

**John Sodiq Sanni – Modalisto Zililo Phiri (eds.).
Monuments and Memory in Africa: Reflections on
Coloniality and Decoloniality. Abingdon and New York:
Routledge, 2024. 168 p. ISBN 978-1-003-43287-6 (ebk)**

Monuments and Memory in Africa: Reflections on Coloniality and Decoloniality – the latest book in the Routledge Contemporary Africa series – was published in March 2024 and it is available as open access content. The book is edited by John Sodiq Sanni – a philosopher – and Madalitso Zililo Phiri – a sociologist – and apart from their contributions, we can read chapters by six other scholars whose expertise ranges from political science through anthropology to French language and some of whom have already been well-established authors in the scholarship on decolonization.

In the introduction, the editors make it clear that their approach is non-disciplinary, as called for by the late South African anthropologist Archie Mafeje. In his vision of doing anthropology in Africa, Mafeje was concerned with an epistemological move away from Eurocentric theories and definitions (Mafeje, *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations: The Case of the Interlacustrine Kingdoms*, 1991) and he characterized his own work as non-disciplinary rather than interdisciplinary as it “drew from the insights of researchers in the different social sciences in Africa, specifically sociologists, economists, historians, political scientists, social geographers,

lawyers (especially those interested in land tenure), philosophers, and literary critics. If I had attempted to be interdisciplinary, instead of simply learning from others, I would have got bogged down in intractable methodological problems, as each discipline would have demanded its pound of flesh” (Mafeje, *Anthropology and Independent Africans: Suicide or End of an Era. African Sociological Review* 1998, 2, 1: 30).

This approach is particularly valuable now when – despite much emphasis on interdisciplinarity – the disciplines have demarcated their territories even more clearly than in the 1970s which Mafeje was referring to.

At the heart of the contributions is an engagement with epistemic decolonisation in relation to monuments and memory, however, the editors highlight that economic and material aspects are explored as well: “The argument that archives are historically constituted, incomplete, and expressive of power relations is indisputable, yet it does not follow that the project of epistemic decolonisation can dispense with the archive as such. On the contrary, a major stumbling block in the endeavour to create decolonised institutions of knowledge across Africa has been the precarious economic

and material conditions of what might be called custodianship of the past.” (p. 1)

The eight chapters that form the book work with different approaches and while some engage in explorations that apply to broader issues, others offer cases from different African countries. It is impossible to summarize the key topics and arguments of all the contributions in a review of this length, the following is rather an attempt to at least provide a flavour of the chapters. As already mentioned epistemology is a key focus of the book, in his chapter Madalisto Z. Phiri focuses on the ideology of epistemicide and epistemicide is also touched upon in John S. Sanni’s chapter in the context of transcending colonialism and reclaiming spaces. Fazil Moradi’s chapter focuses on Cape Town and he argues that cultivating a decolonized political community goes hand in hand with learning to identify as a survivor of colonialism and subsequently distancing from genophilic heritage. Keolebogile Mbebe devotes her chapter to a nuanced discussion of the transitional justice discourse in the so-called statue debate. The Rhodes Memorial in Cape Town is at the centre of Minka Woermann’s chapter and the fate of Cecil Rhodes’ statues is also central to John S. Sanni’s arguments in a second chapter that he has in the book. Frank A. Abumere uses the Rhodes Must Fall protests as a springboard for a discussion of

social, economic and political inequality in South Africa. Gibson Ncube’s contribution offers a case of forgetting (or of deliberate non-remembering) of a military action – Gukurahundi – against dissent in some provinces of Zimbabwe three years after it gained independence.

The contributions are highly topical and through an African lens offer explorations of issues that are current globally, the debates about the removal or preservation of monuments and artefacts that are remnants of a colonial past are not restricted to African countries and neither are protest movements that focus on racial inequalities. The contributions in the book are often in an undeclared conversation with each other, a tribute to the editors’ skills.

There are five key questions that the book addresses: (1) What are monuments and what did they represent during colonial and post-colonial periods? (2) What is the nature of the memories that monuments evoke in the world today? (3) What might the decolonisation of historical monuments and geographies entail? (4) Can colonial modernity continue to coexist with the constructed global Black underclass without a decolonised future? (5) Should agitations for Black freedom and liberation articulate a new language to understand contemporary patterns of empire and dominance?

Anyone interested in these questions – whether they are new to scholarship on monuments and

memory in Africa or already have expertise in this area – will find this book valuable. The fact that its content can be accessed freely is particu-

larly important as increasing access to scholarship in this key area of research that takes a non-disciplinary approach is extremely important.

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Andrea Svobodová. Vietnam vzdálený i blízký. Potomci Vietnamců v Česku. Praha: Karolinum, 2024. 155 s. ISBN 978-80-246-5620-5

Vietnamcům žijícím v České republice již byla věnována řada studií. Není divu, jedná se o třetí nejpočetnější národnostní menšinu (nepočítáme-li Slováky, pak dokonce druhou nejpočetnější), přičemž počátek migračních vazeb mezi českými zeměmi a Vietnamem sahá již do padesátých let minulého století. Přesto řada témat dosud stála stranou badatelské pozornosti a knižně vydaná disertace z pražské přírodovědecké fakulty jedno z nich uchopila velice důkladně. Její autorka se zaměřila na adolescentní druhou generaci imigrantů, u jejichž příslušníků ovšem nestudovala „objektivní“ charakteristiky, nýbrž vlastní zakoušení (tvorba a vyjednávání) identity, skutečnost, že „potomci Vietnamců během svého dospívání čelí odlišným výzvám než jejich [čeští] vrstevníci“ (s. 14).

I když kniha nezapře charakter přepracované disertace (zbytečně „školská“ je především teoreticko-metodologická kapitola, zatímco na mnoha dalších místech Svobodová teorii s výzkumem propojuje

organičtěji), je to dílo zdařilé jak výzkumně, tak prezentačně. Autorka promyšleně zkombinovala výsledky terénního antropologického výzkumu s dalšími informačními zdroji (od kvantitativních dat až po sledování sociálních sítí) a s pregnantní znalostí širokého spektra aktuální literatury (poskytující jak teoretické ukotvení, tak komparativní vhledy do problematiky). Ve svém výkladu pak někdy šla cestou „frontální“ prezentace, jindy se odrazila od konkrétních biografických narativů, své závěry však téměř vždy formulovala hutně a přitom srozumitelně, takže je radost je číst.

Po již zmíněné teoreticko-metodologické kapitole Svobodová prostřednictvím kvantitativních dat představila svůj terén jako celek, čímž odůvodnila vlastní výzkum. I když většina Vietnamců nepřichází do České republiky s intencí usadit se zde, mnohdy k tomu dochází, a to i při současném udržování silných vazeb na zemi původu, což se v modifikované formě přenáší i na jejich