



The Politics of Age and Gerontocracy in Africa: Ethnographies of the Past & Memories of the Present

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Since the studies of Paul Spencer on Samburu, Rendille, and Maasai in Kenya, age as a paradigm for the construction of social knowledge has been widely explored. African societies and cultures were portrayed as giving importance to elders, and creating status and social recognition through elaborate rituals that marked the passing of age. Those social notions and processes created a powerful perception of elderhood, and at the same time engendered gerontocratic mechanisms of political, ritual and economic control. This volume critically review studies of age in Africa, and suggests the centrality of such paradigms in current and future studies of the continent. The contributors, representing current intellectual traditions in Europe, Africa, and North America, provide case studies that help illustrate, and discuss such paradigms. Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania are represented as case studies. The introduction provides a critique of such paradigms of age and gerontocracy, that is informed by current developments in anthropology, history and African Studies. This book presents one of the most comprehensive review of literature on the topic. Despite changes over time, the discussion of age in African development and politics is as central as ever.

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