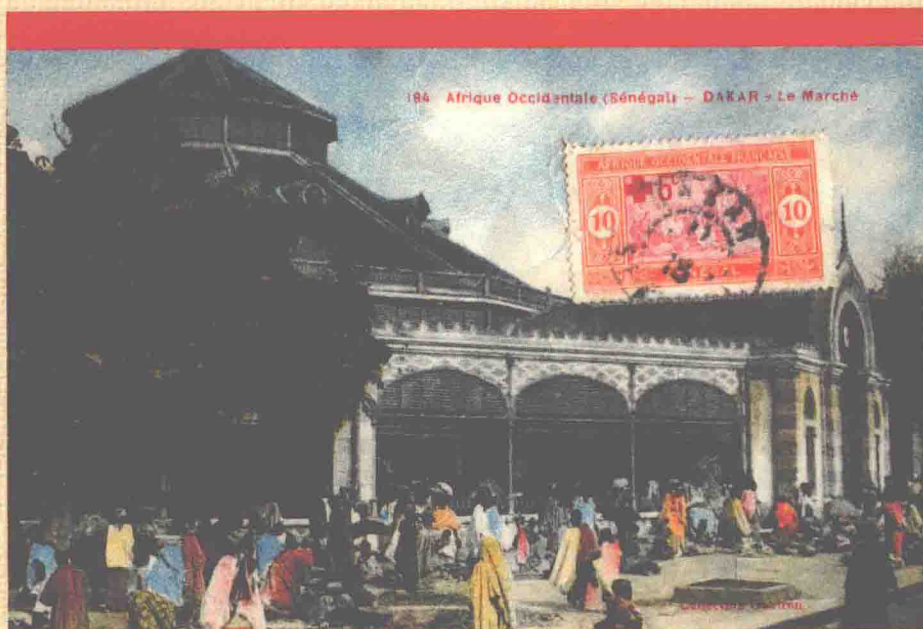


THE HUMAN TRADITION IN

MODERN AFRICA



EDITED BY

DENNIS D. CORDELL

The Human Tradition in Modern Africa

Edited by
Dennis D. Cordell



ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.
Lanham • Boulder • New York • Toronto • Plymouth, UK

Published by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
A wholly owned subsidiary of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
<http://www.rowmanlittlefield.com>

Estover Road, Plymouth PL6 7PY, United Kingdom

Copyright © 2012 by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote passages in a review.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The human tradition in modern Africa / edited by Dennis D. Cordell.

p. cm. — (The human tradition around the world)

Includes bibliographical references and index.


ISBN 978-0-7425-3732-3 (cloth : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-0-7425-3733-0 (pbk. : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-1-4422-1383-8 (electronic)

1. Africa—Biography. 2. Africa—History—19th century. 3. Africa—History—20th century. 4. Africa—Social conditions. I. Cordell, Dennis D., 1947– II. Series: Human tradition around the world.

DT18.H86 2012

960.0922—dc23

2011036159

™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Printed in the United States of America



Contents

	Introduction: People and History in Modern Africa <i>Dennis D. Cordell</i>	1
Part I	Encounters: Two Worlds and New Worlds, 1800–1850	
Chapter 1	José Manuel and Nbená in Benguela in the Late 1810s: Encounters with Enslavement <i>José C. Curto</i>	13
Chapter 2	Efusetan Aniwura of Ibadan (1820s–1874): A Woman Who Rose to the Rank of a Chief but Whom Male Rivals Destroyed <i>Toyin Falola</i>	31
Chapter 3	Moka of Bioko (Late 1820s–1899): The Chief Who United a Central African Island <i>Ibrahim Sundiata</i>	47

Part II	Fashioning African Identities in the Era of European Conquest, 1850–1910	
Chapter 4	Hamet Gora Diop (1846–1910): Merchant and Notable from Saint-Louis in Senegal <i>Mamadou Diouf</i>	67
Chapter 5	Samuel Johnson (1846–1901) and <i>The History of the Yorubas</i> : Christianity and a New Intelligentsia in West Africa <i>Toyin Falola</i>	89
Chapter 6	Stories of Cape Slavery and Emancipation in the Nineteenth Century <i>Pamela Scully</i>	105
Chapter 7	Mama Adolphina Unda (c. 1880–1931): The Salvation of a Dynastic Family and the Foundation of Fipa Catholicism, 1898–1914 <i>Marcia Wright</i>	123
Part III	The Contradictions of Colonialism, 1910–1960: Exploitation and New Rights	
Chapter 8	Colonial Administrator Adolphe A. M. Taillebourg (1874–1934): Strict Interpreter of the Law or Humanitarian? <i>Issiaka Mandé</i>	141
Chapter 9	Louis Brody (1892–1951) of Cameroon and Mohammed Bayume Hussein (1904–1944) of Former German East Africa: Variety Show Performers and the Black Community in Germany between the Wars <i>Andreas Eckert</i>	159
Chapter 10	Siti binti Saad (c. 1885–1950): “Giving Voice to the Voiceless,” Swahili Music, and the Global Recording Industry in the 1920s and 1930s <i>Laura Fair</i>	175
Chapter 11	Maryan Muuse Boqor (b. 1938) and the Women Who Inspired Her: Memories of a Mogadishu Childhood <i>Lidwien Kapteijns and Maryan Muuse Boqor</i>	191

