

Africa is a legitimizing factor in the world: some might argue because of the weakness of its position in the world; others might say because of the realization on the part of some African leaders that there are strengths inherent to their states positions that can be tapped. Africa's place in the world is being re-thought and re-shaped. And that is exactly what this book is about: the authors invite and incite the reader to a much closer and nuanced reading of Africa and its history, and the way in which that history, over time and space allows for a re-conceptualization of Africa's role and place in the world. The authors evoke W.E.B. Du Bois on the invention of identity in the modern world. In that light, these works remind us, as Du Bois would, that the current invention of Africa is indeed a modern one; an identity configured in numerous ways, with and without our interventions. Contributions by Lamont de Haven King (State and Ethnicity in Nigeria), Jesse Benjamin (Nubians and Nabateans), Jeremy Prestholdt (Portuguese on the Swahili Coast), Thomas Ricks (Slaves in Shi'i Iran, AD 1500-1900) Launay Robert (Late-Seventeenth Century Narratives of Travel to Asia) and Richard J. Payne and Cassandra Veney (Taiwan and Africa)

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