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Albert Kasanda. 2018. Contemporary African Social and Political Philosophy: Trends, Debates and Challenges. London and New York: Routledge. 174 pp. ISBN 978-0-8153-8166-2

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Albert Kasanda. 2018. *Contemporary African Social and Political Philosophy: Trends, Debates and Challenges*. London and New York: Routledge. 174 pp. ISBN 978-0-8153-8166-2

This monograph is a bold attempt to contribute to a rather neglected, as well as lesser explored, area of African social and political thought. Indeed, Albert Kasanda, a distinguished Africanist scholar, offers an invaluable scholarly service with a much-needed single thematic volume that not only synthesises the state of knowledge in the context of African social and political thought, but also provides the reader with new insights into the current trends, debates and challenges concerning the topic under study. Written from the premise that African social and political philosophy is rooted in African people's daily experience, Albert Kasanda proposes to rethink Africa as a sphere in which social and political life mutually intertwine, which yields complex power relations between various social and political agents. He argues that the major goal that African social and political philosophy should pursue is a better life for all Africans.

By examining the various philosophical strands, key protagonists and forms of expression, Albert Kasanda has conducted a comprehensive study of African social and political thought with regard to its meaning, aims, sources and relevance for today's Africa. The book sheds new light on debates concerning topics such as ethnophilosophy, negritude, democracy, African civil society, African cultures, and globalisation.

Beginning with indigenous African political thought as the major source of contemporary African social and political philosophy, the book successively explores the legacies of precolonial African societies and the African diaspora, focusing on African discourses of identity as one of the most addressed issues within diverse "schools" of thought, and concluding with contemporary perspectives on African political thought in the new millennium.

The book is divided into eight chapters, followed by an epilogue on Nelson Mandela's unique struggle in defence of pluralism and democracy. Chapter 1 addresses an uneasy task to define contemporary African social and political philosophy, and to delineate its nature and purpose. By rejecting it as a mere subcategory of general African

philosophy and by emphasising a non-elite approach to the studied phenomena, Kasanda persuasively argues for philosophy as a rational search for the achievement of better modes of governance, and thus a better life for Africans.

Chapter 2 reveals multiple, often neglected, sources of contemporary African social and political philosophy, such as literature, music, religion, or art. Thus, it can be read as a continuation of the argument that it would be erroneous to reduce this philosophy to ontology and ideology. The multitude of common points between African social and political philosophy and the above mentioned “other,” seemingly apolitical spheres, shows how important these contributions have been to express philosophical issues.

Chapter 3 explores antecedents and legacies of this philosophy – both from African precolonial communities, and the African diaspora – and discusses their importance and utility with regards to contemporary phenomena such as African modernisation, African revival, self-governance, and democracy. Kasanda rightly points out the double danger dwelling in prevailing perspectives derived from the African precolonial legacy and the African diaspora, respectively: first, in essentialising the African past as something immutable and basically “good,” conducive to democracy, and second, in reifying the concept of African “culture.”

Discourses of African identity through paradigms of ethnophilosophy and negritude are addressed in chapter 4, while the next chapter deals with multiple interpretations of pan-Africanism, including its most important African heirs such as Nkrumah, Fanon, and Gaddafi. This part also addresses new challenges to pan-Africanism thought, particularly Afropolitanism and cosmopolitanism. As Kasanda rightly points out, the preoccupation with African identity, though naturally understandable given Africa’s turbulent past (slavery and colonial history), faces a similar risk as discussed in chapter 3 – a seemingly irreconcilable dichotomy between the particularist perspective, emphasising the peculiarity and uniqueness of African “culture” and “race,” and the universalistic approach neglecting specific features in African social reality. Kasanda shows that the search for quintessential Africa is as dangerous as is the search for abstract ideas of universalism. Moreover, both the polarised, determinist visions

fail to tackle currently burning issues on the African continent such as people's daily struggle for human dignity, human rights, and their diverse strategies to reach a decent life, and hence cannot become the vivid essence of contemporary African social and political philosophy. Especially the conventional pan-African discourse anchored in nativist theories of race must give way to approaches that are capable of incorporating new realities of Africans and their identities in the making.

Chapter 6 concentrates on the issue of democracy in Africa. In a similar vein, Kasanda calls for transgressing the antagonism between the two opposing approaches, reconciling both universal values and the African legacy. Chapter 7 explores the idea of African civil society and its ambiguous role in the current context of globalisation and discusses the question to what extent it is appropriate to apply this concept to African social and political realities. Unlike the previous chapters, in which Kasanda provides the readers with a balanced approach to the ambiguous phenomena, now the readers have to do without the author's reconciling statement. Hence, it is upon the readers to view African civil society either as "supportive of neoliberal policy under the banner of international and financial institutions" (p. 127), or as a tool of resistance in the hands of African people against the ruling neo-liberal order.

The last chapter discusses the issue of globalisation and its social, cultural and political impacts on contemporary Africa, juxtaposes the two essentialist approaches to globalisation, that is, the tendency toward global cultural homogeneity, conceived as McDonaldisation or Americanisation, and the paradigm of cultural differentialism resting on the premise that cultures are largely unaffected by globalisation. Quoting diverse scholars such as Mbembe, Kasanda rightly challenges both perspectives, pointing out, for instance, the phenomenon of African cities as a specific meeting point for cultures and communities, which defy to be categorised in such a dualistic way.

In his coherent, clear and concise volume, Albert Kasanda offers a comprehensive analysis of contemporary African social and political philosophy, focusing on major African political icons and pluralistic generations of reputed African intellectuals. His arguments are deeply rooted in African political and social history, cultural values, and the

long-term involvement of Africa in the broader political and cultural context. He firmly stands against any type of reductionism, he almost always offers the readers a balanced view among the many, often contradictory approaches that he presents in this book. This book is a must-read not only for those who are interested in African social and political philosophy but for everyone who rejects efforts to view African people through the lens of ethnocentrism and Afro-pessimism.

Hana Horáková

Lisa Mueller. 2018. *Political Protest in Contemporary Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 264 pp. ISBN 978-1-10843825-4. Paperback £ 21.99

With the rise of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp public protests seem easier to be organised than ever. A simple look at hashtag movements in South Africa from the past few years provides us with evidence that in the information era protests can spread quicker, mobilise faster and involve far more people than before. Protest movements recently hit the whole of Africa. From Burkina Faso, Niger and South Africa to the very recent protests in Sudan and Mali. We have seen widespread dissatisfaction among the population which ultimately led to uprisings in multiple places. This leads to important questions. Why do these protests happen? Do they have something in common? How can we better understand them and interpret them? In her book *Political Protest in Contemporary Africa*, Lisa Mueller has adequate answers to these questions. The book has five chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. In my view the monograph is suitable mainly for scholars and students looking for inspiration in well-managed research (from a methodological perspective) or with an interest in the study of protests.

The author starts with a comparison of three waves of protest, namely the First Wave, that related to independence; the Second Wave, that burst out after the Cold War in 1990; and the most recent Third Wave, that is still ongoing. The strategies, participants and frames of meaning of these protests are evolving. One of the critical differences between these protest waves could be the new frames of meaning. For