

<http://journals.cambridge.org/MOA>

[illegible]

Email alerts: [Click here](#)
Subscriptions: [Click here](#)
Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)
Terms of use : [Click here](#)

Julius Emeka Okolo

The Journal of Modern African Studies / Volume 18 / Issue 04 / December 1980, pp 707 - 709
DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X00014865. Published online: 11 November 2008

Link to this article: [http://journals.cambridge.org/
abstract_S0022278X00014865](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0022278X00014865)

How to cite this article:

Julius Emeka Okolo (1980). Review of M. R. G. Spiller "Concerning natural experimental philosophic': Meric Casaubon and the Royal Society' *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. 18. pp 707-709 doi:10.1017/S0022278X00014865

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

Ethnic Politics in Nigeria by OKWUDIBA NNOLI

Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978. Pp. xi + 289. ₦ 12.50.

Groundwork of Military Law and Military Rule in Nigeria by OKAY ACHIKE

Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978. Pp. xx + 278. ₦ 13.50.

Political Authority and the Nigerian Civil Service by HUMPHREY N. NWOSU

Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1977. Pp. viii + 176. ₦ 12.50.

These three books, among others, attest to the impressive success of the inexorable effort by Fourth Dimension Publishers, an indigenous company based in Enugu, to encourage young scholars, particularly Africans, to publish the results of their research. All three authors are members of the staff of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka: Okwudiba Nnoli and Humphrey N. Nwosu are in the Department of Political Science, and Okay Achike is in the Faculty of Law.

Ethnic Politics in Nigeria makes a courageous and daring attempt to analyse this nation's perennial problem. The outcome is a comprehensive study and a distinguished contribution to the literature of the politics of development, political sociology, and nation-building and national integration. One is particularly struck by the author's skilful effort to demolish some of the myths surrounding ethnicity propagated by a number of social theorists, and his endeavour to provide a more succinct theoretical perspective – hence the strength of the volume, since much of the material is by now familiar.

Nnoli discusses the social dynamics which are integumentary to ethnicity in Nigeria, and the phenomenon's perversive operational mode. He clearly explains the difference between ethnic and class conflicts, but emphasises that in some cases in Africa 'ethnic and class lines coincide' (p. 11). He maintains that in the analysis of contemporary African societies

ethnicity is not a critical variable. It lacks explanatory potency. Its role in African politics, although sometimes considerable, is more apparent than real. Its potential as a force for changing the objective realities of African life is very minimal (p. 12).

He blames colonial rule for encouraging and perpetuating ethnic differentiation in Nigeria, and stresses the need to emphasise those features held in common by the various ethnic groups, as opposed to their differences. He makes a number of recommendations for solving the problem of ethnicity that are revolutionary in character and content. Indeed, it would require a revolutionary government to change the *status quo* by means of a 'progressive alliance' of 'the rural and urban poor majority' (p. 289). This group, this reviewer must state, happens to be the most down-trodden in Nigerian society, and the most readily used by the members of the 'petty-bourgeois' and 'comprador-bourgeois' class, who often appeal to ethnic sentiments for the furtherance and attainment of their goals.

Unfortunately, and this emerges from Nnoli's analysis, those who are best equipped to organise the 'poor majority', and to infuse the consciousness of

the necessity for revolutionary change, cannot do this because they have already compromised their position. Nnoli's conclusions are not clear as to what is to be done. However, it is to his credit that he manages to remain detached in his painstaking and penetrating analysis of a problem that arouses so much emotion. What he has written will be primarily useful for classroom instruction, especially in courses on African political dynamics.

Groundwork of Military Law and Military Rule in Nigeria is a remarkable volume on a subject that has been hitherto neglected by students of Nigerian law and politics. Achike, a lawyer, draws on well-handled primary and secondary sources in offering a comprehensive picture of the historical, legal, and constitutional development of the Nigerian military, as well as its governmental processes upon the assumption of political power. His approach is that of a scholar familiar with diverse sources – legal, historical, and political.

The book is divided into almost two equal parts: 'Law Within the Nigerian Army' and 'Government Under the Military Regime'. The subjects covered are not as easy as the titles may suggest, and there is a good deal of technical terminology, but happily the author writes in an easy style, and the result is an admirable study of military rule in Nigeria. Achike correctly begins by tracing the colonial origins of the Nigerian military, the sources of law affecting the army, and a soldier's legal status. He moves into a discussion of the factors that contributed to the *coup d'état* against the first civilian government of Nigeria, the constitutionality of the take-over, the crisis within the military culminating in the Biafran war, the legality of the secession, and the machinery of government under military rule. We are given not a mere historical presentation of the events, but a legal interpretation of the issues at stake.

