

scholars can draw from its ample empirical reservoir to continue developing novel approaches to policing in Africa as a field of study.

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***Animality and Colonial Subjecthood in Africa: The Human and Nonhuman Creatures of Nigeria.* By Saheed Aderinto.** Athens: Ohio University Press, 2022. Pp. 340. \$80.00 cloth, \$36.95 paper.

In 2012, Saheed Aderinto and the late Paul Osifundunrin co-edited one of those massive state of the field texts that come out of a festschrift. The volume, titled *The Third Wave of Historical Scholarship on Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ayodeji Olukaju*, honored the work of one of the most innovative historians in Nigerian academia. The editors argued that the third wave of Nigerian historical studies had four key characteristics, one of which was innovation in its topical concerns. The thematic innovations of the third wave brought forth “entirely new fields of history such as crime, urban, children and youth, and sexuality, including works that use new sources to launch significant investigation into previously unknown areas of Nigerian history.”<sup>1</sup> Aderinto’s career has certainly been consistent with this definition of the third wave. The past ten years have seen him writing on a broad range of historical topics including historiography, childhood, prostitution, African empires, guns, and now animals.

*Animality and Colonial Subjecthood* explores what it would mean to take animals as subjects of colonial rule in Nigeria. How could an animal history of colonialism be told that is distinct from, while intersecting with, the human histories? What kinds of sources could one work with to investigate an animal history of colonialism? What would it mean to write a social history of animals in the colonial era as opposed to an economic history or a cultural history for instance? How might the subjectification of animals relate to that of humans? And how would one address the question of voice, given its centrality to the social history method and to the book title’s concern with “subjecthood”? Using colonial era records on a range of animals—those who were celebrated as symbols of grandeur and those who labored in drudgery, those who were seen as dangerous bodies and those who were precious companions, those assigned the role of spiritual agents and those who ended up in pots of stew—Aderinto demonstrates how paradoxes of colonial subjecthood that scholars have uncovered through the human experience were also present in the experiences of non-human animals.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Third Wave of Historical Scholarship on Nigeria” in *The Third Wave of Historical Scholarship on Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ayodeji Olukaju* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 7.

The non-human turn, if it's not premature to use that phrase, is connected to the proliferation of studies on the Anthropocene—the human centric era of Earth history marked by the domination of humans over nature, and the exploitation of nature for ostensible human benefit to the point of threatening its complete destruction. Bear in mind that what constitutes the human and what constitutes nature have been variously defined across space and over time. In the accelerated period of planetary exploitation that we are in the stream of in the twenty-first century, European and American empires, and now some Asian nation states have played a disproportionate role in the exploitation of nature's resources. Non-human studies, in this context, become a literature of critique that seeks to decenter the human and draw attention to histories that also unfold on the planet besides those of the militarily dominant human species.

The book sets an ambitious goal of telling an animal history that is distinct from, while intersecting with, human histories. This proves to be an overly ambitious undertaking even though the book does widen the path for future scholars to make investigations into the possibilities of non-human history. Given the evidentiary demands of the discipline, one can readily see how one defaults to telling a history of human-animal interactions rather than a distinctly animal history. Historians of childhood face similar challenges when trying to write children's histories in which children are agents, as opposed to histories of childhood which are more properly about adult ideas of children. The challenge of writing a human account of non-human history is in the stream of longstanding efforts to decenter the already overpowering subject—adults in histories of children, Europe in histories of the colonial period, the master's gaze in histories of enslaved people, the state, and so on. All these earlier efforts to deal with archival biases form methodological predecessors to what is being attempted here with non-human history. The difficulties inherent to centering the colonized and the subaltern, variously imagined, are compounded here by the human centrism of the historical discipline, its methods, and languages, and by Aderinto's desire to write a social history, a genre that tends to presume people as witness. Perhaps a focus on animal and environment interactions rather than animal and human interactions might have opened greater methodological possibilities like reading landscape, engaging archaeology or environmental history, towards uncovering an animal history that decenters human actors.

