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Reference Books

Tammy J. Eschedor Voelker, Editor

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Africa: An Encyclopedia of Culture and Society. Edited by Toyin Falola and Daniel Jean-Jacques. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2016. 3 vols. Acid free \$294.00 (ISBN: 978-1-59884-665-2). E-book available (978-1-59884-666-9), call for pricing.

Africa: An Encyclopedia of Culture and Society was created to "challenge stereotypes and assumptions and invite the reader into the world of African Studies" (vii) by featuring entries written by over fifty scholars, experts in African Studies or related fields who "have lived in Africa or are Africans, themselves. . . . The voice of Africa's people is alive and well in these volumes" (viii). The originality and diversity of voices represented in this three-volume series is a positive and unique feature of this encyclopedia, but may not be enough to inspire acquisition, for some, in light of questions of the efficacy of these volumes as a quality reference work.

The series begins with a brief thematic and regional introduction to Africa as a continent, including a basic map and chronology, and continues with fifty-four alphabetical country entries. The editors explicitly state that their encyclopedia's "essential purpose is to offer the uninitiated a window into the cultural world of Africa" (vii), yet the language of the introduction and many of the encyclopedia entries themselves are far too dense for readers new to the material, assuming a level of familiarity with geography, history, and terminology that many readers may not have. In addition, the content of the introduction spans nearly the entire history of the continent in a mere ten pages, beginning with the Neolithic Revolution in 16000 BCE and ending with the Republic of Ghana's Declaration of Independence in 1957. Readers versed in African Studies would agree with the authors that "a complete historical background of Africa would be a work of many volumes unto itself, and well beyond the purview of these brief introductory remarks" (xi), yet may still find themselves wishing for broader and more concise contextual information.

The country entries themselves are comprehensive in scope. Each entry begins with an "Introduction" that may include "Geography," "People and Ethnicity," and "Languages," and continues with information in the following sections: "Religion," "Social Customs," "Lifestyle and Leisure," "Employment," "Gender Roles, Marriage, and Family," "Cuisine," "Dress," "Sports and Games," "Festivals and Holidays," "Music and Dance," "Visual Art," "Architecture and Housing," "Literature and Oral Traditions," and "Media." These latter categories uniquely highlight many aspects often underrepresented in other reference works about Africa, and showcase the diversity of cultural experience across the continent. Readers interested in vernacular architecture, traditional and modern art across countries, and cuisine, for example, will be rewarded with detailed information and black and white photographs, and recipes where relevant. However, the narrative style, tone, and cohesion of the information presented can vary widely across entries. Terms are not defined in the text, nor called out for definition by a glossary; subjects are not cross-indexed. References listed at the end of each

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entry are also inconsistent in density and quality; suggested further reading on the topic of Algerian author Albert Camus leads the reader to an online biography created by the European Graduate School, the link to which is broken and for which a search on the larger site produced no results.

With so many other comprehensive reference works on Africa available to libraries, including Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Kwame Anthony Appiah's *Encyclopedia of Africa* (Oxford University Press 2010) or John Middleton's older benchmark title *Encyclopedia of Africa: South of the Sahara* (Scribner, 1997) this encyclopedia is recommended primarily to school or public librarians with a corresponding curricular or programmatic focus.—*Kristin J. Henrich, Reference and Instruction Librarian, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho*

Border Disputes: A Global Encyclopedia. Edited by Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2015. 3 vols. Acid-free \$294.00 (ISBN: 978-1-61069-023-2). E-book available (978-1-61069-024-9), call for pricing.

This is a three-volume work that tackles the job of giving clear, concise information on the issue of border disputes. The work is divided into three types of disputes: territorial, positional, and functional. It is edited by Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, who studies public policy and border disputes at the University of Victoria, British Columbia and is the editor of the *Journal of Borderlands Studies* (Taylor and Francis/Routledge). Over fifty scholars from around the world contributed entries for this encyclopedia, which outlines the differentiation between geopolitical, legal, and cultural boundaries in its discussion. One of the first things the editor addresses is a recognition of the limitations of a reference work on ever-changing geopolitical turmoil; new states arise every year, so the work is described as being representational of the kinds of border disputes happening and is not in any way meant to be an exhaustive discussion of current affairs. It is also meant to discuss a very specific aspect of international affairs, and while it does address other complicated geopolitical themes at play, its main focus is clearly on that of borders. This is apparent in the entries on Israel-Jerusalem-Palestine, Israel-Lebanon, Israel-Syria, and similar. Some of the most complex political situations have the shortest entries, likely for several reasons; they are ongoing, some of the contestations fall outside the scope of border disputes, and it could probably be more thoroughly addressed in a more comprehensive work on the topic suggested in the further readings recommendations.

The editor suggests the audience for these volumes includes high school students and undergraduates. While the encyclopedia does not go into as much depth on complex foreign policy concepts as some others—for example, *Border and Territorial Disputes*, edited by Alan Day (Gale 1982), it does give a clear, concise history of the dispute at hand as well as its implications and the most recent status of the events. It also appears to be one of the most comprehensive and current attempts to represent as many relevant border

disputes in one work, and is a very welcome update in the field of international relations. Suggestions for further reading are included at the end of every entry for those who wish to investigate further. The final volume includes a glossary and excerpts from selected primary documents. The organization of entries into three clear thematic volumes is a helpful effort to streamline incredibly complex geopolitical issues into researchable entry points for newer undergraduates who are just beginning to delve into research, as it makes it very easy to browse for topics based on region or type of dispute. The editor opens each volume with a brief discussion of why these disputes are categorized as they are, which gives additional context to the political issues being addressed.

There don't seem to be many comparable reference works on this specific element of geopolitics. The aforementioned *Border and Territorial Disputes* edited by Alan Day covers this area, but over thirty years after its publication date it is missing many of the most important examples of border disputes. It is true that this information will become quickly outdated, but it provides a crucial first stepping stone in exploring territory and border issues within international relations. As there is no end in sight for the occurrence of these types of disputes in the world, *Border Disputes: A Global Encyclopedia* would be a valuable addition to an academic library.—*Amanda Babirad, Research and Education Librarian, Sojourner Truth Library, SUNY New Paltz, New Paltz, New York*

The Central Intelligence Agency: An Encyclopedia of Covert Ops, Intelligence Gathering, and Spies. Edited by Jan Goldman. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2016. 2 vols. Acid free \$189.00 (ISBN: 978-1-61069-091-1). E-book available (978-1-61069-092-8), call for pricing.

This two-volume reference set offers a well-rounded look at the CIA from its inception to the present. As is made clear in the introduction, it is intended to be much more than a straightforward history of the CIA as an organization, but rather a compendium covering the broader spectrum of related topics. It would appear to live up to this claim. It does provide a detailed timeline chronicling the historical highlights, but moves right into over two hundred individual entries comprised of important events (i.e., operations, projects, cases, etc.), key players and names, and other relevant terms (e.g., "Contras," "Handwriting Analysis," "Torture"). Entries are substantial, too, ranging on average between five and ten paragraphs, with many reaching the teens, peppered with black and white images throughout. Naturally, I compared a handful of entries with their Wikipedia counterparts, and can say with confidence that there is no comparison—that is, this encyclopedia wins. (As we all know, this is not always the case.) Included are the usual cross-referenced entries and "Further Reading" suggestions, but what I find especially helpful is the referencing of associated primary documents.

This leads us to volume 2. Here, ninety-eight primary documents are organized chronologically, starting in the 1940s and ending with the 2014 Senate Select Committee