



Besides being of interest to those scholars active in migration studies, these insights might be valuable for social and labour historians. Eroğlu's work demonstrates how international migration can both have an effect on contemporary social phenomena and lead to an in-depth understanding of historical events through a societal understanding of current issues. Her work and the multi-layered effects of international migration it points to could therefore also be valuable to international policymakers.

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doi:10.1017/S0020859023000275

AGBIBOA, DANIEL. *They Eat Our Sweat. Transport Labor, Corruption, and Everyday Survival in Urban Nigeria*. [Critical Frontiers of Theory, Research, and Policy in International Development Studies.] Oxford University Press, Oxford [etc.] 2022. xi, 266 pp. Ill. Maps. £75.00.

In this new “critical ethnography of the state” (p. 23), Daniel Agbibo analyzes the micropolitics of urban informal transport in Nigeria in order to cast light on the processes through which “the postcolonial state is constructed from below through the practice of everyday corruption and discursive productions”. Rooted in a year of research and data collection, including participant observation, in-depth interviews, critical discourse analysis, court records, archival records, and anecdotal evidence, Agbibo seeks to produce what he calls a “mobile ethnography” that is simultaneously dedicated to understanding the precarity of everyday life among Nigeria’s transport workers and a more theoretical reflection on the operation of power and corruption in the continent’s largest city. In doing so, Agbibo builds on and expands the extensive literature on corruption in Africa, adding important nuance grounded in the everyday life of residents and enriching our understanding of urban dynamics across the continent.

Agbibo’s analysis embraces a Foucauldian notion of power as relational – “the product of complex struggles and negotiations over authority, status, reputation, and resources, which requires the participation of networks of actors and constituencies” (p. 23). The state, in other words, is only one actor in a complex constellation of agents and institutions. In this context, corruption is not merely a failure of leadership, but rather a socially embedded system of obligation, mutuality, and reciprocity. In moving beyond the characterization of corruption as illegality – a violation of what is considered to be a universally recognized understanding of how bureaucracy should function – which is common in political science and economics, Agbibo instead focuses our attention on the “social embeddedness of corruption” (p. 13) through which the diffusion and widespread social sanction of corruption renders it ethically neutral – a “behavioral norm” in a society that is seen as “hopeless corrupt” (p. 3). Both the ruler and the ruled operate according to shared understandings and expectations of acceptable social behavior. This systemic or structural condition of

corruption becomes part of the accepted “culture” – a set of reinforcing practices – but is not, Agbiboia emphasizes, “cultural” in the primordial sense advanced by scholars like Jean-Francois Bayart, Patrick Chabal, and Pascal Daloz. Rather, he argues, systemic corruption compels citizens to participation in order to survive and advance even as they protest corrupt acts, call for reform, and support anti-corruption measures.

In doing so, Agbiboia challenges many of the contradictions and oversimplifications found in scholarly and popular depictions of contemporary African (urban) politics – failed state, powerless populace, weak civil society – and points to a much more complex and dynamic understanding of everyday life in many African cities. Agbiboia’s argument is rooted in an analysis of the practices of Nigeria’s “informal urban transport sector”, including both the ubiquitous *danfo* minibuses and *okada* motorcycles that ply the streets of Lagos. Average Nigerians, as epitomized by the transport workers who operate in this sector, “are not passive in the face of corruption, but rather appropriate it in a variety of ways to minimize risk, maximize profit, and impose order on their workaday world” (p. 17). The “informal” nature of this sector, he argues, makes transport workers particularly vulnerable in the face of corrupt systems. Embracing a notion of “informal” as “the self-organizing capacity of social actors who operate ‘inside the system, but outside the law’” (p. 17), Agbiboia argues that transport workers’ precarious status within the social, political, and economic landscape of contemporary Lagos often compels them to participate in corruption as a survival strategy. This is, in part, a reflection of the profound corruption of public officials who wield their law enforcement powers in order to extract bribes from people operating at the margins of society or outside of formal categories or systems of recognition. However, drivers and their conductors are equally subject to pressure from union officials and tax collectors, who have been emboldened and empowered through the decentralization of state services and the co-opting of various parts of the private sector, brought on through structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in the late twentieth century.

Agbiboia traces these themes across six theoretically informed chapters and a brief conclusion. The introduction lays out the broader parameters of the debates about corruption in order to situate the project and clarify its significance. Chapter One, “Corruption and the Crisis of Values”, explores these issues further, detailing some of the debates about how to define corruption and elaborating the particular culture of corruption that has emerged in the context of Nigeria’s post-independence oil economy. Chapter Two, “The Language of Corruption”, uses popular phrases invoked to describe corruption in order to further explore the shared experience of corruption across various social, political, and economic registers. Here, Agbiboia also argues that the local language and concepts associated with corruption can help us understand what behaviors or practices individuals are willing to accept within a particular social context. Chapter Three, “The Politics of Informal Transport”, explores practices common in the informal urban transport sector operating across the continent as a sort of index of the precarity of urban life in many parts of the continent. Importantly, Agbiboia argues that while transport workers are often cast as criminals, they are just as often (daily) victims of corruption. Chapter Four, “The Art of Survival”, uses vehicle slogans to explore how transport workers understand the “everyday

