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Jon Abbink, Ineke van Kessel, eds. *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth Politics and Conflict in Africa.* Leiden: Brill, 2005. v + 300 pp. $46.00 (paper), ISBN 978-90-04-14275-6.

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Youth: An Imagined Social Construct

Contributors to the work, *Vanguard or Vandals* analyze youth and conflict in Africa. Twelve essays define the volume. Using case studies from northern Nigeria, Zanzibar, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Angola, the Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, and Eritrea, the contributors accomplish several goals. They create a framework from which to analyze the social construction of youth and generation. Authors employ different methodologies such as personal accounts, oral testimonies, and historical genealogies to show continuities and discontinuities between and among different political generations. Besides creating a framework from which to analyze youth and generation, scholars also debate the issue of marginality. They define what marginalization means and how it plays a role in creating formal and informal policies of exclusion and inclusion. Scholars address these questions: how do the youth play a role in their own marginalization, and once marginalized how do they reintegrate into society? The answers vary and they depend on the locale and subject in question. Case studies focus on child soldiers, student organizations, nationalist movements, street children, transitional politics, ex-combatants, and reintegration, among other subjects.

The book is divided into three sections. In the first section, "Historical Perspectives on Youth as Agents of Change," Murray Last and Thomas Burgess examine case studies in Nigeria and Zanzibar. Last analyzes youth activism in northern Nigeria from 1750 to 2000 while Burgess focuses on the 1964 Zanzibari Revolution. While the two authors use two different geographical regions, their works correlate around a central unifying theme: power is a fluid commodity. Last and Burgess capture this theme by analyzing how the youth assumed the dominant position in society, but also how the older generation renegotiated the change in authority. Sometimes, as Last shows, the older generation co-opts or, as Burgess shows, the older generation confers with the young to effect change.

In "Towards a Political History of Youth in Muslim Northern Nigeria," Last examines the concepts of generation and youth in Hausaland. Hausaland is a gerontocratic society, where age sets create ritualized patterns of behavior and identity formations. Hausa society is divided into the young (*yara*) and the old (*dattijo*). Last writes, " 'youth' in Hausaland is not just biological: it is both a style of behavior and matter of status in a society where seniority plays an important role" (p. 37). Senior wives, for example, exercise authority over junior wives. Junior status represents a temporary identity marker (with the exception of slaves) that people can transcend (p. 40). Last notes "there are always people junior to you" (p. 40). Because Last uses that statement to describe power relations in Hausa society, he acknowledges that one's status is not permanently inscribed or defined by age. Instead, what emerges in Hausa society is a pattern of behavior which allows for the transition of power by militant, peaceful, or violent means. Youth assumed power by conquest, by building forts, or by establishing emirates. The youth also had another weapon at their disposal, flight. Flight, which served as a form of resistance, allowed the youth to escape the elders' control. Youth constantly refigured their identity which Last underscores by analyzing three historical episodes: 1804-8, 1903, and the 1950s. During those key periods, the youth wrested power from the elders by redefining the structures under which they operated.

In "Imagined Generations: Constructing Youth in Revolutionary Zanzibar," Burgess argues that two types

of youth identity emerged: vanguard and client. He writes that, "vanguard youth defined themselves as a distinct historical cohort with unique access to resources of extraversion in the late colonial world," while "client youth defined themselves instead [by] reference to 'timeless' principles of patronage and patriarchy" (p. 55). To explain the mechanics of these two identity types, Burgess examines the political parties that they formed. The vanguard generation operated under the Youth's Own Union (YOU) as activists who advocated for western education, overseas scholarships, and bilingual fluency while the Afro Shirazi Party (ASP) relied less on "parades, and performances across the national stage" (p. 65). These two political groups demonstrated that youth, as a subgroup, was not monolithic in their treatment of the generation from which they inherited power.

In the second section of the book entitled, "State, Crisis and the Mobilization of Youth," Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, Karel Arnaut, Jok Maduk Jok, and Sara Rich Dorman grapple with the issue of violence and its relationship to youth. In "Clash of Generations," Kagwanja's intellectual terrain is Kenya, where he situates his study around the Mungiki. The Mungiki is a revivalist political movement which traced its roots back to the Mau Mau movement of the 1950s. From 1992 to 1997, this group engaged in an "orgy of violence" (p. 82). Kagwanja writes that "[i]n January 2003 alone, its followers killed nearly fifty people in different parts of Kenya, sparking off a bloody confrontation between the group's followers and the security forces, which continued in the following months" (p. 82). Besides the violence that the Mungiki endorsed, the movement also encouraged a transfer of power by traditional means using the Kikuyu system of *Ituika* (break) (p. 83). The Mungiki, as Kagwanja shows, "wanted to replace the … gerontocratic orthodoxy of the Moi era … with a dispensation that empowered the youth" (p. 84). The Mungiki used rhetoric and power to fashion a political ideology that showcased differences in age, economic status, and ideology, similar to what is described in Karel Arnauts "Regenerating Nation: Youth Revolution and the Politics of History in Cote d'Ivoire." But despite these attempts to wrest power from an older generation, the Mungiki remained economically marginalized in Kenya.

