the convening, in the same city, of the first pan-African conference three years later. They note that during the 1930s pan-Africanism was strongly influenced by the ideology of Marxism-Leninism and socialism as a model of development. This was reflected in the life and work of such scholars and activists as Du Bois, Hunton, C. L. R. James, George Padmore, and Paul Robeson. As the authors rightly observe, while Europe was the center of the pan-African world before 1945, the focus of pan-African activity switched to Africa after that date. Stimulated by the independence of Ghana (1957) and the dynamic leadership of its first president, Kwame Nkrumah, a new type of pan-Africanism emerged, aimed at the total liberation of Africa from colonial and white minority rule and culminating in the founding of the Organization of African Unity in May 1963. In addition to Nkrumah, the political standard-bearers of this radical and militant brand of pan-Africanism and African socialism were Ahmed Ben Bella of Algeria, Amílcar Cabral of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, Patrice Lumumba of the Congo, Jamal Abd al Nasser of Egypt, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, and Ahmed Sékou Touré of Guinea. Their political and intellectual alter egos were Frantz Fanon, Cheikh Anta Diop, Malcom X, and Walter Rodney.

Outlining the political profiles of the major pan-African leaders of the last three centuries in less than two hundred pages was surely a daunting task. Adi and Sherwood have done a fine job in terms of the breadth and depth of their coverage. They have included in their survey neglected figures such as Cugoano and Equiano, Nathaniel Fadipe and Ladipo Solanke (Nigeria), Duse Mohamed Ali (Egypt), and Ras T. Makonnen (Guyana). They also have made a special effort to include key women figures of pan-African history such as Constance Cummings-John, Claudia Jones, and Amy Ashwood Garvey, although, as they themselves admit, "the general

lack of research on the contributions of women in Pan-African history is sadly reflected in this book" (x). At the end of each entry, the person's main publications not cited in the text are listed, along with suggestions for further reading. In addition, the authors have carefully cross-referenced the many people profiled who knew or collaborated with each other. A detailed index completes the work.

In spite of these positive features, however, this work suffers from a number of problems and deficiencies. The main one has to do with the admittedly difficult choice of the political figures for inclusion in the volume. As the authors explain, "our aim has been to keep some sense of balance between the number of entries from each geographical region" (x). Yet the criteria for inclusion remain fuzzy, and the reasons for excluding some key pan-African figures rather puzzling. Thus a key Nigerian nationalist and pan-Africanist political leader, Nnamdi Azikiwe, although mentioned frequently, is not included, while his lesser-known compatriots Fadipe and Solanke are. Also excluded is Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta, mentioned no less than twelve times in the text. In addition, some leaders with dubious pan-Africanist credentials, such as Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela, are included, while major figures are excluded: Alioune Diop, Stokely Carmichael, Thomas Sankara, Anton Lembede, Robert Sobukwe, St. Clair Drake, Jean Price-Mars, and last, but not least, the "third man" of *négritude*, the (French) Guyanese poet-novelist, Léon Gontran Damas. If only because attempts have been made to erase his memory completely, mention should have been made of Denmark Vesey, the leader in 1822 of the largest slave rebellion in U.S. history in Charleston, S.C.

The authors have also left out some key references from the "further reading" rubric. While Adi and Sherwood readily acknowledge their "distinct Anglophone bias" (x), there is no excuse for their omission of key references in French in their entries on Aimé Césaire, Cheikh Anta Diop, Frantz Fanon, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Patrice Lumumba, and Léopold Senghor. Also inexcusable is their irritating tendency to misspell almost every French name in the text.

Some major factual inaccuracies have also crept into the book. Thus Hakim Adi wrongly states (172) that Senghor successfully campaigned for a "no" vote in the September 1958 referendum, when in fact he campaigned for a "yes" vote in favor of the Franco-African Community proposed by Charles de Gaulle (only Sékou Touré's Guinea voted "no"). Similarly, the entry on Ahmed Sékou Touré (*not* Sékou Ahmed, as indicated) erroneously mentions Sudan, Senegal, and Mali as having joined the Ghana-Guinea union toward a "United States of Africa" in 1959–60, confusing the (formerly Anglo-Egyptian) Sudan (which was never part of this plan) with the French Sudan, which took the name of Mali at independence. Regarding the final days of the late prime minister of Congo, Patrice Lumumba, Hakim Adi states that "he managed to escape from

house arrest and traveled to Stanleyville [Kisangani] to establish a new government and a new army. Lumumba's government began to gain increasing influence throughout Congo" (115). In fact, Lumumba never made it to Kisangani. On December 1–2, 1961, he was captured at Lodi (on the left bank of the Sankuru River), flown back to Kinshasa, and placed in the custody of his worst enemies, Katanga officials, who eventually murdered him—with Belgian and American complicity—on January 17, 1961 (see Ludo De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* [Verso, 2001]).

In spite of these flaws, *Pan-African History* is, overall, a timely addition to the African biographical literature, and it will be of particular interest to Africanist researchers and students of pan-Africanism and of African political thought. It is hoped that the problems and deficiencies identified above will be duly corrected in subsequent editions, and that a second volume will eventually be added to address the key issue of inclusiveness.

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Dele Olowu and James S. Wunsch et al. *Local Governance in Africa: The Challenges of Democratic Governance*. Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Reinner, 2004. x + 310 pp. Bibliography. Index. \$58.00. Cloth.

The postcolonial period witnessed a remarkable tendency toward political centralization in Africa, but the economic and political balance sheet generally showed up in the red. As economic and political crises, compounded by increasing urbanization, engulfed the continent by the 1970s and '80s, African states were forced to look for solutions elsewhere. International financial institutions, notably the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, foisted Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) with their now notorious "conditionalities" as a standard reform package. Donor pressure also began to mount for "good governance," with an emphasis on decentralization. The shift to local governments was also expected to reduce central government expenditures. These reforms were fraught with weakness because of the failure to differentiate between deconcentration and devolution as forms of decentralization. "Local governance," as such, did not result. The new phase of decentralization that began in the 1990s is termed "democratic decentralization" by one of the authors in the volume under review: while maintaining several old features, it includes the possibility of developing "local governance"—participatory institutions responsible to local communities.

The mixed fortunes of decentralization measures lead the contributors to ask under what circumstances viable systems of local governance can emerge. This is the central theme of the book. Governance at all levels poses challenges, but in the end, "the national political context is critical"