

been endowed with a multilateral mandate which it is inadequately funded and institutionally stretched to perform.

The book is a great overview of a specific set of bilateral relations between Africa and different Northern states and intergovernmental organisations. The approach is to start with each state/organisation and explore its relations with Africa as a whole, so one gets a sense of ‘outside looking in’ concerning African agencies in international politics. The book – through no fault of its own – reads as a little dated because of the reinvigoration of aid politics that has taken place from about 2005 onwards (the year of publication, but some of the chapters seem to have been written a couple of years earlier). It is perhaps unfair to make too strong a criticism of what the book *doesn't* do, but I would have been interested in reading something on Scandinavian states, which developed substantial and relatively ‘non aligned’ Africa policies from the late 1960s onwards. Japan is included as ‘Northern’, which begs the question is the status of China as a candidate for consideration. The recognition (in academic circles anyway) of China as a significant actor in Africa’s international politics commences shortly after the book’s publication, so again this might just be unfortunate timing, except that it raises questions about what ‘the North’ actually is.

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Agricultural Trade Liberalization and the Least Developed Countries

edited by NIEK KONING and PER PINSTRUP-ANDERSEN

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Niek Koning and Per Pinstруп-Andersen’s edited work offers a wide-ranging and detailed examination of the issue of agricultural trade liberalisation and its likely impact on least developed countries (LDCs). The book’s content laudably covers a broad range of themes, including analysis of ‘pro-poor’ agricultural reform; the impact of price-intervention in sub-Saharan African agriculture; the impact of liberalisation on cotton and sugar; potential strategies for maximising LDC benefits from the Doha Round; as well as lessons to be learned from the Asian experience of agricultural trade liberalisation. As the editors make clear in their introduction, the collection offers a variety of often conflicting viewpoints as to the strategies that LDCs should seek to follow to maximise their position in multi-lateral (and bilateral) negotiations, and to enhance trade revenues for the social well-being of their general populations. These seek to reflect and to build on current debates in the area.

This heterogeneity of opinion is both the book’s strength and its weakness. It is indeed a strength in that it sparks debate and departs from any singular ideological rigidity regarding issues such as whether least developed countries should seek to insulate their own markets from further agricultural liberalisation. It is also a weakness, however, in that it sometimes detracts from the work’s overall coherence, due to the fact that certain chapters sit in uneasy juxtaposition and do not readily seem to ‘speak’ directly to one another’s arguments.

For instance, Andrew Dorward *et al.* (Chapter 4) argue for the likely advantages of price support and tariff protection for LDCs. Ousmane Badiane (Chapter 9) on

the other hand laments that those in favour of LDC protectionism and interventionism sometimes 'do not bother going through the complex analysis of the significant economic losses caused to protecting countries and the high cost imposed on the global agricultural systems'. This diversity of opinion is to be welcomed by those already familiar with the debates as to agricultural liberalisation and the LDCs, but is likely to make the text less accessible for those new to the subject.

The collection's thoroughness in terms of its contributors' familiarity with the complexities of multilateral trade negotiations as well as the fine details of empirical analysis of anticipated trade impacts also proves both a potential aid and a potential hindrance to the reader. In places it adds to the overall authority of the contributions, yet in others it leads authors to dwell too narrowly upon quantitative data, rather than address broader questions of political economy in sufficient detail. For example, the role of the Doha 'Development' Round in donor countries' attempts to portray 'post-Washington Consensus' market-opening as a catalyst for human development (as espoused in the discourse of the Millennium Development Goals), via the attachment of 'aid for trade' to liberalisation packages, receives rather limited attention.

Nevertheless, having noted these challenges, there are a number of informative and engaging pieces that do offer significant contributions to our understanding of the impact of agricultural trade liberalisation, and the challenges inherent in current trade negotiations for the least developed countries. Sophia Murphy (Chapter 13) presents an informed overview of the position of the LDCs in the most recent WTO discussions from the foundation of the Doha Round, to Cancún, the 'July Package', the Hong Kong summit and the stalemate at Geneva. She examines present challenges to the overall direction of WTO negotiations for the LDCs, including the dominant position of 'oligopoly buyers and sellers' at various points in agricultural value chains (for instance, Monsanto), the problematic association of human welfare with development strategies focused mainly on trade agendas, and the serious implications of climate change for current agricultural models.

