

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282516434>

INDIGENOUS AND EXOGENOUS SOURCES. The Akan People: A Documentary History. By Kwasi Konadu. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2014. Pp. xv + 446. \$68.95, hardback (ISBN 978-0...

Article in *The Journal of African History* · November 2015

DOI: 10.1017/S0021853715000481

CITATIONS

0

READS

74

1 author:



Emmanuel Ofosu-Mensah Ababio

University of Ghana

31 PUBLICATIONS 190 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Political Economy of Cocoa Production in Ghana from 1800s up to 2012. [View project](#)



Mining in Ghana [View project](#)

policymakers move reform forward. South Africa's intractable economic problems in 2014, which are similar to the concentration of wealth in the United States, provide much of the fire for Julius Malema's attacks on the government. The time has come to stare Rhodes down.

This important book nevertheless brings together primary sources covering a wide range of South African history and culture. Instructors and students will find much to consider. They will also discover why South Africa and South Africans represent such a fascinating microcosm of our world. Instructors can compensate for the omission of Rhodes and Glen Grey. Robert Rotberg's *The Founder* will help. Adam Habib's *South Africa's Suspended Revolution* restates the problem well. Ironically, some solutions have long been advocated in one of Rhodes's best legacies – his land grant to the University of Cape Town, whose scholars continue to reveal and attack remnants of his racist policies. Abusive capitalism, you are next.

KENNETH WILBURN
East Carolina University

INDIGENOUS AND EXOGENOUS SOURCES

The Akan People: A Documentary History.

By Kwasi Konadu.

Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2014. Pp. xv + 446. \$68.95,
hardback (ISBN 978-0-44879-5795).

doi:10.1017/S0021853715000481

Key Words: West Africa, Ghana, sources, exploration/travel, oral sources.

This book, the first in a two-volume anthology, is a compilation of the history of the Akan from indigenous (African) and exogenous (European/Islamic) sources, and offers contributions from almost unimpeachable primary and secondary sources in the form of eye-witness accounts, diaries, and journal articles.

The sources in this volume are separated into two categories: *indigenous* and *exogenous*. Alongside the well-written prefatory essay that provides a context for reading and using the sources provided in the book, Part One gives an overview of Akan cultural history and consequently of this collection at large. The first contribution from Kenya Shujaa assesses the current states of knowledge about the Akan past and equips readers with some of the major research questions that have guided investigations into Akan prehistory. This essay *inter alia* focuses on the question of Akan origins and the processes of urbanism and state formation. Shujaa approaches the study of Akan history from a landscape perspective, employing multiple scales of analysis in her review. What is interesting about her contribution is her masterful synthesis of Ghanaian archaeology, history, and linguistics in recreating Akan history. Following Shujaa, Kwame Daaku's 'History in the Oral Traditions of the Akan' offers a prelude to the category of indigenous sources that follow his contribution. Daaku evaluates the historical content in oral traditions and reflects upon

his methods as a field historian who encountered a range of subjects in the chronicles he recorded. Further works included under the category of indigenous sources, which are often unpublished oral accounts, are Carl Christian Reindorf's *History of the Gold Coast and Asante* (1895) and John Fynn's *Oral Traditions of the Fante: Komenda and Kwamankese*. Oral accounts in the book have been selected from the settlements and peoples of Nsoko (Beggho/Bɛo), Takyiman, Wassa, Sefwi, Denkyira, Adanse, Ahafo, Asante, and Fante.

Part Two, comprised of exogenous sources, covers a wide temporal range, though they are written by individuals whose observations came from outside the Gold Coast and contain their own religious, cultural, and commercial biases. The first set of exogenous sources presents the reader with the Iberian perspectives among which are select passages from Eustache de la Fosse's 1479–80 voyage; Duarte Pacheco Pereira's *Esmeraldo de situ orbis* (1508); and, a Spanish account of the founding of what is now the Elmina castle (1515). Dutch sources form part of the second set of exogenous sources, in addition to one significant French source authored by Jean Barbot.

The English sources include some of the earliest collections with relevance to Gold Coast and Akan history and excerpts from works such as Richard Hakluyt's twelve-volume set, which included the mid-sixteenth-century voyages of William Towerson and William Rutter. The next selection in the English sources is carefully culled from ship surgeon John Atkins whose *A Voyage to Guinea, Brazil, the West Indies* (1735) was published during the height of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and in which the Gold Coast features prominently. Before the latter part of the seventeenth century, English sources are sparse; however, once the British acquired Cape Coast from the Dutch and made it their commercial headquarters, the British presence and the volume of its records increase from the late seventeenth-century into the twentieth-century. Thus, a rich collection of Royal African Company (RAC) records are also featured as part of the English sources. Seminal accounts by the early-to-late nineteenth-century authors such as Henry Meredith, John Leyden, Thomas E. Bowdich, William Hutton, Brodie Cruickshank, and Dennis Kemp follow the RAC records. Selections from the works of R. S. Rattray shed light on some Akan festivals such as the Takyiman *adae* and the Asante *odwira*. Two essays have been reproduced in the book from Islamic sources and reflect the limited effect Islam has historically had on the landscape of Akan life. The first bibliographic essay by Raymond A. Silverman and David Owusu-Ansah, surveys the Arabic and European primary source literature relating to the Muslim presence among the Akan peoples of Ghana. The second essay, authored by Nehemiah Levtzion, focuses on the early nineteenth-century Arabic manuscripts from Kumasi, three bundles of Arabic manuscripts, containing about 900 folios, at the Royal Library in Copenhagen, and an interpretation of these manuscripts. The list of Arabic manuscripts kept at the University of Ghana, many of which await translation, concludes this book. The most serious criticism one can make of this work is that more emphasis is placed on the exogenous sources than warranted as shown by its sheer volume. Nevertheless, the works comprising the indigenous sources provide a valuable balance.

EMMANUEL ABABIO OFOSU-MENSAH
University of Ghana