

This book is definitely one of the best introductions to synodality written by contemporary Roman Catholic ecclesialogists. It will be appreciated by a wide audience of academic and nonacademic readers.

PETER DE MEY

KU Leuven, Belgium

peter.demey@kuleuven.be

Elections, Violence and Transitional Justice in Africa. Edited by Elias O. Opongo and Tim Murithi. New York: Routledge, 2022. 202 pages. \$127.50.

doi:10.1017/hor.2024.10

Postcolonial Africa is categorized by nation-states that attempt to reflect the ideals of a democratic culture. The key word here is “attempt.” This is because Africa’s nation-states are themselves unique in their origins and ways of existing in the global community of nation-states. They are mostly the products of imperialists of the West designed to serve their respective economic interests. Also, one has to acknowledge the fact that democracy, as a sociopolitical system, is rooted in a culture of negotiated identities by a people whose praxes of negotiations have defined their collective sense of self. Thus, the process of articulating the structures of governance for a nation-state calls for the collective buy-in by those who have embraced the shared markers of identity. Can the same be said of contemporary African nation-states? This is where the paradox of democracy plays out in postcolonial African nation-states. Each country in Africa is constituted by a plurality of nations. Due to the political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and religious markers shaping the respective countries in Africa, one is forced to ask the following questions: What are the constitutive markers of shared identities that hold together these constituent nations to form a cohesive state? How do the citizens of these states buy into the vision and ideals of the state both internally and externally as the state relates with other states? These questions serve as the hermeneutic lens used by the contributors to this anthology to probe the political culture defining election, violence, and transitional justice in contemporary Africa.

Elections, Violence and Transitional Justice in Africa, an anthology edited by Elias O. Opongo and Tim Murithi, wrestles with how the electoral processes in postcolonial Africa play out. Through their creative and insightful critique of democracy in Africa, the reader appreciates the depth of the problems that Africa’s nation-states face as they attempt to uphold a democratic culture that affirms the will of the people. The work also sheds light on the respective

cultures of violence that are rooted in the skewed electoral systems that are themselves hijacked by Africa's oligarchs who have no desire to uphold the common good, except their own narcissistic interests.

Among the many strengths of this anthology are the following. First, the respective contributors use case studies to address the relevant issues promoting electoral violence in Africa. They employ relevant political theories to their research on Africa's political systems and electoral praxes. They also attempt to shed light on the phenomenology of violence that emanates from a dysfunctional electoral system in the many parts of the continent.

Second, the anthology offers insights into the intersection between access to wealth and the promotion of violence that tend to upend the democratic process in Africa. For example, in chapter 1, Opongo sheds light on the undemocratic ways politicians use personal wealth to foster a culture of voters' intimidation. Such politicians either bribe voters to vote in a certain manner or hire their own militias to scare voters away from the polling stations. Opongo uses Nigeria, Kenya, and Sierra Leone as his case studies. Poor legal structures and the unwillingness to improve on such structures help to perpetuate the undemocratic culture of bribery and the perpetuation of violence.

Third, this anthology sheds light on the ways democracy tends to be hijacked through the intentional favoritism demonstrated by journalists toward particular candidates. Using Kenya and Nigeria as his case studies, Joseph Olusegun Adebayo calls attention to the bias for tribal affiliations that journalists in these two countries have used to skew public expectations of electoral results, thus leading to violence among the electorates. The chapter proposes how the journalistic ethic of neutrality can be nurtured in the journalistic profession in the continent.

Fourth, cognizant of the fact that Africa has the youngest population among all continents, Patrick Hajayandi studies closely how the youth of Africa are used by the political elites to change the outcomes of elections. Using Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo as his case studies, Hajayandi sheds light on how political candidates galvanize the youths based on their tribal, religious, and political party affiliations to use violence to achieve the needed outcome of the electoral processes.

Fifth, Lanoi Maloiy calls attention to the erasure of African women in Africa's electoral process. This culture of erasure has created a political system that does not tap into the talents and skills of all citizens. Employing a feminist political theory, Maloiy makes a case for ways African women can claim their rightful place as leaders in Africa's political and social systems.

Sixth, in another chapter of this anthology, Opongo makes a deliberate case for the ways international institutions like the International Criminal Court (ICC) can help to stabilize the electoral processes playing out in

some countries in Africa. Using Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire as his case studies, Opongo makes the argument that electoral violence can be a graced moment for peacebuilding advocates to study closely the root causes of electoral dys-functionalities in a country to allow for putting in place workable structures that can help foster a healthy national life. In light of this, Opongo argues that the ICC played a positive role in addressing the electoral crises that engulfed Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire.

Seventh, a prophetic turn is a clear marker of this anthology. Each contributor makes a case not just for lament of the dysfunctionalities defining the electoral processes in Africa's nation-states, but constructive ways of remedying the issues at stake. Tim Murithi makes a strong argument for rethinking the current system of governance in Africa. In doing this, Murithi argues for the retrieval of ancient African values defining the politics of African societies that can be used to address the several dysfunctionalities playing out in today's Africa.

The interdisciplinary strength of this anthology is outstanding. The authors draw on social psychology, memory studies, trauma studies, legal studies, cultural studies, philosophy, gender and feminist studies, and many more disciplines to address the electoral cultures in contemporary Africa. They use compelling data to make their arguments to allow for the readers to consider the multi-pronged matters at stake.

This work stands to be relevant to scholars, politicians, think-tank agencies, NGOs, and other peacebuilding agents and institutions who are interested in studying in detail the current trajectory of Africa's political and social cultures. The anthology has made a strong case to be a credible source for future scholars to consult as their intellectual vade mecum.

SIMON MARY ASESE A. AIHIOKHAI
University of Portland, USA
aihiokha@up.edu

After Method: Queer Grace, Conceptual Design, and the Possibility of Theology.

By Hanna Reichel. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2023. vii + 277 pages. \$40.00.

doi:10.1017/hor.2024.15

Theology is a human endeavor to understand and explain what can be neither understood fully nor explained thoroughly. Conversations on theological method do not usually draw standing room only crowds. But many will engage with Hanna Reichel's queer postmodern approach. The author claims, or at