The book might more precisely be described as being about domesticated animals. Pets, transport animals, beasts of burden, zoo animals, and animals that people eat populate eight chapters divided into two sections. Section I, "Loyal Companions, Tasty Food, Distinguished Athletes, Political Beings" looks broadly speaking at the uses and symbolism of animals in Nigeria societies. The chapters in Section II, "Pathology, Empathy, and Anxiety" take various approaches to violence upon animals, some of the ways in which it was imagined, enacted, prevented, and prosecuted. The first chapter, "Loyal Companions, Tasty Food, Distinguished Athletes, Political Beings" provides an overview of the transformations in the uses and ideology of domesticated animals in the first half of the twentieth century. It explains, among other things, "how beef changed Nigerian history" (p. 8). The second chapter looks at equine creatures—the donkey and the horse in particular. It examines how these "instruments of conquest" and "tools of colonization" shaped the experience of space and time and became seen as indexes of

colonial modernity (p. 9). Chapter 3 will appeal to most readers as it concerns one of the world's most popular animals—the dog. The chapter looks at the ideas, practices, and sentiments surrounding the dog in African and European communities in colonial Nigeria. Various categories of dogs in symbiotic relationship with humans are examined. Among them are the dog in hunter societies, the lap dog, and the watchdog, who all worked in multiple senses of the word, as members of human dominated communities. The chapter includes a fascinating discussion of debates over the work that dogs did and what made their labor taxable or exempt.

There is a curious fourth chapter in the middle of the book on animals in the political cartoons of the *West African Pilot* that called to mind the important digital archiving project of the late Tejumola Olaniyan—the *Encyclopedia of African Political Cartooning*.<sup>2</sup> The chapter profiles Akinola Lasekan, the artist behind the *Pilot's* cartoons who used animal imagery to depict the struggles between the Action Group and the NCNC on the road to independence, and analyzes the potency of animal imagery in communicating the NCNC's interpretation of the issues at stake in the political battles leading up to independence. It is an interesting but oddly placed chapter because it does not deal with actual animals who are, in every other chapter, the subjects of this social history. Rather it explores the interplay of local and Christian animal metaphors in the *Pilot* cartoons. This was a rich chapter but one that disrupted the continuity of the book. I could see it working well in the context of a Sources and Methods seminar, being paired with Olaniyan's tremendous digital archive.

Chapter 5 continues with the dog but now looking at human-dog relations marked by fear, specifically the human fear of dog-transmitted rabies. The chapter tracks rabies panics in colonial Nigeria, in rural and urban areas. These panics showed how precarious categorizations could be in the colony. Depending on breed, ownership, and racialization as close or distant from Europeanness, dogs could instantly go from being a friendly species to being the targets of mass killing campaigns. Like every other resource in the colony, the status and rights of dogs were unilaterally bestowed by dominant others and could be unilaterally and suddenly withdrawn depending on the needs of colonial power. The sixth chapter looks at the history of wildlife conservation in West Africa and how it functioned to bring African animals into colonial modernity. Chapter 7 addresses the discourse of animal cruelty as it was wielded by both African elites and colonial agents in the production of their own modernist subjectivities. Chapter 8 explores the contrasting material and symbolic histories of the horse and the donkey in colonial Nigeria, and finally an epilogue offers a thoughtful discussion of animal-human issues in contemporary Nigeria. The clashes between farmers and herdsmen that erupted into deadly massacres, and the ethnicized politics of trying to manage these conflicts are thoughtfully addressed in this closing.

A key claim of the book is that if we are to understand colonial modernity as being directed by the will to extract resources, through domination of people and nature, then we have to consider the non-human creatures of Africa as subjects in the enterprise of colonial

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<sup>2</sup> Tejumola Olaniyan, (2014) *Africa Cartoons: Encyclopedia of African Political Cartooning*. Accessed December 14, 2022. <https://africacartoons.com/>.

exploitation and extraction. I was persuaded that the value of pack animals like the donkey to projects of territorial expansion has been grossly underappreciated. This, it turns out, is a recurring theme in the history of Nigerian donkeys—to be thankless carriers of loads and unseen bearers of burden.

