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Jannik Schritt and Annika Witte, *Oil-Age Africa: Critical Reflections on Oil Politics, Resource Economies and Extractive Communities*. (Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies #29). Brill Academic Publications, 2023, 296 pages. ISSN: 978-90-04-53006-5.

Reviewed by: Bourouayah Mohamed, Former Vice-president of Emir Abdelkader University, Constantine, Algeria.

Oil has occupied a prominent place in the process of colonial strife against Africa when it became an important source of energy compared to coal during and after the First World War. During the sixties and seventies, Western oil companies dominated this vital sector, in partnership with the national oil companies in Africa. This book is a masterful examination of the repercussions and consequences of the oil issue and its consequences on the economy in Africa. It offers new perspectives and critical reflections on the prevalent academic discourses on oil in Africa. It also brings together researchers from the social and economic sciences to challenge specific approaches to the complex related processes of oil politics, economies, and societies. The book provides a critical and a focused survey on oil in Africa. It includes three parts: *Oil Politics and the Rentier state*, *the Oil Industry and the Enclave Economy*, and *Oil Communities and Rural-Urban Transformations*. The central subject of this book is oil politics in Africa in light of the successive changes. The authors' perspective is that Oil Politics and the Rentier State require causal relations between resource wealth and economic, social, and political transformations. The rentier state is the most prominent aspect of the rentier economy, which refers to a country that derives all or a significant portion of its national revenue by leasing domestic resources to foreign investors, often depending on an uneven rule that does not guarantee the development of local wealth and increased incomes. This concept applies to Africa with some limited exceptions that the book deals with and presents as pioneering economic experiments.

In testing the different theories of the rentier state, Joseph N. Mangarella presents the case of Gabon. In his article entitled, "Rural Rentierism? The Rentier State Theory and Its Applicability to Local Spaces in Gabon," Joseph N. Mangarella argues that the historical development of certain rentier effects in Gabon is explained by five main factors: state legitimacy, public accountability, rentier mentality, corruption, and legitimacy. The author argues that this historical development has been happened in three separate time periods. The first period begins before the wells were drilled. The second spans when Gabon could first be

characterized as an incipient rentier state. The third stage marks when rentier effects changed Gamba and the Ndougou lagoon into an extreme case of oil-rent dependence at local levels, after the discovery and exploitation of the giant Rabi-Kunga oilfield.

This study has interaction with what Douglas A. Yatesin claimed in his book, *Oil Rent Dependency & Neocolonialism in the Republic of Gabon*. This book provides a detailed study of the political and economic condition of the Republic of Gabon, focusing on the years of the oil boom (1975-1985) and the rise to power of Leon M'ba before the military coup that removed him from power in February 1964. Leon M'ba was accused of applying a dictatorial regime that sought to guarantee French interests. After his death, Gabon became one of the most prosperous countries in the region, with the highest human development index in sub-Saharan Africa. The case of Gabon has shown clearly that eliminating the rentier state is the best way for national development. Another African sample of oil-Age Africa is given by Salissou Oubandoma and Jannik Schritt in their study of the case of Niger. In their article entitled, "De l'argent facile? Pétrole et transformation rurale-urbaine dans la région de Zinder (Niger)," the authors confirm-for the case of Niger- that despite the decline in oil activities from 2011 to 2012 which led to the dismissal of many local workers, despite also the conflict related to repeated incursions by Boko Haram, the oil industry has obviously allowed a large number of young diffalais to fulfill themselves and provide for the needs of their families.

Indeed, the oil wealth in Niger has allowed this African country to improve the economic and social situation and resist the manifestations of poverty that prompted numbers of Nigerians to migrate to neighboring countries. As a collection of essays, this book contains different approaches to the issue of oil-age Africa. Despite these differences, the authors succeeded in presenting a comprehensive study of the pre-oil and post-oil phase, which we urge researchers in African studies to refer to it in writing their public and private writings. Overall, these articles make a major contribution to our understanding of the current and future vision of Africa regarding the issue of oil as a natural resource and as a source of wealth. Oil-policy should be as an element of development in which Africa records low levels.

This book is a vital resource for academics, policy makers, and economists. Indeed, the book contains an analytical and forward-looking vision for the present and future of Africa in light of the optimal exploitation of oil wealth. This goal can only be achieved by the presence of an effective policy and economic diplomacy that enables lifting challenges, achieving development, and ending dependence on the outside.

#### **Research Africa**

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