

From the Editorial Team

Dear Readers and friends of CJAS:

Greetings from the Institute of African Studies, and the entire team at CJAS. We are pleased to bring you our first issue of 2023, volume 10, number 1. While the health aspects of the Covid-19 pandemic may have receded, the social impacts remain, and with them the global challenges of publishing: exhaustion and inertia among authors, reviewers and even editors. And so we must thank you all, our readers, authors, and reviewers, for your generosity.

At the time of writing the threat of military force by ECOWAS to end the military takeover in Niger has led to significant divisions and tensions in the region. Readers will note that I use the term “military takeover” and not “coup”. This is deliberate given the wider diversity of such interventions in the region over the last 60 years, from bloody take overs to so-called revolutions with few or no casualties. On 28 July 2023, Tchiani proclaimed himself as the president of a “National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland” in an address on state television. He did not use the term coup, and I leave it to others to analyse the different terminologies, and who they have been used by, in contexts of military and other takeovers in Africa and elsewhere. The point of this introduction, however, is to signal the many conversations on the colony that they have excavated, as well as on the state of the post-colony and the decolonizing project. CJAS continues to contribute to this project through the African-centred knowledge work we publish. In this issue we present six original papers that address issues of language; and socio-political-religious rites, praxis, and governance.

“On the status and function of the particle *ń* in serial verb constructions in Kusaal” by Hasiyatu Abubakari discusses the particle (in this case *ń*) in serial verb constructions in Kusaal. The study is significant because it shows the multiple functions of the particle *ń* in Kusaal as well as other Mabia languages, and thus signals for us the importance of both a technical as well as socio-cultural knowledge of a language.

Godson Ahorator writes on “Expiation and punishment; A view point on Tongu Mafi Mortuary Rites in Ghana”. He contends that while certain aspects of the mortuary practices of the Tongu Mafi people of Ghana may be viewed as having seemingly contradictory philosophical explanations, the rational is actually quite purposeful when surveyed from the people’s metaphysics. The paper focuses on those mortuary rites from the perspective of the rituals as expiation, and the rites as punishment based on how the deceased was viewed

and also to facilitate a harmonious relationship between the worlds of the living and the dead.

Many studies on land grabbing in Africa focus on land that is leased or sold to investors (usually foreign) to produce export crops and biofuel. In his paper, “Sugarcane Plantations and the Alienation of Land from Smallholder Farmers through Out-Grower Schemes in Busoga Sub-Region in Eastern Uganda”, Robert Ojambo deconstructs the nature of the contemporary land alienations through contract farming between plantation agriculturalists and smallholder farmers, revealing new forms of concessions to land grabbing practices in Uganda.

Dinah Mwanza’s paper is titled, “Changes in customary land administration and ‘plausible’ development outcomes: A comparative study of Chamuka and Shimukunami chiefdoms”. In the years since independence, customary land administration structures have been changing across Sub-Saharan Africa. This paper compares two customary areas in Zambia, with different customary rights and administration, to explore responses to changes in customary land governance and the reasons for these.

The penultimate paper, by Sulemana Anamzoya Alhassan, Baba Zakarie, and Samuel Ntewusu provides interesting intersectional analyses on migration, chieftaincy, and the socio-political place of “migrant chiefs” in Zongo (“stranger”) communities in Ghana. They focus on efforts by these chiefs to be fully included into the Houses of Chiefs structure, statutory (constitutional) bodies. Using historical and anthropological material, the paper suggests a basis for migrant chieftaincy in Ghana, and explores how migrants reinvent chieftaincy in urban centres.

The final empirical paper, “Ghana’s democracy and the digital public sphere: some pertinent issues” by Maame Adwoa Gyekye-Jandoh and Abdul Hakim Ahmed returns us to popular conversations about elections and democracy. Focusing on the 2016 and 2020 general elections in Ghana, the authors assess the role of the digital media in establishing or destabilising Ghana’s democracy using the lens of Habermas’ concept of the public sphere. Usefully, they pay attention to the phenomenon of fake news, online disinformation, the issue of a digital divide, creeping state repression, and COVID-19 restrictions (during the 2020 election).

CJAS continues to be committed to bringing conversations with notable Pan-Africanists to our readers. In this issue we share our immediate past Kwame Nkrumah Chair’s lecture with you. Professor Amina Mama, a feminist scholar, was the fourth and first woman occupant of the Kwame Nkrumah Chair in African Studies. She was officially installed at a ceremony chaired by the

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nana Aba Appiah Amfo at the University of Ghana's Great Hall on February 16, 2022. After the installation, Professor Mama delivered an inaugural lecture titled, "Nkrumah's Legacy, Feminism and the Next Generation" about the development of a pan-African and feminist bridging praxis that underscores the collective sense of destiny among Africans. It is that lecture we bring to you.

Once again, we thank our readers, contributors, editors, and all the staff in the Publications office at the Institute of African Studies for your continuing support and engagement with us. We are especially grateful to the many anonymous reviewers for their time, scholarly generosity and in some cases their commitment beyond the work assigned to them.

Akosua Adomako Ampofo

Editor-in-Chief, CJAS.