

UCLA

Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies

Title

Anderegg, Anton. France's Relationship with Sub-Saharan Africa

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4db3n55q>

Journal

Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies, 23(1)

ISSN

0041-5715

Author

Rouchtchakov, Anton

Publication Date

1995

DOI

10.5070/F7231016702

Copyright Information

Copyright 1995 by the author(s). All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author(s) for any necessary permissions. Learn more at <https://escholarship.org/terms>

Peer reviewed

Anton Andereggen. *France's Relationship with Sub-Saharan Africa*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994. 200 pp.

There exists a vast literature on various aspects of French policies toward Africa. Much of this literature has emphasized "special" Franco-African relations that were established during the colonial period and upheld after the former French colonies were granted political independence in the early 1960s. In a sense, *France's Relationship with Sub-Saharan Africa* by Anton Andereggen is no exception to this trend. Based on contemporary French sources, the book offers a brief history of Franco-African relations as they have developed from the first contacts of the French with Africans in the 17th century until the early 1990s. In the chapter on economic ties between France and its former colonies there are a few references as late as February 1992. The cultural component of Franco-African relations is given a special emphasis. Although the author relies heavily on sources from the French press, particularly *Le Monde*, he employs a considerable number of French scholarly references as well.

The book includes ten chapters, seven of which focus on the historic evolution of Franco-African relations, and the remaining three respectively on the cultural component of these relations, economic ties between France and its former colonies, and historical perspectives on how the French view Africans. Each of the historical chapters gives a brief survey of significant periods in the history of Franco-African relations. The evolution of these relations is put in the general context of the diminished role of France as a world power and the internal political strife in the French Republics. The major theme of his historical analysis is the economic and political importance of the West African colonies for France as it strove to maintain its status as a world power after the Second World War. Unfortunately, this historical overview is too brief and superficial. Although the author does not seem to miss any historically significant events, he does not pursue any thorough historical analysis.

Chapter Eight deals with the cultural aspects of Franco-African relations. The author maintains that French culture, especially the French language, has always been part and parcel of Franco-African relations. The French colonizers were committed to implementing the policy of assimilation that aimed at sharing French culture and language with "uncivilized" people and eventually replacing indigenous African cultures with a French surrogate. Unfortunately, the author's evaluation of France's cultural policies remains vaguely defined and the negative aspects of the *mission civilisatrice* are never fully addressed in the book.

In the chapter on economic ties, the author emphasizes the stability of financial and commercial relations between France and African countries. He correctly observes that France's economic

interests have been focused primarily in four West African states: Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Gabon, and Cameroon. After independence, these countries have received the largest share of France's investments and financial assistance on the continent. Andereggen remarks that although the "inegalitarian" nature of France's bilateral aid has been criticized since 1971, when the details of the Grose Report were revealed, the general pattern of aid distribution remained unchanged. The author describes briefly the way in which the Franc zone functions, but falls short of detailing other aspects of Franco-African economic cooperation.

The book concludes with a chapter presenting a historical perspective of how the French perceive Africans. The author contends that the French have developed a negative attitude towards Africans that persists to this day. Racial tensions are strong in France, and, according to Andereggen, have deep cultural roots. Unfortunately, this chapter is not well-fitted in the book and can hardly be linked to other chapters.

While this book may be of interest for beginning historians, political scientists, and sociologists of West Africa, as well as for a general audience, specialists are unlikely to find food for thought in this work. Overall, it is a mildly useful addition to the literature on Franco-African relations which may serve as introductory reading for newcomers.

Anton Rouchtchakov