Although the book is heavily weighted on the legal side, it is enlivened by comments on recent political developments in Nigeria, and includes suggestions about how to eradicate the fissiparous tendencies inherent in the regionally/ethnically/religiously-oriented politics in the country. Achike's study is certainly of tremendous value for both academics and lay readers.

Political Authority and the Nigerian Civil Service is useful and important as a contribution to the literature on organisational behaviour, as well as economic planning and implementation (chs. 4–5). The author presents the characteristics of the Nigerian social environment, and discusses how the environmental factors 'combined in various ways to shape the growth, structure, functions and the changing phases of the Nigerian Federal and State's authorities and civil services' (p. 41). His main thesis is that Nigeria exemplifies a political system in which the existence of a multiplicity of parochial loyalties militates against the emergence of a central authority and legitimacy, thereby impeding the growth of a common national outlook.

Nwosu's book is insightful and its conclusions are sound. Here and there are found some statistics to buttress his arguments, although the data and footnotes generally come from widely-read secondary sources, primarily concerned with Nigeria and Africa. In addition, the reader is provided with a general bibliography of relevant literature, as well as more specific publications on Nigeria – unfortunately neglected by the other two authors.

All three volumes demonstrate much concern with problems of political stability and national integration in Nigeria. However, in scholarship and

depth of analysis, *Groundwork of Military Law and Military Rule in Nigeria*, although very technical, and *Political Authority and the Nigerian Civil Service*, are not the equal – nor do they pretend to be – of *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*.

JULIUS EMEKA OKOLO

Department of Political Science and Administration, University of Sokoto

The Arab–African Connection: political and economic realities by VICTOR T. LE VINE and TIMOTHY W. LUKE

Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1979. Pp. xvii + 155. \$18.00.

Afro-Arab Relations in the New World Order by E. C. CHIBWE
New York, St. Martin's Press, 1978. Pp. x + 150. \$18.95.

Victor Le Vine and Timothy Luke have written an empirical study of political and economic relationships between Africa and the Arab states from 1973 to 1978. Their main emphasis is on the 1973 Arab–Israeli war, resulting in the use of money and oil as weapons of diplomacy by the Arabs. They outline the historical perspectives of Afro-Arab relations, and stress the impact of European colonialism on Africa and the Arab world; the net result was 'to freeze Arab–African contacts at the official level...[and] to contribute to an expansion of Islam on the continent' (p. 1). They appraise Egypt's links and contributions to black Africa, as well as Nasser's theory of 'the Second Circle—the African Continent Circle' of Arab involvement. They discuss the purported Arab assertion to leadership in the African nationalist movement, and then erroneously assert: 'That claim was finally laid to rest in 1963', when the Organisation of African Unity was established (p. 4).

The Arab–African Connection: political and economic realities also deals with the community of interests between African and Arab peoples, the impact of the Arab–Israeli conflict on Africa, the vulnerability of the Israeli political and economic penetration of the continent, and the conversion of Africa to the Arab cause. The Israeli seizure of the Egyptian territory on the west bank of the Suez Canal was a calculated risk. They recall a statement by B. Rivlin and J. Fomerand: 'The Arab–Israeli conflict was no longer purely regional; it had become an issue affecting the entire African continent because of Israel's "threat to African soil"' (p. 14).

The authors assess the importance of the economic power of the Organisation of Petroleum-Exporting Countries (O.P.E.C.), the dangers of oil diplomacy, and the response of international organisations to the post-1973 crisis. They assign the rôle of 'moral leadership' of the non-oil developing countries (N.O.D.C.s) to the members of O.P.E.C., but unfortunately do not define or explain its nature. The Afro-Arab positions in international conferences, and the importance of price-stabilisation to the N.O.D.C.s, are carefully analysed. 'The political inspiration that the OPEC cartel gave to other commodity-producing and exporting countries, particularly those in Africa, has become a critical dimension in Arab–African relations since 1973' (p. 57).

Le Vine and Luke belittle what they view as O.P.E.C.'s insatiable quest for 'petro-dollars', and their inability to provide meaningful aid to the N.O.D.C.s.