In "War, Changing Ethics and the Position of Youth in the Sudan," Jok Maduk Jok analyzes the belief systems of the Dinka regarding the importance of youth. He couches his narrative within a discussion on the subculture of violence. Jok shows that lack of communication and adherence to Christianity has led to intergenerational problems. Other problems also emerged. Communities both hailed and criticized the presence and absence of males: "To have the young men around here is a blessing, but it is also a serious burden. Their presence is vital as we need their physical strength…. They protect the communities against Arab raids. But having them roaming the villages especially those among them who are soldiers, is an ordeal. Not only do we have to watch our girls, we also have to protect our property against them, and we have to constantly try to talk sense into them" (p. 147).

Children become stakeholders in armed conflict (a theme echoed in Sara Dorman's essay, "Past the Kalashnikov, Youth Politics and the State in Eritrea"). The expectations for the young to serve in that capacity also come with other priorities. An older generation expected the young to defer, show respect, and to protect the elderly generation while adhering to traditional customs. In exchange for these expectations, Jok shows that the older generation served as mediators. Parents and elders intervene to preserve societal values and customs that they see eroding.

Besides showing the tensions that developed between generations, Jok shows how these generations reproduce through a social paternity, meaning that men who do not sire their own children "inherit" one from a younger brother or other male relative (all lines of descent follow men). While Jok brings women into the conversation when discussing procreation, little exists in this essay or for that matter the volume, on female youth. Jok defines youth in the following manner: "To be a youth, it seems is to be single, not to be steadily employed or independent of one's family and, above all, to live under conditions of political conflict where fighting and defending one's family and property is a major preoccupation" (p. 145). This definition is inclusive; however, would the definition change if the subjects were females? Does Jok exempt himself from this criticism with this statement: "Youth seems to be seen as a social category with a sliding definition" (p. 145)? Jok does raise some important issues that delve beyond the scope of this work, which include the role of female soldiers, females as cell operatives, female political activists or female street children. Placing women in focus would possibly change the definition of youth, and result in some additional, fruitful discussion regarding identity formation and politics.

In the book's last section, "Interventions: Dealing with Youth in Crisis," Yves Marguerat, Angela McIntyre, Simon Simonse, and Krijn Peters discuss the roles that

ordinary people, NGOs, and government organizations play in trying to integrate youth into mainstream society. Marguerat provides an ethnographic analysis of street children in Lome, Togo. His study discusses how he cared for several male youth and funded their education. Marguerat's work highlights an interesting and often unacknowledged aspect of the profile of many street children (who fell within his sphere, at least): many come from influential backgrounds rather than economically deprived ones. Most of the subjects became street children following a change in the familial structure such as a divorce or death. Marguerat takes the readers into the street children's realm and intimately describes the hierarchical arrangement that defines the moral code which operates among them. Older boys assume the dominant position and are accorded respect based on seniority. The same code of conduct operates within the home for street children that Marguerat founded with others.

Angela McIntyre furthers the conversation by explaining the role of children as instruments of the state. In "Children as Conflict Stakeholders: Towards a New Discourse on Young Combatants," McIntyre writes, "the response of moral outrage to images of children in ill-fitting scraps of camouflage clothing carrying assault rifles has been a double-edged sword" (p. 231). McIntyre examines the environments which shapes youth's agency and the methods of recruitment used to entice the young. By examining child soldiers, McIntyre shows how they have become a high-profile international policy issue. These children that McIntyre, Peters and Simonse feature all share a common need: to reintegrate as "ex-combatants," "warriors," "mercenaries" or "hooligans" into mainstream society.

In his introductory chapter, Jon Abbink (one of the volume's editors) outlines several models of interpreting youth: the agency model, the interventionist model, and the analytic description model. By using these approaches, contributors show the myriad ways youth construct their own identity as "vanguard" or "vandals." These scholars not only introduce problems surrounding conceptions of youth and the generation, but they also show how conflicts between the young and older generations reconfigure power in society. Only lacking an explicit discussion of "women" as "youth," this volume adds immensely to the ongoing debate on youth and the politics that surround the term.

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