Part IV	Globalization, Family Strategies, and New Threats in the Era of Independence, 1960–2012	
Chapter 12	Wambui Waiyaki Otieno Mbugua (b. 1928): Gender Politics in Kenya from the Mau Mau Rebellion to the Pro-Democracy Movement <i>Cora Ann Presley</i>	209
Chapter 13	Tina (b. 1942) of Côte d'Ivoire: Success in the Masculine World of Plantation Managers <i>Agnès Adjamagbo</i>	231
Chapter 14	Samba Sylla (b. 1948), Doulo Fofanna (b. 1948 or 1949), and Djénébou Traore (b. 1972): The Colonies Come to France <i>Dennis D. Cordell and Carolyn F. Sargent</i>	249
Chapter 15	Foday (b. ca. 1974) Meets the Rebels in 1991: Diamonds Are Not a Boy's Best Friend <i>Doug Henry</i>	267
	Index	285
	About the Contributors	299

INTRODUCTION



People and History in Modern Africa

Dennis D. Cordell

This collection enlivens the history of Africa with people—not with superheroes like Sunjata of ancient Mali or Shaka the Zulu or the Queen of Sheba, whose everyday lives are clouded by the mists of myth and fantastic feats—but with individuals whose day-to-day lives are at once real and a part of larger themes in the continent's history since the early nineteenth century. The volumes in the Rowman & Littlefield series *The Human Tradition around the World* add crucial human dimensions to the study of the past of many societies. In the case of modern Africa, this contribution is particularly valuable because the sources usually used to write about the history of Africa in this era—travel narratives by outsiders, oral traditions, and anthropological accounts—do not easily lend themselves to biography. As a result, African history courses have frequently and profitably turned to novels written in the last half-century to explore the ways that historical events and trends have shaped individual lives. In contrast, the fifteen chapters that follow recount the life or lives of real, identifiable people from societies across Africa south of the Sahara or from African communities in Europe over the last two hundred years.

To underscore the obvious, many major changes have occurred in Africa since 1800. This book divides these two centuries into four periods, each

covering a half-century or so. The even decade dates attached to each of them signal that these divisions are rough approximations, since human societies evolve over time and clearly delineated boundaries between eras are rare.

The first period, which we call “Encounters: Two Worlds and New Worlds,” covers the first half of the nineteenth century. Overall, this era is characterized by a greater European presence in the interior of Africa—beyond the slave-trading outposts on the coast that in some cases dated from centuries earlier. The increased European presence was very uneven. For example, in parts of West Africa and Southeast Africa, respectively today’s Angola and Mozambique, Portugal already had a long history of colonial rule and administration on the ground. Other international powers established new outposts on the coast, sometimes for people liberated from slaving ships—such as the British in Freetown in today’s Sierra Leone, the French in Libreville in today’s Gabon, or even the Americans in today’s Liberia—but their effective control did not extend very far inland. South Africa was an exception. The Dutch had established a resupply station at Cape Town in 1652, and Dutch settlers slowly expanded their area of settlement over the next century and a half. The British took definitive control of Cape Colony in 1806, so that British settlers joined descendants of Dutch settlers now called Afrikaners in enlarging their hegemony over local African societies. A few European missionaries had made their way to Africa as early as the fifteenth century, but in the first half of the nineteenth century their numbers also grew significantly. As a result, local people in many scattered places on and near the coast became more intimately acquainted with Europeans and imported European institutions between 1800 and 1850. Some of them challenged European power.

After 1850, Africans found themselves dealing with a much more intrusive European presence. European powers competed for formal control of African territories, fueled by new knowledge of tropical diseases and how to combat them; more sophisticated military, maritime, and communications technology; and competition for new resources and markets in an era of rapid industrialization. Each country feared that it would be deprived of the chance to profit from Africa’s imagined riches, and the “scramble for Africa” took off after 1885. Africans and their societies were not at all passive in the face of this onslaught. Out of choice and necessity, they acted on the possibilities presented by this topsy-turvy world. Hence our title for the second part of the volume: “Fashioning African Identities in the Era of European Conquest.”

