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RICHARD VOKES (ed.), *Photography in Africa: ethnographic perspectives*. Woodbridge and New York NY: James Currey (hb, €53.99 – 978 1 84701 045 2). 2012, 272 pp.

URTE UNDINE FRÖMMING

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major stars, not only from Africa, but also the black diaspora. Their lavish nature needs to be related to the independence euphoria of the 1960s and the new-found oil wealth of 1970s Nigeria. As Gibbs explains, both festivals performed to a sub-text that looked to a confident and prosperous African future. The disillusionment which set in during the 1980s and 1990s is reflected not only in the smaller scale of events but their more fragmented nature. One symptom of this was a concern less with the size of the audience than with its constitution. In his very articulate interview, Andrew Buckland is painfully aware that, even after 1994, the bulk of the audience attending his Grahamstown Festival performances has been white. Victor Yankah deplores the way the Ghanaian Pan African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFEST), active in the late 1990s and up to 2010, departed from a small-scale, culturally local vision to a grandiose event more appealing to tourists than to local citizens. Patrice-Jude Oteh offers a different view on the annual Jos Festival in Central Nigeria, which is relatively small and appeals for the most part to local audiences. However, despite all the efforts to bring Christian and Muslim audiences together, sectarian violence, through no fault of the Festival organizers, caused its cancellation in 2010 and 2011.

All in all, religious, social and economic forces make the optimistic futures imagined in the 1960s and 1970s seem implausible in the early twenty-first century. From the perspective of most authors in *ATII*, such visions of African unity were simply utopian. Gibbs, in his commentary on the FESMAN event, quotes Ayi Kwei Armah's perceptive 1985 assertion that 'culture is a process, not an event' and that Africa does not need grandiose festivals, but 'institutions supportive of creative cultural work on a steady, yearly, monthly, weekly, daily, hourly, minute to minute basis' (p. 41). Not all the authors in *ATII* might agree with this, but the tendency of most articles seems to endorse a utilitarian vision that links smaller-scale festivals with skill acquisition and the showcasing of grassroots art and performance troupes. Gibbs deserves praise for teasing out these themes from the raw material of the varied articles.

In addition, *ATII* contains an excellent Ghanaian playscript, *Prison Graduates* by Efo Kodjo Mawugbe, and some very useful reviews of hard-to-obtain books.

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A book project on photography in Africa requires courage as well as a lot of knowledge about the history of both photography and Africa. With this anthology, Richard Vokes demonstrates that he has both. In his introduction, he reminds us that African photography is not a monolithic field; and that 'the sheer diversity of photographic practices... compels us to instead think in terms of multiple, overlapping African photographs' (p. 3). All the book's chapters engage with current ongoing discourses in visual anthropology about translocal, entangled flows of images across histories and spaces. But many contributions also offer surprising treasures that illustrate the importance of indigenous



FIGURE 1 (Fig. 4.5 in the book) Bokayo and young relative looking at a photograph by Paul Baxter taken in the 1950s, Marsabit, July 2010 (Photo by: Kimo Quaintance. Reproduced by permission)

agency both in the process of image making and in the production of meaning. For example, Neil Carrier and Kimo Quaintance returned and discussed with relatives and descendants the photographs taken of individuals in northern Kenya during the 1950s. In this way, images originally taken to represent an 'exotic' culture were reinvested with history and biography, offering the collection another layer of meaning as well as a social after-life.

The first part of the book focuses on 'Photography and the ethnographic encounter'. Here a chapter by Christopher Morton explores Azande and Nuer attitudes towards photography during E. E. Evans-Pritchard's fieldwork in the 1920s and 1930s in Sudan. Morton raises the questions, 'Why are there no group portraits of Nuer families? Or age mates? Why are there relatively few informal images of Azande involved in everyday tasks and activities?' (p. 34). He argues that many Nuer refused to gather for a supposed family portrait, to be taken by Evans-Pritchard, without those of their family members who had just been killed by the British army. Contending that the role of 'indigenous agency in the shaping of the ethnographic archive' (*ibid.*) has hitherto been under-analysed, Morton's chapter reveals the absence of family photographs as the product of a process of self-empowerment by the putative ethnographic visual 'objects'. Like other ethnographic encounters, fieldwork with the camera is irrevocably dependent on its historical context.

In the second part of the book, 'Picturing the nation: photography, memory and resistance', a contribution by Katie McKeown examines the role of photography in establishing and promoting Gorongosa National Park. Exploring how 'photographic representations of Gorongosa have been entangled with political imaginings' (p. 166), she discusses the making and labelling of the Park as one of 'Africa's Edens', which was aimed at promoting international wildlife tourism. Pointing to similar processes in other parks, such as the



FIGURE 2 (Fig. 2.4 in the book) Group portrait with Evans-Pritchard seated in a chair and a group of Zande boys saluting in a line behind him, with sticks as imitation rifles slung over their shoulders, Yambio, Western Equatoria, southern Sudan. Photographer unknown (but seemingly taken with Evans-Pritchard's camera), 1927–30 (Reproduced by kind permission of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, Classmark: 1998.341.576)

Kruger National Park, McKeown suggests that neo-imperial hunting with the camera is one of the most debatable post-colonial appropriations of African people, landscapes and wildlife.

In the final section, 'The social life of photographs', Heike Behrend looks at wedding photography along the East African coast. Behrend focuses her contribution on the 'processes of disentanglement, rejection and withdrawal from global media, as well as the creation of new opacities and secrecies that have been largely ignored by scholars' (p. 229). Photographers in Africa are predominantly male, and Behrend discusses female photographers on the East African Coast who have emerged and occupied a professional space that formerly belonged to men (p. 239). Mirroring Morton's emphasis on the role of indigenous agency in the shaping of the ethnographic archive, Behrend discusses the 'indigenous agency' of African women, both photographers and their subjects, who take 'great pains to develop and print photographs of women in such a way that no unrelated man will see them' (p. 239).

To sum up, *Photography in Africa* is a fascinating and important read because of its deep roots in the tangled, injurious and troubled history of African and European colonial history. Most of the readers of this book are likely to be specialists, visual anthropologists and historians, but non-specialists will also be inspired, and even disturbed, by the wide range of detailed examples that *Photography in Africa* offers.

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