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Newsmaking Cultures in Africa: Normative Trends in the Dynamics of Socio-Political and Economic Struggles. Hayes Mawindi Mabweazara, Ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 396 pp. \$99.99 hbk. \$79.99 ebk.

Tabloid Journalism in Africa. Brian Chama. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. 216 pp. \$119.99 hbk. \$84.99 pbk. \$64.99 ebk.

Scholars of international journalism are fortunate to be witnessing an unprecedented flourishing of published research concerning journalism and new media on the African continent. It is research, importantly, which is predominantly by African scholars. This body of work has opened up insights into the unique impacts of journalistic practice and rapid media change in parts of Africa, which the patchy scholarship of past decades has tended to ignore.

Prominent examples are Hayes Mabweazara's anthology *Newsmaking Cultures in Africa* and Brian Chama's *Tabloid Journalism in Africa*.

As the word "making" suggests, and in line with much of his own prior research on African journalism, Mabweazara, a lecturer at the University of Glasgow, takes a media production approach with *Newsmaking Cultures*. That is hugely welcome, because detailed analysis of media making had long been missing from the canon of research on Africa's relationship to media. Much of that, necessarily, has critiqued international (and especially, European and American) media content about Africa, but as Scott (2017) demonstrated in a scathing meta-analysis in *Africa's Media Image in the 21st Century* (2017) many of the long-standing and far reaching claims about Western media bias are not supported by the amalgamation of narrowly focused studies over the decades. A key gap in that body of research was the failure to examine production: the everyday journalists' practice on the ground. This applied as much to the parachute-prone Western correspondent as to well-established newsrooms in African capitals with honorable, often brave (and, as Chama documents, also often scurrilous) traditions which stretched back for over a century in many countries.

Newsmaking Cultures seeks "to reinvigate and contribute to the nuancing of well-trodden debate in journalism studies," but through its steady focus on production culture, it deserves credit for taking a fresh approach. The book contains chapters by some veteran journalists turned academic, such as Wallace Chuma and Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, and by many rising stars of African media scholarship, such as Akinfemisoye, Mare, and several others. There are also excellent contributions by European scholars with a long experience of examining journalism in Africa. The editor's skillful introduction situates the contents within broader international debates over challenges to journalism and the impact on journalism of globalization. The geographic coverage is expansive, with focused studies from many of Africa's big media centers, like

Kenya, Uganda, and Nigeria, but also countries whose media culture appears far less frequently in international scholarship, such as Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

A particular strength is a set of chapters which examine similar ethical challenges in several countries, revealing a fairly universal problem of the compatibility of massively under-resourced journalism with the pressing need for independence and fearless investigation; indeed, critiques of “brown-bag journalism” in its various guises often disguise the fact that surprisingly many African journalists earn far too little, or nothing at all. Postcolonial media regulation, structures of patronage, and editorial allegiances that flow easily between the commercial and political, all complicate journalistic work. Robert White joins with Mabweazara, for example, to examine the pan-African challenge of reporting effectively on what Hyden and Okigbo in *Media and Democracy in Africa* (2002) termed pervasive “neo-patrimonial governance”. This is sophisticated and thorough scholarship, and should become the go-to overview of African journalism. The book is well edited and well-integrated, with each chapter effectively standing alone, but also forming part of a unified whole, given useful cross-referencing of other chapters throughout the book and thorough indexing of the whole anthology.

Chama's single authored *Tabloid Journalism in Africa* is an original and necessary project which maps the intersection of entertainment and journalism “as a form of popular culture” south of the Sahara, with a focus on particular newspapers in Kenya, Zambia, and South Africa. Chama, who is senior lecturer at the Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning in Toronto, Canada, provides both defense and thorough critique, with often shocking detail of the excesses of tabloid editors across the continent. What Chama terms “newspapers that provide colorful pictures, brief stories, and sensational headlines” and content “usually written in local jargon loaded with sexual innuendos and exaggerated headlines” will be familiar to people across the continent, and he contends they attract both “the highly educated and those with limited reading skills.” The importance of understanding their role cannot be understated, for they've been implicated in instigating massacres and fueling hatred against minorities, but also in advocating for political reform. The story of African tabloids is bound up in struggles for democracy and press freedom, but also in a ruthless hunt for audiences in the context of growing consumerism.

Violent attacks on tabloid journalists and editors are not uncommon, and complicate international demands for press freedom (as this reviewer's 2014 *War Reporters under Threat* argued, global media and press freedom organizations often find some media less worthy of protection than others). This text has as much to contribute to global debates about free expression as it does to the welcome and long-overdue expositions of the complexities of African print journalism, and the extent of comparative detail across much of the continent is rare and commendable. The book will be valuable to researchers of African journalism, although a disappointment in Chama's otherwise impressive work is that the dense content is often harder to digest than it need be, due to meagre editing and less than coherent organization.

I started by noting that these books are part of a cannon of new research on communications in Africa, which notably also includes Mutsvairo's 2016 anthology, *Perspectives on Participatory Politics and Citizen Journalism in a Networked Africa: A Connected Continent*. These works are welcome contributions toward dewesternizing research on media and journalism in Africa.

Mutsvairo, B. ed., 2016. *Participatory politics and citizen journalism in a networked Africa: a connected continent*. Springer.

Paterson, C.A., 2014. *War reporters under threat: The United States and media freedom*. Pluto Press.