Cosmopolitan Africa: C.1700–1875. Trevor R. Getz. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. ISBN: 9780199764709

In the late nineteenth century, European leaders such as Jules Ferry, the Prime Minister of France, and Joseph Chamberlain, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, believed the West had a duty to civilize Africans. This mission was to be accomplished through the constructive exploitation of African resources for the benefit of Europe and Africa. Such an ideology rested on the false belief that Africans were "backward" and needed the Europeans to help organize their societies and institutions in a civilized manner. In *Cosmopolitan Africa*, Trevor R. Getz challenges this conception of Africa. Looking at the period sandwiched between the peak of the Atlantic slave trade and the start of official colonization, he argues that African societies had complex institutions and global relations. African societies, the author argues, were not "backward" and isolated—they were cosmopolitan. *Cosmopolitan Africa* is divided into five sections corresponding to the major themes Getz addresses: state organization, the oceanic era, spiritual beliefs, economic relations and relations with the West. In the first section, he looks at the dynamics of pre-colonial African states and how they related to one another and to the external world. Three types of African states are explored: the centralized states such as Buganda, the decentralized states of the Delta Niger in West Africa and the states that were ruled by foreigners, e.g. Egypt. He argues that the organization of the kingdom of Buganda in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was a monumental shift. This process led to the unification of warring clans and the construction of ideologies of state and power. These ideologies, which attempted to balance the power between the king (Kabaka) and the clan leaders, helped unify and strengthen the kingdom; thus, "Buganda managed to be both cosmopolitan and unified at the same time" (6).

In the second and fourth sections of the book, Getz looks at how the oceans provided a vital link in Africa's global economic relations in the eighteenth century. African states of this period had ties extending beyond the shores of Africa. The inventions and advancements in steamship and navigable technologies made travel to distant parts of the world possible. Geographically, Africa is linked by three major seas: the Mediterranean Sea stretches across the North of Africa, the Indian Ocean spans the east coast and the Atlantic Ocean flows along the western shore of Africa. Commerce, whether of goods or persons, was the primary function of these sea routes. Africans were active participants in the global trade as "traders, consumers, and sailors" (67). African societies supplied some of the raw materials used for production in Europe. This in turn changed production at home, as the economy was reorganized to meet this new global need. Some of the exports from Africa were palm oil, coffee, and spices. The author offers a convincing argument that Britain's overseas colonies helped fuel the industrial revolution as they provided the essential raw materials. Africa's contribution was in three main ways: "The first was the production of primary resources such as cotton and wool, which fed the factories of Britain. The second was industrial materials, including lubricants and gums that were used in the production process. The third was crops consumed by European workers and managers, such as

coffee, tea, spices, and tobacco" (75). This commerce created trading networks deepening Africa's relations around the globe. Getz does an excellent job linking Africa's primary production with the rise of the industrial revolution, addressing a salient but often neglected fact.

Religious practice is one area in which the cosmopolitan nature of African societies is very visible. There are multiple religious traditions in Africa. Apart from the traditional African religions historically practiced by the local people, Islam and Christianity came to Africa due to interaction with other parts of the world. Getz argues that "African spiritual practice between approximately 1700 and 1875 was as cosmopolitan as African politics, commerce and demographics. In many regions, there was no single 'traditional religion' but rather a multifaceted, flexible, and often quite open set of practices and faiths that changed rapidly and accepted new ideas and practices imported from outside or invented by internal innovators" (47). The author challenges the notion often advanced by some Africanists that Africans were passive recipients of foreign-imposed religions. He shows that the cosmopolitan nature of African societies allowed them to adapt these religions and make them suitable for the people. Getz states that the most successful Christian missionaries in Africa were not the Europeans, but rather Africans who became converts.

In the last section of the book, Trevor Getz explores the intellectual contributions of some notable Africans who encountered Europeans or studied in Europe. His goal here is to give the reader a window to their worldview and the global realities they faced. Examples of such persons are al-Tahtawi, an Egyptian who studied in France and later advocated the adoption of European scientific education; Abbe Boilat, a Senegalese who studied in France and became a Catholic priest; and James Africanus Horton, a Nigerian freed slave who studied in Britain. He says these African intellectuals "were all struggling with the changing global realities that would eventually drive formal colonialism.... European technology and science were reaching a point where for the first time they were seriously in advance of Africans' abilities to resist them militarily or economically. In seeking to redress this imbalance, these Africans were engaged in exploring the advantages of adopting aspects of European culture and technology" (99).

Examining 100 years of African history in a 106-page book is challenging, and the five themes on which Getz focuses could each be separate books. As a result, the author sometimes makes broad generalizations that do not capture the complexities of African societies or institutions. The book is also skewed toward the Eastern and Northern regions of Africa. For example, the author discusses the hundreds of years of intercontinental trade on the east coast of Africa that helped create cosmopolitan societies but fails to show how the trans-Saharan trade had also created cosmopolitan societies on the west coast of Africa.

By focusing on Africa's relations with the rest of the world, Getz has demonstrated that the world of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was more complex, interwoven and interdependent than most historiographies portray. He shows us that we must stop treating the different regions of the world as isolated units and look at the modern world as a whole. Doing this will reveal that African societies and their institutions were no less complex and cosmopolitan than those of Europe, Asia or America. I will recommend this book as a text for

African or world history survey courses. It is also an excellent primer for those interested in a concise history of late modern Africa. The selected references at the end of each section are good guides for those who want to deepen their knowledge on the subject.

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