In addition, insightful analysis is provided across a variety of chapters on the issue of the European Union's 'Everything-But Arms' (EBA) agreement, and the lessons of this programme in qualifying the ostensible gains that are said by developed countries to accrue to the LDCs by the EU's granting of duty free, quota free (DFQF) market access. The apparent disappointments of EBA illustrate the LDC negotiators' need to focus on issues additional to DFQF access in the Doha Round: for instance, the impact of non-tariff barriers, including developed countries' hygiene and environmental legislation attached to imports received from the least developed states. Along similar lines, Olle Östensson (Chapter 2) warns of potential negative consequences for LDC trade arising from 'the many, and in most cases, much more stringent, quality and labelling requirements imposed by importing firms'. The role of oligopolies and supermarket standard schemes – such as Eurepgap – must be filtered into discussions surrounding strategies for enhancing human well-being in the LDCs via agricultural trade.

In conclusion, *Agricultural Trade Liberalization and the Least Developed Countries* is an at times challenging but overall rewarding contribution to debates surrounding the position of the LDCs in current multilateral and bilateral trade

negotiations. It offers insightful analysis of the potential strategies that could be pursued in order to make trade work better for the developing countries currently marginalised in global agricultural markets.

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The Living Dead and the Living God: Christ and the ancestors in a changing Africa by KLAUS NÜRNBERGER

Pietermaritzburg & Pretoria: Cluster Publications & C B Powell Bible Centre, 2007. Pp. 312, SA Rand 75.

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In this book, Klaus Nürnberger, professor emeritus at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, seeks to establish grounds for an engagement between Christianity and African indigenous religions, what he prefers to call 'African traditionalists', by 'listening' to forces, both historical and contemporary, that affect African societies. These include 'African spirituality', 'the biblical witness', 'the Reformation', 'modernity' and the 'global future'. His main point, as a Christian theologian and missiologist, is to develop a strategy for the church's mission in Africa that takes seriously the traditional emphasis on ancestors in African religions (following Mbiti, he calls them 'the living dead') while at the same time noting the erosion of traditional authority under the forces of modernity both in African societies and in the church. He concludes that the church's mission applies equally to those in Africa who 'are under the spell of ancestral authority and subject to fear of uncanny forces', and to those who have become modernised and thus are 'caught up in the constraints and pressures of modernist pragmatism and hedonism' (241). Both groups, traditionalists and modernists, are 'welcome' in the church and accepted by God, but Nürnberger adds that 'with his acceptance of the unacceptable God does not condone what is unacceptable in their dispositions, perceptions, attitudes, actions and life worlds' (241). In the end, Nürnberger calls for people in all religious traditions, including Christianity, to undergo the 'transformative processes' induced by becoming 'free and responsible sons and daughters of God' (241).

The theological assumptions that motivate this work, in this reviewer's opinion, ought to raise healthy suspicions about Nürnberger's analysis of the relationship between the ubiquitous belief in sub-Saharan Africa in ancestors, and the author's description of an African understanding of God. To his credit, he draws distinctions between Christian and African conceptualisations of God, but he reinforces many of the assumptions that have been promoted widely in previous studies, primarily that the African God is remote and largely inactive. Nürnberger writes: 'The Supreme Being is not accessible in the communicative sense of the word at all ... because his weight is too mysterious and too massive to be amenable for human understanding and manipulation' (32). He further notes that although there are no shrines to the Supreme Being amongst Bantu-speaking African peoples, this is largely because the Supreme Being 'is the ultimate source of the whole of experienced reality' and 'the peak of the spiritual hierarchy' (32). Quite correctly, I think, he challenges the commonly propagated view amongst African Christians that the ancestors' primary function is to carry messages to the