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NATIONS AND NATIONALISM

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comparative (Part 4) chapters. The volume makes an attempt to provide a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary overview of nation-building in Israel, but fails to provide an explicit common framework to draw the individual accounts together.

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Wale Adebani, (2014). *Yoruba Elites and Ethnic Politics in Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo and corporate agency*. Cambridge: University Press. 312 pp. £54 (hbk).

Ambition is the grand enemy of all peace- John Cowper Powys

The book analyses how Chief Obafemi Awolowo whom he described as the modern progenitor and secular ancestor of the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria emerged as the facilitator of the remaking of the Yoruba people and why he has remained the reference point for everything noble and egalitarian in modern Yoruba and Nigerian politics. While the first part of the book comprised two chapters, the rest five chapters provide a rare ring-side view and insider accounts of loyalty, grandstanding, betrayals, treacheries, contentions, conflict (mis)management, (dis)agreements, ambitions and outcomes of struggles for the exclusive appropriation of the political trademark of Awolowo by a core of the Yoruba political elite since his demise. This struggle to inherit the mantle of leadership of the Yoruba people by the elites underscores the political agency of the dead and the utility of ethnicity in (sub)national politics in Nigeria.

The author does justice to its objectives using ethnography and historical sociology in engaging the core of Yoruba elites while wearing the cap of both an insider and an outsider. The author garners data through (non)participant observations, ethnographic interviews and archival/library combing. While admitting the risk faced by ethnographers in relying on newspapers, the book confirms the importance of newspapers as repository of memory, public affairs and elites' relationships and persona.

Adebani's book presents fresh perspectives in comprehensible language on subjects ranging from political sociology, political processes, ethnicity and ethnic politics, democratization and ethnography. Each chapter like a plot unravels how ambition constitutes the greatest threat to peace as stated in the epigram. However, despite the fragmentations amongst the elites owing to their ambitions to step into the shoes of the Sage, they remain united on the sanctity of Awo as the embodiment and symbol of quintessential Yoruba. Indeed the general public, academics and students of Nigerian and Yoruba politics, ethnicity, political sociology, political conflict, memory, structure and agency would find the book a rare intellectual asset.

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The author succeeds in convincing the reader about the reliability of understanding socio-political processes by studying elites' relationships. With ample evidences, Adebani shows how Obafemi Awolowo dominated and has transcended reality. Through a thorough analysis of the unattained aspirations of the Sage that informed his description as "the president Nigeria never had", Adebani shows the limitations of relying on stoic and ideal politics when realpolitik might be needed. Adebani shows that unlike some of Awo's followers, the quest to realize his ambition was not enough to trade off his ideals. Adebani reflects on the appropriateness of moral politics as a strategy within Nigeria's amoral politics and this provides a solid basis to measure the distance between what Awo stood for and how his followers have carried on since he joined other 401 Yoruba ancestors.

Theoretically and methodologically, the author's use of data in challenging theories and presumably settled paradigms makes the book scholarly novel. For instance and contrary to widely held assumptions that inter-ethnic rivalry is more fractious than its intra-ethnic variant, reading Adebani's book provides a valid basis for a rethink of this based on balanced analyses of issues and actors within the universe of the core of Yoruba elites. As a fault line, Adebani shows that ethnicity can be uniting and divisive depending on actors, interests and contexts. Rhythmically, every page takes the reader deeper into the inner precincts of the core of Yoruba elites akin to reading a political history of the Yoruba laced with critical analyses of the roles of actors and their implications while providing an integrated comprehension of the ancient, the past and the present in making the work an innovative one.

The book fulfills its mission as spelt out in terms of coverage of actors and issues and transcends it exceedingly going by the scope of period and actors covered. The plausibility of the author's argument is not in doubt as Yoruba elites remain largely polarized by the singular ambition to exclusively control the mantle of leadership left behind by Chief Obafemi Awolowo in order to be regionally and nationally relevant. Next to ambition, the continued (mis)-management of candidate selection crisis and its attendant strains on the unity of the elites' core underscores the plausibility and timelessness of Adebani's argument. The tenability of Adebani's argument is further reinforced by the continued fragmentation and squabbles that have attended all efforts at forging a common Yoruba front. Although, the author could have offered more by exploring theories on conflict management to complement the stellar analyses of issues, eras and actors; the book remains an excellent attestation to the ten-year period used in putting it together and can as well be regarded as a political history of the Yoruba.

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