The parallels between the colonial attitude towards animal subjects and human subjects are very clear in the book. The author writes directly about the racialization of animals in relation to their owners, or rather in relation to their proximity to Europeans, and how that racialization could lead to harms ranging from increased exploitation to a kind of communal punishment. In the chapter on dogs and rabies panics, Aderinto details the racial categorizations of dogs as being either White dogs, meaning a domesticated, registered, lapdog, or being a “pi-dog,” a derogatory term signifying a stray, a mutt, or a native African breed. As Aderinto points out, dogs were always threatening to blur the breed lines, or racial lines, that human beings categorized them under by escaping custody and having sex with each other. How a dog was racialized was highly correlated with whether a dog would be rounded up for immediate destruction in areas thought to have a rabies problem. The human fear of rabies in short made all dogs vulnerable to capture and elimination, but their Whiteness or pi-ness made them unequally so.

From my reading, I can see that the study of humans has provided a number of tools with which to think anew about animal histories, but not yet vice versa. The parallels between frameworks for analyzing the governance of humans and the governance of animals in the colony may strike some readers as being a bit hard to sustain. But the overarching point is to reinforce the idea that the colonial system was designed to enable the extraction of wealth from one place to another, and that it was agnostic about who or what in the colony would be exploited—women, men, children, minerals, artifacts, land, bodies of water, flora, fauna, or whatever else in order to generate profits.

From a feminist studies angle there is another major question about domination that occurs to me. Scholars concerned with gender and power in colonial history have long challenged our thinking about the relationship between gender hierarchies and colonial hierarchies in the lives of African women under colonial rule. Given the multiple subjectifications that women confronted under regimes that were both Eurocentric and phallogocentric, how generalizable were theories of colonial power that did not account for the simultaneity of race and gender difference and hierarchy? Domesticated animals in the colonial era were subjectified by colonial systems of exploitation, and by humans in general. Sometimes, as the book shows, colonizers asserted themselves as salvationists who would rescue worthy animals from the cruel African humans. How should we think about these complicated dynamics? Through richly detailed narratives the book provides ample opportunity for readers to debate on how to analyze multiple matrices of power within the colonial world.

I appreciated the attention to local ideologies regarding and engagement with animals, which bore some distinctions from the ways in which Europeans engaged with them. For example, while animals were universally regarded as laborers, hunters, and companions, some were also endowed with ritual significance as mediums in certain Nigerian societies and as ritual sacrifices in others. The book anticipates popular tendencies, to read an animal-unfriendly African worldview against an animal-friendly European worldview

through histories of animals and religion. The book handily collapses such binaries through exploration of the aggressive dog euthanization campaigns that shadowed rabies panics across colonial Nigeria. We learn about the cold debates over killing efficiency and gruesome approaches to mass killing of dogs that colonial officials organized to quell rabies panics.

In addition to the attention to local ideologies about animals, I also appreciated the urban focus of the book that allows it to be worked into urban studies courses. Given the urban turn in African studies and realities, it is important that works on animal history not be located only on the game reserve or in rural spaces. How did the presence and the absence of animals create the city as such? When one considers the fact that as late as the eighteenth century, Lagos was dense with mangrove forests featuring all manner of wildlife—monkeys, snakes, pumas, boar, and countless other animals that are scarcely associated with a city like Lagos today, not to speak of being seen there, then one appreciates how a certain kind of animal absence plays a role in our conception of the citiness of urban spaces.

I can see the book working well in seminars on social history, its possibilities and methods, courses on urban history, courses on colonial history and of course, courses on Nigerian history. Obviously courses on animal history or on non-human history would also need to incorporate this book.

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