The decades between 1910 and 1960 were an era of contradiction and rapid change. The European conquest of Africa had concluded by 1910, although areas in the far interior, such as Ubangi-Shari in Equatorial Africa

or southern Sudan, had only recently fallen to European control. Often referred to as the high tide of colonial rule, the interwar years were marked by intensified efforts to extract labor and resources from African societies everywhere—particularly during World War I and the Great Depression of the 1930s. In order to rule their vast domains, though, European administrations had to turn to Africans for help. By this time, expanded numbers of missions had brought schools and rudimentary medical infrastructure to much of the continent, and as we see from the biographies of some of the people in this book, many individual Africans sought Western education in an effort to improve their fortunes and those of their children. In so doing, they also learned how to leverage their labor power, how to manipulate Western institutions, and very often, how to use the colonial presence to enlarge their own arenas of action. Moreover, they began to do so on the scale of the colonial political borders that had been drawn around them and in new colonial cities. With time they perceived quite clearly the contradictions between how European powers recognized democratic principles and individual rights at home—with notable exceptions such as Germany—and how they administered their colonial possessions. Across the continent at different times and in different places over these five decades, people claimed and campaigned for greater rights. The infrastructure of colonial rule made it possible for them to learn what was happening in other European colonies in Africa and in the wider world. In the last decade of this era, their struggles led to the political independence of most former colonies, even though Portugal did not relinquish its colonies until the 1970s and the white minorities that ruled South Africa and Southwest Africa recognized majority rule only two decades later. What is clear, in general and from the stories of men and women included in this volume, is that Africans possessed a sophisticated understanding of the instrumentation and culture of European colonial rule.

In the last few chapters of this volume, covering the decades since 1960, we read about people attempting to deal with political, economic, gender, and cultural issues that have brought together the local and the global in new ways. Unfortunately, independence did not bring true democracy to the countries of Africa—not surprising given that as colonies they had been subjected to many decades of authoritarian rule. In the 1980s and 1990s people in many countries again set out to limit or overthrow dictatorial rule. “Presidents for life” looted national resources for their personal advantage and politicized differences between ethnic communities in order to remain in power. In some places, conflict led to failed states where violence undermined the national community. In other countries and regions, local people turned to local institutions in order to maintain social and economic life. There are

some countries—for example, Mali, Senegal, Cape Verde, Ghana, Benin, Sao Tome and Principe, Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, Mauritius and several others—that have weathered these storms reasonably well.¹ And in many places, forms of African cultural expression have remained vibrant, as known and anonymous artists attempted to interpret and understand their worlds.

So, how do reading and thinking about the lives of the people in this book deepen our understanding and enhance our engagement with these many dimensions of the history of modern Africa? Before beginning to answer this question, stop to think about how knowing about your own life might help us understand the broader forces and trends in the larger society around you. How have major economic developments in recent years impacted you and your family? What, if any, social or political movements have prompted you or your friends to take action? Most important, how do you think knowing about your life and the lives of members of your family and friends deepens our understanding of these larger happenings?

The biographies in this book help us understand the human tradition in modern Africa in four ways. First, learning about the actions of real people underscores the importance and the power of individual action or agency. Moka was a chief on the island of Bioko in the second half of the nineteenth century (chapter 3). Bioko, now part of Equatorial Guinea, had been divided up into smaller chiefdoms for a long time. Yet Moka came to see the possibility of uniting the island—which he did. The life of Tina (chapter 13), a woman in southwest Côte d'Ivoire, also illustrates how individual action may influence historical events. Despite the predominance of men in commercial agriculture in Côte d'Ivoire, for example, the woman Tina became a major producer of palm oil. In the 1960s, Samba Sylla (chapter 14) arrived in Paris with minimal knowledge of French, but through language classes offered by French unions, he learned labor-organizing skills that he later applied to mobilize migrant resistance to discriminatory housing practices. His fellow migrant Doulo Fofanna (also chapter 14) helped in these campaigns. Their experiences and those of their fellow migrants paved the way for Djénébou Traore, a young girl who followed her parents to France (chapter 14). Although her experiences built on those of her parents, her life was different because they had preceded her. All of this is to say that individual agents and their actions do have an impact on how human societies change through time. Not all change is the result of large, impersonal forces.

