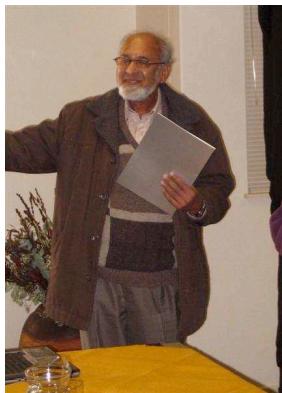


BOOK REVIEW by Abdul Bemath

AFRICA bibliography 2007-works published on Africa in 2007. Edited and compiled by T.A.Barringer in association with the International African Institute. London: International African Institute and Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008. Xxix, 406pp. ISSN 0020 5877; e-ISSN 1757-1642; ISBN: 978 0 7486 3851 2



Abdul Sameth Bemath

'For many African scholars, browsing through a bibliography is like looking at goods in a shop window: pointless without the ability and means to acquire what is on display. That said, bibliographies are of great value to scholars in institutions with libraries that do possess the means to build up and maintain good collections'

My paper, *In search of Mazruiana-tracing the writings of Ali A.Mazrui, 1962-2003*, (presented at the 2009 International Conference of the Association of Southern African Indexers and Bibliographers, Africa Visited and Revisited: the history of Africa revealed through Indexing and Bibliography, held at the Maropeng Heritage Site, March 8-10, 2009) cites various indexes that I consulted in tracing his publications. Indexes such as British Humanities Index, Historical Abstracts, Social Sciences and Humanities Index, to name a few. Africa Bibliography 2007(referred too as AB 2007 in this review) has four Ali Mazrui entries and its previous issues is another source that I should have consulted and will consult in tracing his writings for the next edition of my annotated bibliography of Mazrui's works. These bibliographies are, *The Mazruiana Collection. A comprehensive annotated bibliography of the published works of Ali A. Mazrui, 1962-1997. New Delhi, India: Sterling and Johannesburg, South Africa: Foundation for Global Dialogue, 1998.* The other one is, *The Mazruiana Collection Revisited. Ali A. Mazrui debating the African condition. An annotated and select thematic bibliography, 1962-2003. New Delhi, Sterling and Pretoria, South Africa: Africa Institute of South Africa, 2005.*

Any bibliography is as useful as to those who consult it. To illustrate my point further, I showed AB 2007 to an Ethiopian Public health graduate student based in Washington, USA. Of interest to her in the section on Ethiopia, subject-entry Medical, is, *F. Fantabun, Comparative study of characteristics of family planning service users and non-users in north-west Ethiopia. African journal of reproductive health, vol.10, no.1, 2006, pp.62-70.* Interesting as she calls for family planning in Ethiopia and always astonished at the large-size of Ethiopian families as she grew up. This also illustrates the usefulness in dividing each country entry into separate subject headings.

Terry Barringer has been editing this annual bibliography since 1997 and Chris Allen and Hector Blackhurst since its inception in 1984. AB 2007 has an introduction by Alli Mcharazo, Director General of Tanzania Library Services Board, titled, *Serving the bibliographic needs of scholars in Tanzania: a case study of the Tanzania Library Services Board*. His makes an interesting point in that, (p.vii). 'For many African scholars, browsing through a bibliography is like looking at goods in a shop window: pointless without the ability and means to acquire what is on display. That said, bibliographies are of great value to scholars in institutions with libraries that do possess the means to build up and maintain good collections' A point well made as I came to realise in my search for Mazruiana in South African libraries with its excellent reference sources, periodicals, card and electronic catalogues. In contrast to Makerere university (where Mazrui taught) which had mainly his books and hardly his individual papers when I contacted them in my search for his publications.

AB 2007 focuses on the social and environmental sciences, development studies, humanities, arts, and some items from the medical, biological, and natural sciences. With emphasis on readers from the social sciences and the arts background. Records 5243 published works for the year 2007 and provides for the inclusion of material not listed in previous years. AB 2007 covers Africa comprehensively as it includes materials on Africa in specialist Africa publications and in subject specific scholarly journals. Barringer points out that that African government publications and works of creative literature are not normally listed (p.xiii). All the pity as Michael Holman's, (former Africa editor of the London-based Financial Times Newspaper) satirical two volumes on an East African city, *Last orders at Harrods* (*Polygon, 2005*) and *Fatboy and the dancing ladies* (*Polygon, 2007*)-with one reviewer referring to *Last orders at Harrods*, the 'fiction world's answer to Jeffery Sach's *The end of Poverty*', would have been an important inclusion in AB 2007.

