

2015

## The Editor's Preface

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### Recommended Citation

. "The Editor's Preface." *Journal of Retracing Africa*: Vol. 2, Issue 1 (2015). <http://encompass.eku.edu/jora/vol2/iss1/1>

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## Editor's Preface

The *Journal of Retracing Africa* (JORA) is honored to publish the second volume dedicated to some of the issues surrounding Africa's socio-political and economic development. The attitude in the West over the last three decades has been to exaggerate and generalize problems in Africa and ignore many positive news that typify modern Africa. This unreliable approach has continued to becloud proper understanding of the problems African countries face, the domestic and external forces that created them, and the efforts Africans have made to address them. The impression that Africa remains a lost continent persists in the minds of many in the West in spite of the fact that six out of the thirteen fastest-growing economies in the world are located in Africa: Rwanda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Ethiopia.<sup>1</sup> As the World Bank's *June 2015 Global Economic Prospects* reveals, these African countries possess the highest projected Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) from 2014 through 2017.<sup>2</sup> JORA publishes articles that provide a much more balanced and comprehensive analysis of the complex and challenging social, economic and political transformation in Africa since the precolonial period.

We witnessed a significant increase this year in submissions. This second volume of JORA includes three articles and 18 book reviews. In "Leadership and African Agency for Development in Post-Fifty Africa," Chikwendu Christian Ukaegbu examines the remarkable progress made in Africa fifty years since independence, the obstacles that threatened to hinder the development of African economies, and the strategies to facilitate rapid economic development fifty years ahead. He argues that Africa's future promises to be bright if political leaders in their various countries place "local human resources or domestic agency" at the epicenter of developmental process, abandon their "fixation on extractive economies," and embrace a policy that "sees development as the primary responsibility of endogenous agency."<sup>3</sup> Emphasizing the importance of leadership as a critical agent of change, the author concludes that "Only countries that have transformational leadership embodied in a developmental state can achieve such a change in the highly competitive global economy."<sup>4</sup>

The role played by the Aro sub-cultural Igbo group in the social, political, and economic development of Eastern Nigeria since the precolonial period has not

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<sup>1</sup>World Bank Group, *June 2015 Global Economic Prospects: The Global Economy in Transition* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, 2015).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Chikwendu Christian Ukaegbu, "Leadership and African Agency for Development in Post-Fifty Africa," *Journal of Retracing Africa* 2, no. 1 (Fall 2015): 1.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 26.

been fully studied. In “The Dual Image of the Aro in Igbo Development History: An Aftermath of their Role in the Slave Trade,” Ndu Life Njoku argues that the Aro were at the center of the transformative (though controversial) activities that shaped the history of precolonial, colonial, and post-colonial eastern region of Nigeria. As Njoku shows, “the negative and positive experiences that neighboring Igbo communities had of the Aro since the fifteenth century helped to evoke hatred, fear, and horror on the one hand and wonder, awe, and admiration on the other.”<sup>5</sup> The author concludes that the contemporary perception of the Aro had roots in the dominant role they played during the era of the Atlantic Slave Trade and the assertive manner they confronted British administrators during the colonial rule. The British attitude to the Aro people was a mixture of reluctant admiration and mild resentment. As one official puts it, “Thirty- five years ago the country was opened up and we knew little about the natives, but we did realize that the Aro were very different from the other tribes in those parts.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, another official wrote that the Aro established “their relatively great intelligence, as compared with other native tribes.”<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the people’s use of that intelligence to outwit British colonial officials earned them a bad reputation. As one colonial official puts it, the Aro “have done a lot of harm as if they are sent to bring the mail they levy blackmail.”<sup>8</sup> Njoku’s article offers a priceless insight into how dominant ethnic groups in Africa such as the Aro engaged with colonial rule and sometimes thrived economically despite the dictatorship that characterized colonial rule.

One of the major obstacles to the economic development of Africa, especially since the 1990s, is the relentless waves of terrorist attacks across the continent and the resultant sense of insecurity. Nowhere in Africa is this threat potentially more consequential than in Nigeria, Africa’s largest economy. In “Beyond Political Islam: Nigeria, the Boko Haram Crisis and the Imperative of National Consensus,” Simeon H.O. Alozieuwa shows how Nigeria’s social, economic, and political order has been increasingly challenged by the Boko Haram terrorist organization. Placing political variables at the center of his analysis, Alozieuwa argues that the “outburst” of the sect derived from the “sense of exclusion by some powerful political forces from the northern part of the country.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ndu Life Njoku, “The Dual Image of the Aro in Igbo Development History: An Aftermath of their Role in the Slave Trade,” *Journal of Retracing Africa* 2, no. 1 (Fall 2015): 29.

<sup>6</sup>Rhodes House, Oxford MSS., Afr. S. 375 (3), *The Resurrection of the Long Juju*, 1908, 2.

<sup>7</sup>Cd. 1768-10, Colonial Reports—Annual, no. 405, Southern Nigeria Report for 1902.

<sup>8</sup>National Archive Enugu, CSE 1/86/43, *3rd Political Report*, Major H. Trenchard, Ababaliki, March 17, 1908.

<sup>9</sup>Simeon H.O. Alozieuwa, “Beyond Political Islam: Nigeria, the Boko Haram Crisis and the Imperative of National Consensus,” *Journal of Retracing Africa* 2, no. 1 (Fall 2015):51.

The author shows that Boko Haram has reshaped Nigeria's political and security landscape, especially since 2002.<sup>10</sup> It reveals that the activities of the sect have continued to create havoc across many northern states, threaten southern states, and scare foreign and local investors and workers. The sect has become more or less a criminal enterprise bent on irrational killings of innocent civilians in Nigeria, the highlights of which was the kidnapping of more than 200 young Muslim and Christian students at gunpoint while they were sleeping in their dormitories at the Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok, Borno state on April 14, 2014. This article reminds us that the violence and destructiveness of Boko Haram poses a formidable threat to Nigeria's attempts to construct a united, modern, and prosperous country.

The eighteen book reviews published in this volume capture the rich and complex experience that define modern Africa. They cover a wide range of periods, regions, and topics such as Middle Eastern immigrants in French colonial West Africa, dance and music in Malawi, war on drugs in modern Africa, agriculture and the challenge of food security, Africa's foreign relations, healthcare and survival, imperialism and decolonization, postcolonial migration, identity crisis, the Cold War politics, women issues, and economic challenges. Our book reviewers brought their expertise to help our readers understand the diversity and richness of Africa's histories, peoples, cultures, and societies. The articles together with the book reviews will certainly make for a fascinating read.

Special thanks are due to our authors and book reviewers for their dedication, and for trusting us with their manuscripts. Many thanks to our readers for revising the manuscripts with care and intelligence. Without the dedication of members of the editorial team, this volume would not have appeared. Thank you. I am especially indebted to Drs. Tiffany F. Jones and Tamba M'bayo for accepting more than their fair share of responsibilities to ensure that this volume is published. This volume, more importantly, benefited from the unrelenting support of Berkeley Electronic Press, Eastern Kentucky University Libraries, University Programs at Eastern Kentucky University, the African/African-American Studies program and the Department of History at Eastern Kentucky University. I appreciate them.

Ogechi E. Anyanwu  
Editor-in-Chief.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.