Second, the biographies of individual people also often serve to show that reality is more complex than the generalizations produced by too exclusive a focus on broad historical trends. Painting the past with very broad strokes also may produce stereotypes. Knowledge of what is local informs and en-

riches our understanding of what is global. Life histories complicate the big picture by adding other perspectives; in so doing, they may even alter our view of the big picture. A prime example of this phenomenon is the struggle of Nbena and her daughter to regain their freedom in the hinterland of Angola in the late 1810s (chapter 1). While Nbena's fight seems quite natural to us today, you will perhaps be surprised by what she did after she regained her liberty. Clearly her own victory did not lead her to conclude that everyone should be free. The life story of Adolphe Taillebourg (chapter 8), a French colonial administrator in what is today Burkina Faso, also defies the comfortable presumption that European officials were uniformly evil, which tends to be embedded in survey texts on the history of Africa under European rule.

Even the sketches of the lives of Louis Brody and Mohammed Bayume Hussein (chapter 9), men from the former German colonies of Kamerun (today's Cameroon) and German East Africa (today's Tanzania) who found their way to Germany after World War I, challenge our much too simplistic imaginings of what life would be like for African immigrants living in the open society of Germany in the 1920s or in the horrific Nazi years between the early 1930s and the end of World War II. Moreover, their experiences were different. On the other hand, the story of Foday (chapter 15), a boy soldier in Sierra Leone in the 1990s, confirms in a concrete way what we might imagine to be the horrors of such a life, based on global accounts of the treatment and suffering of children forced to become killers. But even in his confined environment, he found room for action.

Third, individual life stories help us see more clearly how people and their societies deal with times of transition. The nineteenth century in Africa was such an era. Looking back at the period of outright European conquest and colonial rule in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, along with the movements toward independence after World War II, we have been encouraged to divide people into two groups—those who collaborated with European domination and those who fought against it. But these opposed categories do not exhaust the range of reactions to the extraordinary changes that were taking place. Many people forged a middle way through these transitions. For example, Hamet Gora Diop (chapter 4), a prominent figure in the local Muslim religious and merchant class in the Senegal River valley in the second half of the nineteenth century, joined with others of his social group to shape an accommodation with the French officials of the colony of Senegal. The arrangement served the economic position of these “notables,” enabling them to preserve their own African-Islamic society while fashioning a new place for themselves. Several hundred miles to the south in today's Sierra Leone, Samuel Johnson (chapter 5) was born in 1846 into a

recently freed and newly converted Christian Yoruba family—the same year that Diop was born. Freed from a slave ship and settled in Sierra Leone, Johnson's father returned with four of his children to their homeland in today's Nigeria. Johnson promoted Christianity and championed Western education as a way of using the European presence for personal development. Although enamored of things Western, he nonetheless wrote a book on the history of the Yoruba that attracted wide readership and undoubtedly ensured the recognition of their importance by the new British colonial administration.

A little later and much farther away, in today's Tanzania in East Africa, Mama Adolphina Unda (chapter 7) was also a transitional figure. Born into the aristocracy of the Fipa people, Mama Adolphina engaged with Catholicism but then returned Christian ritual objects to the missionaries who preceded the German colonial administration. Later she returned to the Church. Her actions were not simply aimed at manipulating the Europeans. She found herself situated between the power and religion of her royal forebears and the new faith. She was truly attracted to Christianity, indeed going so far as to convince the missionaries to found an order of African sisters, which she led as mother superior. Still later, the complexity of royal politics, the coming of World War I, the ensuing paralysis of Church institutions, and the illness of her brother the king dampened Adolphina's ardor, and she sought the shelter of family. Although remembered among the Fipa, she was unknown to the British officials who arrived later to replace the Germans. Mama Adolphina Unda personified the ambivalence of transition.

Fourth and finally, this collection of biographies offers concrete examples of the important and diverse roles that women have played in the history of modern Africa. Earlier paragraphs have introduced us to Nbena, Tina, Djénébou Traore, and Mama Adolphina Unda. Other chapters add more women, such as Efusetan Aniwura (chapter 2), who like many other Yoruba women was a successful trader. What set her apart was the great scale of her commercial success and how she parlayed that achievement into a position of military and political power. In addition, the stories of family in the Cape region of today's South Africa (chapter 6) in the era of slavery and emancipation include portraits of women of several generations who displayed courage and strategic thinking in their efforts to remake their lives. Steyntje went to court in 1815 to demand her liberation in accordance with a resolution issued by the Court of India in 1772 that a slave woman who had had children with her owner would be freed upon his death—a decision that had never been recognized in Cape law even though the Cape fell under the jurisdiction of the India Office. In the end, Steyntje and her children were freed following a decision in London by the king in council about 1819! Former slave Katie Jacobs recalled that their owner gave her mother to his son,

who went to live elsewhere. She never saw her mother again. Later, after being formally freed in 1838, Katie and her husband had to stay on three years with their former master because they had no alternative. They eventually managed to make their way to Cape Town. The chapter includes vignettes of many other women (and men) who struggled for freedom and survival.

