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Baldwin, Kate. 2016. The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs in Democratic Africa. New York: Cambridge University Press, xv+237 pp.

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introduced a concept that first raised awareness to the failure of modernity's promises, which Mildnerová also notes but then elevates the resulting ideologies to the status of a "multiple modernity." Culturalism is the logical consequence of such an inconsequent theory.

While Mildnerová furthers all essential elements for a thorough critical analysis of witchcraft beliefs and traditional healing in Lusaka, she steps back from the consequences of her facts and represents African societies as the essential other, where even scape-goating and witch-hunting benefit the social order, where values like human rights and truth are culturalised and therefore withdrawn from the reach of the infantilised African subject. Although her interpretation is oriented after the ruling paradigm in the anthropology of spirit healing she neglects the criticism this culturalist perspective has drawn especially among current African intellectuals. When she states that "individualism is considered to be a threat for collectively shared egalitarian norms," she does not defend individualism, but the egalitarian norms. In the same way, witchcraft accusations are not an "expression of resistance to the erosion of traditional social values around family and community loyalty," they do not "enable the society/community to change or amend its structure and to rid itself of certain moral obligations and unnecessary or excessive relationships," as Mildnerová posits against her own data, which nonetheless contributes to the understanding of current processes in sub-Saharan Africa.

Felix Riedel

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The book under review makes part of the prestigious series Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics in which many dozens of monographs and some edited volumes on politics in Africa and other parts of the world have appeared in recent years. The author belongs to the young generation of political scientists who trespass the usual topical concentration of their discipline. Therefore her venture into the

question of the present-day usefulness of chiefs in Africa is particularly welcome. Chiefs and chiefdoms have traditionally been mostly the realm of interest for anthropologists and archaeologists, even though the classical writers on late colonial and post-colonial Africa such as Apter, Fallers, Ranger or Rathbone did not avoid the issue of chiefs. The novelty of Baldwin's book is that she carried out long-term fieldwork in rural Zambia and interviewed a host of officials connected with chieftaincy there. Having their support in her Zambian research she dared to draw in data from other Africa countries and regions and even discussed the question of Francophone Africa and its less prominent use of chiefs in modern politics.

Baldwin shows that chiefs in Africa are facilitators of democracy even though they are not elected. This she views as a paradox. I think that this is only a seeming paradox, because various aspects of checks and balances existed in African chiefdoms and kingdom long before European democracy arrived on the scene in Africa. Besides, democracy of the Euro-American type has not really taken root in Africa, we can rather speak of democratising countries in Africa. One of them certainly is Zambia. One of the few countries where no coup was staged during the post-independence period, Zambia is a good laboratory for testing the thesis about the contribution of hereditary rulers to democracy. Even though Zambia has had a complex ethnic structure, the author does not consider ethnicity as decisive in African politics. Neither chiefs are important because they can influence voting in rural areas. It is actually the ability to broker development which fascinated Baldwin and there she sees the real contribution of chiefs because through development projects they have the ability to hold modern party politicians accountable to the voters. In the end, however, chiefs rather tend to impact national politics than local politics because local democracy weakens the chiefs and their ability to influence local affairs.

The book is very well argued, nothing is left without proof. Baldwin composed 23 figures that explain and support the textual argument. She systematically proceeds through various chapters within the three parts of the book. First she suggests that a new theory of chiefs is needed and possible, then she brings in the question of the role of the chiefs in development and elections. Finally a discussion of traditional leaders in Africa and beyond closes the main text that

is concluded by five appendices (Cross-National Data Set of Chiefs' Power, List of Interviews and Interview Protocols, Data Set on Local Public Goods and Chiefs, Survey of Chiefs and Chiefdom/Level Data Set, Household Survey and Experiment). The book has an extended section with references and an index.

How does Baldwin define chiefs and traditional leaders? On the one hand, she believes that they are “rulers who have power by virtue of their association with the customary mode of governing a place-based community,” on the other she accepts Olson’s thesis of “stationary bandits” who “cannot completely exploit or ignore the local population because this will ultimately harm their own interests” (p. 21). She seems impressed by Ranger when he stresses the ability of traditional leaders to capture the public imagination and bothers less about the genesis or practice of the chiefly institutions. I would suggest that the true paradox of chiefs lies precisely in Baldwin’s discovery that they “have more power in Africa’s more democratic countries” (p. 17). Elections, paradoxically, gave more strength to the chiefs. I believe that Baldwin indirectly bares the fact that totalitarian or tyrannical countries in Africa may have plenty of chiefs but do not really allow them to play a role in governance while the democratising countries by virtue of their attempt at establishing democracy enhance chiefs because they are not considered a competition for the state. However, as long independent states in post-colonial Africa continue to perform unsatisfactorily, the authority of chiefs appears to be a welcome boost for the state.

I would though polemise with Baldwin when she assumes that chiefs had or have “power.” States have various degrees of power of coercion or imposition of decisions, but chiefs and other traditional leaders wield authority, which often takes shape in the form of ritual or religious sanctions. Their indispensability lies in their moral and customary abilities that are respected by their subjects. If there is overlap or even unison of purpose between politicians and chiefs, then lots can be done with the least amount of effort. Thus Baldwin is right to state that “democratic accountability in rural Africa operates better on the back of nondemocratic foundations” (p. 17). Here I would contend that urban chiefs, so common in present-day Africa, can do the same because they are more often literate than not and people respect them even more than in rural areas. But Baldwin did not study

urban chieftaincies and thus we cannot blame her for ignoring the role of urban chiefs in the democratising processes.

But the implementation of democracy within chiefdoms is an unrealistic vision and Baldwin is sceptical here. I would only suggest that perhaps a new indirect rule whereby chiefs would form some kind of upper chambers of parliaments and regional assemblies and serve as watchdogs of democracy and its respect for tradition/custom is a solution. Even some European countries have upper chambers composed of nobles or seniors. They vet the laws voted by lower chambers. In Africa, chiefs cannot only be development brokers as Baldwin suggests, but also guarantors of fairness of legislature within the state. But of course in genuine democracies it must be people of each country that can vet both elected and unelected leaders. And this not yet a fully established rule in Africa.

Baldwin's book is a major step towards understanding the dimensions of democracy in Africa. It is also a symbol of rapprochement between anthropology and political science. It is readable, well-argued and persuasive. It is a pity that there are shortcomings in the references at the end of the book. Several places of publication or pages of chapters in edited volumes are missing. "Aiden" (Southall) should be Aidan, Ekeh's book is not alphabetically placed, the original year of publication of some older books omitted. Co-editor van Dijk is omitted in note 31 on page 29. "Van Bingsbergen" in note 103 on page 46 should be van Binsbergen and his book is altogether missing in the References. Yet on the whole *The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs in Democratic Africa* is to be read by many students and specialists and should also attract interest of African politicians – especially those who genuinely want to fulfill their election campaign promises.

Petr Skalník