Barringer consulted and personally examined the holdings of Cambridge university library, the African Studies Centre, Cambridge, SOAS, the Afrika Studiecentrum, Leiden, and the International African Institute. She also consulted published bibliographies, both print and online, from COPAC, the online Union Catalogue of the United Kingdoms major research libraries and African Journals Online (AJOL). Workshop papers are also

included.

She has examined close to 1000 periodicals, chapters in edited volumes and single-authored works. The majority of the entries are in English and non-English items in French, Portuguese, German, Italian, some Afrikaans, Swahili, and Spanish materials. Includes articles in journals and chapters from edited books that are not Africa-specific. Browsing through my issues of *African Affairs Journal* I note that AB 2007 is part of an ongoing process deriving entries from her bibliographical listing in this journal.

The volume covers all the regions of Africa, North-Africa and offshore islands. Arrangement is by region and country and an extensive preliminary 1019 entry section on Africa as a whole. It has a single-page section on Lusophone Africa. Seven regions are covered and these are: North Africa, Horn of Africa, East Africa, West Africa, West Central Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa and lastly, the islands. But the African Diaspora is only covered selectively. South Africa contains the most amount of entries in the volume.

Each region has a general section followed by a subject field arranged in alphabetical order and its country entries similarly arranged. 'See also' cross-referencing is indicated immediately under each subject heading or the subject index will guide users to it. The Religion subject field is further divided into Christianity, Islam and Judaism. At times the same title appears in separate subject headings. To cite an example of this, Habib, A. and Morrow, S. '*Research, research productivity and the state in South Africa*' appears in Transformation Journal and the Journal of Higher Education in Africa. This entry is listed in both South Africa General and Education-Higher. One would have expected a separate subject entry on land in the case of Zimbabwe, as this is a topical issue. Barringer covers this in the subject index with entries under differing subject headings for land related issues in the country section for Zimbabwe.

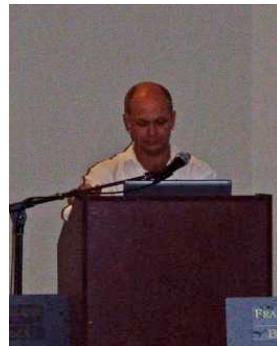
Barringer states in her Guide to Africa Bibliography that the bibliography contains three types of entries: periodical articles, books and pamphlets and chapters. The book entries give full bibliographical details but not the ISBN number or price. In a book with many entries such as, O. Wambu (Editor), *Under the tree of talking: leadership for change in Africa. London: Counterpoint, 2007*, the chapter entries includes only a short version of the title, the names(s) of the editor(s) and the entry number of the book itself. For example, Entry 58, Mazrui, A.A. *Global pan-African leadership in the new millennium, in Wambu, O(ed). Under the tree of talking, pp. 252-66*(Item no. 103). I reviewed Wambu's book for a forthcoming issue of SCOLMA'S African Research and Documentation journal, edited by Terry Barringer. In the case of chapters in non-African books full bibliographical details are provided for the volume concerned.

AB 2007 has a clear user-friendly detailed author and thematic subject index. The locators in the index refer to citation number and not to page number. The author index lists only the first three authors of multi-authored works. The subject index lists themes on specific countries under theme and not under country (e.g. Children, Eritrea; Children Ghana; Children, Kenya). Some 'subject specific' authors such as Kofi Annan, Wole Soyinka, are listed in the subject index and not in the author index.

Barringer states that the index will be most useful for those searching under concepts or under names or ethnic groups and languages. She includes a list of 60 subject headings and titles of close to 1000 periodicals in various languages that she has consulted.

Africa Bibliography is an essential reference guide to be consulted by academics, students and researches with an interest in Africa. Particularly for those of us not based in university or public libraries. Barringer, her predecessors and the International African Institute are to be commended for this annual collection.

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Muhammed Haron who in addition to presenting his own paper kindly read that of Abdul Bemath who due to personal reasons could not attend the conference

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