

William C. OLSEN & Walter E. A. Van BEEK (Ed), *Evil in Africa. Encounters with the everyday*, Indiana University Press, 2015, 392 pages.

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The book is about the reality of Evil in Africa from different points of view, but the most eminent is the link between Evil and Justice in Africa. "This volume explores the cultural meanings and social contexts of evil in everyday life within various African societies" (p. 2). This is the purpose of the Introduction of the book: "African Notions of Evil: The Chimera of Justice". Divided into three part: "Evil And The State/War"; "Evil And Religion"; "Evil And Modernity", *Evil in Africa* in the field of African Religion, link a religious concept (Evil), to "secular" realities (justice, reconciliation, war, gender, violence, etc.). This is why the book is precisely an *Encounters with the everyday*. By "every day", it is difficult to separate in African life, what is sacred\religious and what is not. "Evil influences invade existence at all levels, including personal daily life, communal living, and even the national character" (p. 21).

In the first article of this first part, Sónia Silva present "Political Evil: Witchcraft from the Perspective of the Bewitched", Susan Reynolds Whyte and Lotte Meinert, Juliana Obika in the second article invites to consider the "Untying Wrongs in Northern Uganda". "The Evil of Insecurity in South Sudan: Violence and Impunity in Africa's Newest State". In this contribution, Jok Madut from South Sudan invites the reader to question the reality of Injustice as one of the main expressions of Evil in a Country

bruised by several years of armed conflicts. One of the great expressions of Evil these past years in Africa is the Rwandan Genocide. Jennie E. Burnet in "Genocide, Evil, and Human Agency: The Concept of Evil in Rwandan Explanations of the 1994 Genocide" is a general call for a deep healing of the traumatic memory. Concerning the political manifestation of Evil, Wyatt MacGaffey in "Politics and Cosmographic Anxiety: Kongo and Dagbon Compared" from two ancient kingdoms to actual Congo and Ghana, invites us to see how the consequences of the particular worldview COULD become a problem for a generation if there is no respect of public goods and planification.

Religion is probably one of the best domains to see how Africans face and finds solutions against the reality of Evil. René Devisch in "Ambivalence and the Work of the Negative among the Yaka" explores in an anthropological immersion how the yiYaka speakers from Kwaango and Kinshasa consider evil through the interpretation of their relation to the spirit, ancestors, divination, Forces and the oneiric world. "These topics inevitably challenge the researcher to extend the investigation beyond the domain of the observable, touchable, and explicable." (William C. Olsen & Walter E. A. Van Beek, 2015, 106). "Aze and the Incommensurable" This is how Léocadie Ekoué and Judy Rosenthal interpret the representation

of Evil understanding as Aze, translated as “witchcraft”, but more complex for Ewe from Ghana, Togo and Benin. Walter E. A. van Beek explores “Evil and the Art of Revenge in the Mandara Mountains” in the north of Cameroon on the difficult question of death. Diane Ciekawy in the “Distinctions in the Imagination of Harm in Contemporary Mijikenda Thought: The Existential Challenge of Majini” in Kenya explores Evil through spirit aggression. For Ulrika Trovalla’s “Haunted by Absent Others: Movements of Evil in a Nigerian City”, the problem of religious conflicts between Christians and Muslims is one of the big problems in many Nigerian States. “Attributions of Evil among Haalpulaaren, Senegal”, is how Roy Dilley shows how Christians and Muslims are working together in Senegal to think about the problem of Evil and find some concrete solutions. Kjersti Larsen in “Reflections regarding Good and Evil: The Complexity of Words in Zanzibar”, proposes a moral reflection in Zanzibar on Evil, from an anthropological point of view applied to the performativity of ordinary Words and their healing power. “Constructing Moral Personhood: The Moral Test in Tuareg Sociability as a Commentary on Honor and Dishonor” is Susan J. Rasmussen’s contribution to the relationship between Evil and religion for Tuareg people from Mali and Niger. For him, the goal “is to reveal subjective cultural experiences of evil and danger through exploration of their representations in small incidents and cases involving tests of character and judgments and commentaries on honor and dishonor, with examples from other social interactions and verbal art.” (p. 229). The last contribution of this second part of the book is a contribution to the topic “The Gender of Evil: Maasai

Experiences and Expressions”, by Dorothy L. Hodgson. She indicates the goal of his contribution: “In this chapter, I compare three different manifestations of evil in the lives of Maasai pastoralists in Tanzania to suggest the importance of a gendered analysis to our theorizations of “evil”: the evil acts (esetan) of individuals such as cursing and the “evil eye”; the immoral acts of men that provoke collective retribution by women (olkishoroto); and the waves of spirit possession (orpeko) that inflicted Maasai women starting in the 1970s.” (p. 251).

