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**Klíma, Jan: *Dějiny Španělské Afriky a Rovníkové Guineje* [The History of Spanish Africa and Equatorial Guinea]. Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2017. 512 pp. ISBN: 978-80-7422-616-8**

African studies in the Czech Republic have struggled to date with a lack of specialised literature that deals comprehensively with the history of so-called Spanish Africa and other Spanish possessions in Africa. The one outstanding exception was a collective volume edited by Pavlína Springerová (Springerová, Kudynová and Polcerová 2012) but apart from that Czechs interested in these issues have had to make do with imperfect texts in publications dedicated to the history of Spain, or else use the older, not yet outdated, *Dějiny Afriky* (History of Africa, 1966) by I. Hrbek et al. Finally, a historical monograph has appeared on the Czech academic stage that in a structured, coherent and highly detailed manner covers the history of the three African regions where the Kingdom of Spain has left and (in the case of Ceuta and Melilla) continues to leave its mark. These are the former Spanish Morocco, Spanish West Africa, and Spanish Guinea.

Jan Klíma, an experienced Africanist and Iberist, is known in the Czech Republic and abroad as the author of a large quantity of historical works devoted to the history of African countries (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, São Tome and Principe, Namibia and others) European (Portugal), as well as Asian (East Timor, Portuguese India) and Latin American (Brazil) countries. He is the author of a series of surveys dedicated to the history of Africa (2012) and the history of Latin America (2015), and also devotes a great deal of attention to eminent personalities who played a role in the history of these regions (Salazar, Vasco da Gama, Bolívar, Tiradentes, Hidalgo, Artigas, etc). His book devoted to the establishment of the Sokol movement on the Cape Verde Islands (2016) also received widespread attention.

Klíma is an expert on the Lusophone world, and his body of work to date has focused primarily in this direction. In the past, he has repeatedly written about regions (especially in Latin America) that belonged to Spain during the colonial period, but his latest publication is for the first time in his historiographical work devoted to the topic

of the Spanish penetration of the African continent, and we must state right at the start that this is a very successful debut.

Readers less acquainted with the region may not understand from its title alone which countries the book describes (apart from Equatorial Guinea), nevertheless the term Spanish Africa includes both modern Morocco and the troubled region of Western Sahara, along with the already mentioned Equatorial Guinea. The publication is in fact divided into four main sections that map the history of Spain and present-day Morocco, Western Sahara, Spanish Guinea, and Equatorial Guinea (formerly Spanish Guinea).

The present reviewer will not refrain from making a small criticism here, namely that readers will surely be surprised by the imbalance between the amount of text devoted to the history of Spanish Morocco (almost 100 pages) and that of the single chapter devoted to the history of modern Morocco from 1960 to the present (5 pages). In connection with this fact, the reviewer is also troubled by a discrepancy in the structuring of the book, where the history of Spain and modern Morocco are both covered in one section, while the history of Spanish Guinea and Equatorial Guinea were (quite rightly) given separate sections by the author. One logical explanation could be connected to the author's current focus on the history of so-called Black Africa, while another explanation for this apparent inconsistency might be found in the work of this prolific author on another monograph that will focus on modern Morocco. The answer to our speculations will no doubt be provided in the near future.

The structure of the first three sections devoted to the colonial history of Morocco, Western Sahara and Guinea is in fact the same. The author first devotes rather detailed attention to the pre-colonial period, and then moves on to cover the colonial development up until political independence is obtained. While in the case of Equatorial Guinea, an entirely separate section is devoted to political developments after the gaining of political independence, for Morocco and Western Sahara the author deals with the same issue via individual sub-chapters.

The acquisition of political independence in Morocco was not complicated from a historical point of view, but unfortunately in the case of Western Sahara it was a complicated long-term process

that has not yet been resolved due to the active intervention of surrounding African countries (Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania). In particular, Morocco's attitude has long complicated the resolution of the independence of Western Sahara, as a significant part of the country (80% of the territory) is considered by Morocco to be an integral part of its territory. Only 20% of the territory is controlled by the Polisario Front, which considers the entire Western Saharan territory as part of the declared Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, and calls for a referendum on independence to be held throughout the territory. To date, all attempts at brokering peace, including UN efforts (MINURSO mission) and those of the former American Foreign Secretary, James Baker, have failed.

The history of Equatorial Guinea after gaining political independence in 1968 is one of the most absorbing sections of the book under review. The primary reason for this is the dramatic development of what was originally the poorest equatorial country, where one of the bloodiest dictators in African history rose to power. Shortly after gaining political independence, the election winner Macias Nguema decided to deal with all remnants of the Spanish colonial government, and not only expelled the Spanish diplomatic corps, but all former Spanish settlers as well (6,800 Spaniards were evacuated from Equatorial Guinea under the supervision of the UN in the spring of 1969).

Later, Nguema decided to deal with all of his political opponents and also co-workers who could potentially become a threat to his rule in the future, most of whom were murdered by fanatical youth guards and his secret security forces. He instituted a one-party system in the country, where nobody could be sure of personal safety. Via a decree in May 1971, Nguema openly transferred to an autocratic regime, and his security agencies and youth guards focused on one of the last remaining pillars of society, the Catholic Church. Nguema was declared to be the one and only true god, and the country was often referred to in the literature as an African-fascist state. The bloody crimes of the mad psychopath (p. 357) Nguema were eventually paid for when he was deposed, sentenced and executed after a coup in 1979.