spaces of maneuver, survival, and opportunities” (p. 44) available to them. Chapter Five, “Nigeria’s Transport Mafia”, details the practices of corrupt unionists and tax collectors and highlights their connection to the politics of structural adjustment reform. Chapter Six, “The Paradox of Urban Reform”, argues that urban reform can reproduce corruption in everyday life, tracing the corrupt actions of law enforcement agents in the wake of the 2012 Lagos State Road Traffic Law. At the same time, however, he argues that, in the midst of this corruption, transport workers and their associations sought to push back against the actions of these agents and the limitations of the law. The brief conclusion revisits Agbiboa’s argument about the relational and dialectical nature of power and corruption. The book, he asserts, is ultimately not just about corruption, but also about a broader set of issues related to the city and its transport sector.

In attempting to provide a “grounded, place-based understanding of corruption”, Agbiboa helpfully moves us past old and unnecessarily limiting assumptions about corruption as a function of failed states to instead understand the complex dynamics of daily life. This is a welcome revisiting of old debates with a fresh new perspective informed by a broad literature that is heavily anchored in anthropology, but which also includes history, political science, economics, and other allied fields. The more abstract nature of the first two chapters seemed, in some ways, like a missed opportunity to show what it might look like to ground a discussion of corruption and its definition in a case study and create greater narrative and analytical continuity throughout the book.

Particularly in the broader points about this transport sector – both within individual instances and across the continent – Agbiboa makes some generalizations or assumptions that seem increasingly common in scholarship on African transport systems, often in the service of drawing broader conclusions about the field, that often occlude or elide important differences in both culture and practice. The specific historical, cultural, economic, spatial, and infrastructural contexts of these different transport systems and the way those specific contexts shape the cultures, practices, and values associated with urban mobility and infrastructure are critical. Overgeneralizations about this sector continue to be used to justify inadequate development initiatives and reform measures and limit our ability to learn productive lessons from the differences that exist in different contexts. There is some hint of this tension in Agbiboa’s discussion of “informality” – transport owners and operators are not always “outside the law” but the reduction of these practices to binary categories has too often obscured the complex realities. Even across West Africa – or, for that matter, in Nigeria itself – there are significant competing historical narratives and trajectories that shape contemporary practices. Just as “corruption” has locally significant meanings within complex networks of signification and mutuality, so do mobility and technology.

That said, Agbiboa’s work provides a refreshing new take on the politics of mobility in urban Africa. His rich and thoughtful interdisciplinary approach to an issue that holds incredible significance in ongoing debates about the current state and future trajectory of urban governance on the continent advances our understanding of everyday life in African cities and deserves wide readership. Particularly as the experience of

precarity becomes more widespread around the world, this book provides instructive lessons on thinking about the micropolitics of power and mobility.

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doi:10.1017/S0020859023000287

CANDIDO, MARIANA P. *Wealth, Land, and Property in Angola. A History of Dispossession, Slavery, and Inequality.* [African Studies Series, 160.] Cambridge University Press, Cambridge [etc.] 2022. xiv, 323 pp. Ill. Maps. £85.00. (Paper: £26.99; E-book: \$34.99.)

For more than seventy years, Africa has been regarded as a land-abundant and labour-scarce continent in mainstream economic and social history. This scholarship has been partially inspired by the Nieboer–Domar thesis, which, in short, contends that land surplus and insufficient manpower led polities, and economic and social elites, to invest in the accumulation of wealth in people rather than in amassing wealth in land. In the case of Africa, specialists hold that land abundance and people’s scarcity led to the creation of lineages and the establishment of dependency ties as a means to gather wealth. Wealth in people, on the other hand, has been regarded by scholars as one of the key explanations for the existence of widespread warfare, slavery, and other forms of dependency in the continent, and for the involvement of African polities and economic elites in the different streams of the commerce in enslaved Africans.

The new book by Mariana P. Candido, *Wealth, Land, and Property in Angola*, not only challenges this dominant historical narrative in various ways, but also unveils its colonial roots in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By so doing, it also calls for a “decolonization” and “gendering” of African economic and social history, and for the setting up of a research agenda in which African perspectives and knowledge are given their rightful place in the main historical narrative.

Firstly, by analysing in detail the rich evidence gathered from various Angolan, Brazilian, and Portuguese historical archives, Candido demonstrates that in coastal West Central Africa people accumulated wealth not only in people, but also in land. Rulers, elites, as well as commoners not only “claim[ed]” and register[ed] land [from as early as] the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries”, but also “entered into a series of disputes over property in the nineteenth century” with Portuguese colonial settlers (p. 1). This evidence attests not only to the importance given by West Central Africans to landownership, but also makes clear the existence of local landownership rights and regimes, and how these clashed with European property ownership ideas from as early as the precolonial era, and continuing into the colonial period (Chapter One). Simultaneously, the existence of these archival records is a testimony to how Europeans and Africans had to negotiate regimes of landownership and how African rulers, elites, and commoners made use of the judicial institutions,