In this third and last part of the book, the contributions tried to point the new conceptions of Evil or the new forms of Evil, “Neocannibalism, Military Biopolitics, and the Problem of Human Evil” is for Nancy Scheper Hughes a denunciation of “the biomedical abuse and plunder of dead bodies, among these, the bodies of enemies, with the complicity and collaboration of militarized states” (p. 267). William C. Olsen in his article “Theft and Evil in Asante” develops a deep reflection on instant justice (known in some other countries as “popular justice”). For him, “Theft is evil in Asante’s life because it is illegitimate expropriation of property. It is also an excessive accumulation of wealth. Indeed, the subject of theft was rarely left out of narratives regarding evil deeds.” (p. 320). Maia Green with “Sorcery after Socialism: Liberalization and Antiwitchcraft Practices in Southern Tanzania” “The essays in that volume raise important questions about the category of evil and its relation to social orderings. But, in claiming that cosmological orders establish the conditions for the attribution of evil within social relations such accounts occlude the processes and the strategies of actors through which cosmologies of evil come to have social traction.” (p. 324).

“Transatlantic Pentecostal Demons in Maputo”, is for Linda van de Kamp the conviction that through “Brazilian Pentecostalism, Mozambican Pentecostals are developing a new vision of Maputo’s history and particularly the role of “evil” in it, in contrast to or re elaborating the views and positions of their grand/parents in this city in the past.” (pp. 344-345). The final contribution “The Meaning of ‘Apartheid’ and the Epistemology of Evil” by Adam Ashforth identifies “the nature of the evil that was apartheid was a matter not merely of vilifying a political opponent, but of analyzing power.” (p. 378).

This book review introduces the difficult reality of Evil in Africa, from Mayotte’s experience and perspective. An inversion or perversion of kinship constitutes this “evil” (p. 247). Although evil may be “constituted” as an inversion of kinship, it is also clear that evil has effects, and is identified, in many other areas of daily life and existence in Africa. Throughout Africa, evil is a dramatic reality, because people suffer. By evil acts, however, defined in a society, people experience terror; they are hurt, persecuted, exiled, murdered, maimed or made disabled, raped, threatened, or robbed; or they become ill or die in an unanticipated or unusual manner. Such negative descriptive conditions may be observable in contemporary and historical circumstances in African lives. They have been recognized within the narratives of some notable ethnographic works. A sense of moral judgment is a likely working component of all cultural systems. Evil is not only bad by definition, but defining evil is not without its problems. Describing evil is problematic. Evil is an adjective, and like many adjectives, it generates problems as a noun. Societies distinguish between evil

acts. However, as a noun evil invokes notions of essentialism. It thereby confronts the basic anthropological premise of cultural relativism.

As images go, we are presented with devils, demons, monsters, witches, and evil sorcerers. The world conspires against us! Job’s suffering resulted from a conspiracy on high, but most conspiracies are closer to home: the other ethnic group, the immigrants, our next-door neighbors, our kinsmen. Finally, African wisdom predicts that we can never be sure that we are not only the victims of these conspiracies but also their perpetrators. Evil, in the end, is our conspiracy. Finally, many in Africa today consider a great deal of the problems found in the continent, as well as those imported through Western influences, to be an affirmation of the realities of evil. Even so, responses to evil illustrate the ability to resolve such issues with whatever resources may be at hand. The chapters in this volume teach us that encounters with evil in Africa are not so much uncontrollable and intractable forces. Rather, the essays remind us of the global nature of African life in that everyday African communities often define evil, as well as how to respond to its impact through transnational entities such as commerce, Koranic prayer, mercenary forces, international human rights, the United Nations, missions, nationalism, war and genocide, Christian ethics, migration, hospitals, the Internet, national media, schools, and so forth. Nevertheless, while using such realities, local African populations - like people everywhere - move in directions that give them some degree of assurance in their lives, some measure of continuity, and some level of recognition that acknowledges both the realities of evil and the perceived methods for countering its nefarious and damaging effects in their daily living.