Following emancipation in 1897, the slave woman Siti binti Saad courageously left the countryside of Zanzibar Island for the city in 1911 (chapter 10). She sold pottery in the streets of Zanzibar Town, composing and singing songs in Kiswahili as she made her rounds. She often sang of the tribulations of her fellow former slaves of black African heritage. Despite her low social status, her popularity led her into the houses of the Arab elite on the island, where she contested their prominence in song. Having taken on one elite, she turned to another, learning the ways of the British colonial administration sufficiently well to travel with her band to India to record her music. Siti's records were hits in Tanganyika (today's Tanzania), Kenya, the Belgian Congo (today's Democratic Republic of the Congo), and throughout the Indian Ocean region.

Two other East African women, Maryan Muuse Boqor of Somalia (chapter 11) and Wambui Waiyaki Otieno Mbugua of Kenya (chapter 12) also figure prominently in these years. Maryan's story is a tale of solidarity among women of several generations, showing how women supported each other. Building on the recognized family roles of women, Maryan had an expansive view of the world—gleaned from visits by male relatives whose commercial activities took them up and down the East African coast and later from overhearing the extended debate among the Allied powers after World War II about what to do with Somalia, a colony of Italy that they had defeated. The men listened to these discussions on the radio in a courtyard below, while the women listened by clustering around the windows above. Maryan learned what women could do in politics by observing how her stepmother, through poetry and persistence, supported the Somali Youth League. When she went off to school in Egypt in the later 1950s, Maryan took this heritage of women's solidarity and political awareness with her, eventually ending up in Boston.

Over the course of her life, Wambui Waiyaki Otieno Mbugua of Kenya has always been politically engaged, beginning with her commitment to the nationalist movement in Kenya in the 1950s. She went from supporter to engaged revolutionary in the Mau Mau movement. Following independence, she served in the national assembly. But her greatest struggle has been around women's family rights in contemporary Kenya. When her husband died in the 1980s, she challenged traditional practices that gave rights over her husband's body and burial to his extended family—setting her against his male relatives. The court case was long and she lost, but her challenge to

patriarchy mesmerized Kenya. In recent years she has pushed her challenge to accepted gender roles even further by marrying a much younger man. Advocates for women's rights rallied to Wambui, while her own children boycotted the ceremony. Once again, Wambui's life story crystalized controversy across the nation and opens a window into the social history of Kenya.

In conclusion, a few paragraphs and questions are in order about biography and history. To be sure, biography, literally "the drawing or writing of life," focuses on the life course of an individual, while we tend to think of history as embracing larger numbers of people in societies and how societies change through time. So the scale is different—which leads us to ask to what degree a biography, or small-scale history of the individual, is representative of the large-scale history of a region, a country, a continent, or the globe. In the chapters of this book, the authors and the editor explicitly link the lives of the people who figure in them to larger events and patterns of change that have usually emerged from their other research. Most of the time the relationship is very direct; sometimes it is less so.

Another question concerns just how historically accurate a biography may be—even how accurate it is possible for it to be. First, since biographers can never learn all there is to know about their subjects, they inevitably fill in gaps in their evidence with their interpretation. They speculate about why the person they are writing about may have done one thing or another; they even try to imagine what she or he might have been thinking at the time. Second, and not surprisingly, the subject or subjects of the biography themselves also regularly offer their own interpretations of why they did what they did—whether in the written documents they leave behind or in oral accounts to others. We have examples of both in this collection. Third, life histories, unlike daily diaries, are written or told backwards—after the events in a person's life have taken place. Hence, later happenings may influence what is remembered, written, or said about earlier ones. Fortunately, documents contemporary with the events may serve as a corrective for these kinds of problems. And fourth, how accurate or complete a life history may be is also tied to the question of why the biography or life story is recalled at all. In African societies as in Western ones, life stories sometimes aim more at teaching lessons, documenting status, or claiming rights than at transmitting truthful information.

But despite all of these questions, the stories of people who lived in the past are compelling because they describe real experiences. In the chapters that follow, we encounter men and women from across Africa. We may or may not identify personally with each of them, but taken together these

life stories add a human dimension to the history of modern Africa. We are drawn to them because, we too are individuals, living our own life stories.

Note

1. See the “Map of Freedom, 2010,” produced by Freedom House at www.freedomhouse.org.

PART I

ENCOUNTERS: TWO WORLDS
AND NEW WORLDS, 1800–1850