Another member of the Nguema family, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasoso, then rose to power and established his own authoritarian regime in the country, like his predecessor founding his own political

party (PDGE) and restoring a one-party political system. During the process of democratisation in the beginning of the 1990s, Obiang agreed to the restoration of a multi-party system, but all subsequent elections were merely a staged farce to legitimise the political power of Obiang and his ruling PDGE party. Compared to the previous regime, Obiang attempted to develop a more open foreign policy, but the crucial turning point for the country's development came in 1991, when rich oil sources were found in the north of the island of Bioko. One of the poorest countries on the planet became the richest virtually overnight. In the following chapters, Klíma describes the suffocating atmosphere of an economically prosperous autocracy in which the ruling Nguema family controlled not only all profits from the petroleum industry, but completely dominated the public space as well. Existing political parties, under the threat of violence, only served to project an image of a "democratising" country, and until today a political alternative has not been an option.

After the chapter on the history of Equatorial Guinea follow the chapters on the culture and relations between the Czech Republic and both countries. The publication contains some interesting appendices, such as geographical data, a chronological overview of major events, a list of national and government representatives, a glossary of terms, a list of maps and an explanation of abbreviations. The book of course contains a list of sources and a bibliography along with a useful index. The publication also contains many interesting historical maps, engravings and photographs.

The individual sections are balanced, and the author again is a well-educated and experienced historian who communicates the complicated history of Spanish Africa and Equatorial Guinea to readers in lively and readable language. Once the reader opens the book (either at the introduction or any chapter) it is hard to put down. The colourful portrayal of historical events, the fate of their protagonists, the connection of developments in African and world historical contexts and events, and short evaluative commentaries make this publication a bestseller that for its field is the equivalent to the world's foremost detective novels.

The interpretation of historical research and communicating this effectively to his audience is probably the most valuable thing that

the author offers to readers in both this publication and most of his previous ones as well. The division of chapters is logical, the author selects distinct historical milestones, the historical events follow a broad spectrum, displays no bias towards any of the historical actors involved, and tries to make an objective assessment of conflicts depicted (perhaps not including his rather abrupt evaluation of the current development in the European Union, which in his opinion has begun to fall apart after the unnecessary referendum in the UK, p. 424).

The present reviewer highly appreciates the author's ability to not only describe historical and internal political events, but also to place them into the wider context of African, European and world politics. In particular, the issue of Western Sahara is a long-term diplomatic problem, which in today's hectic times, dominated by the problems of African migration to Europe, the Syrian civil war, the struggle with the Islamic state and world terrorism, is somewhat overlooked, but it is only a matter of time before it will once again, perhaps in an even more complicated form, have an impact on world diplomacy.

In writing the history of Spanish Africa and Equatorial Guinea, Jan Klíma has drawn on extensive Spanish and English written literature and sources (16 pages). The author's deep knowledge of African history is reflected in useful assessments and comments that explain complicated events to readers, especially in connection with the current developments in Western Sahara and Equatorial Guinea.

This book is the only comprehensive historical work in the Czech language on the history of Spanish Morocco, Western Sahara, Spanish Guinea and Equatorial Guinea. It will be appreciated not only by students of African studies or African/World History and the academic community, but also by history lovers and travelers or tourists heading to Morocco (as the author suggests, visiting Western Sahara is not too safe, similarly to Equatorial Guinea, where travelers must count on increased surveillance by the security forces). Jan Klíma has once again shown that history can be written in a readable way, without losing the reader in marginal or historical details. For these reasons, the book can be recommended to a broad community of readers, academics, students, and others who want to deepen their knowledge of this unknown and magical African world.

## References

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Vlastimil Fiala

**Boswell, Rosabelle and Francis Nyamnjoh (eds.) 2017. *Postcolonial African Anthropologies*. Pretoria: HSRC Press. 222 pp. ISBN: 978-0-7969-2569-5.**

This book echoes previous publications promoting the concept of anthropologies, i.e., the pluralism of the anthropological endeavour worldwide, especially by recognising the contributions of anthropologists from the Global South (Ntarangwi, Mills and Babiker 2006; Lins Ribeiro and Escobar 2006; Bošković 2008). In this sense, the editors and authors join the movement towards decentring and dehegemonising of the discipline. The book is dedicated to the late Elaine Salo, a significant South African anthropologist, activist and feminist. This makes the book exceptional because it is critical in Elaine's spirit. Critical of a colonial and postcolonial anthropology marked by an exoticising approach. Francis Nyamnjoh in his concluding chapter puts it clearly: the “business of transformation of colonial and apartheid ideologies on being human and being Africa” is unfinished. Frustration with the hierarchicised roles of the researcher and the researched continues. It will not finish until “the traditional anthropological subject (‘the native’)” is included “as a bona fide ethnographer with a licence to self-study as well as to study those who have traditionally studied them” (p. 195). In other words, it is all about overcoming the marginalisation and misrepresentation practiced through such categories like “race, ethnicity, class, gender, generation or geography.” A decolonisation of anthropology will be possible only, and Nyamnjoh cites here Faye Harrison, if we carry out a rehistoricisation; rethinking, reworking and reassessing theory; rethinking disciplinarity; pursuing social responsible ethics and politics of ethnographic research; mapping the local and supralocal spheres; interrogating the organisation of anthropology; mobilising