African History through Sources

This book recounts the history of colonial Africa through more than one hundred primary sources produced by a variety of actors: ordinary men and women, the educated elite, and colonial officials. The sources include official documents and politicians’ commentaries, as well as interviews, memoirs, lyrics, and photographs. This book includes entries drawn from all around sub-Saharan Africa, many translated into English for the first time. Introductions to each source and chapter provide context and identify themes.

Balancing coverage of the state and economy with attention to daily life, family life, and cultural change, African History through Sources presents a wide range of experiences that allow readers to analyze change, understand perspectives, and imagine life during Africa’s colonial past.

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For my teachers and my students
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I often imagined the entries in this book as textile scraps. The fabric metaphor provides a good way to make the necessary disclaimers, because nothing is easier than seeing the imperfections in one’s own stitchery. Sadly, beautiful remnants remain unused. Perhaps I cut some pieces unwisely or edited them clumsily. The grain of some pieces may not be straight with the work as a whole. Some seams pucker and the stitches aren’t even. Much of the richness of this patchwork comes from the imagination and enthusiasm of others. Any artless or messy handiwork is my responsibility.