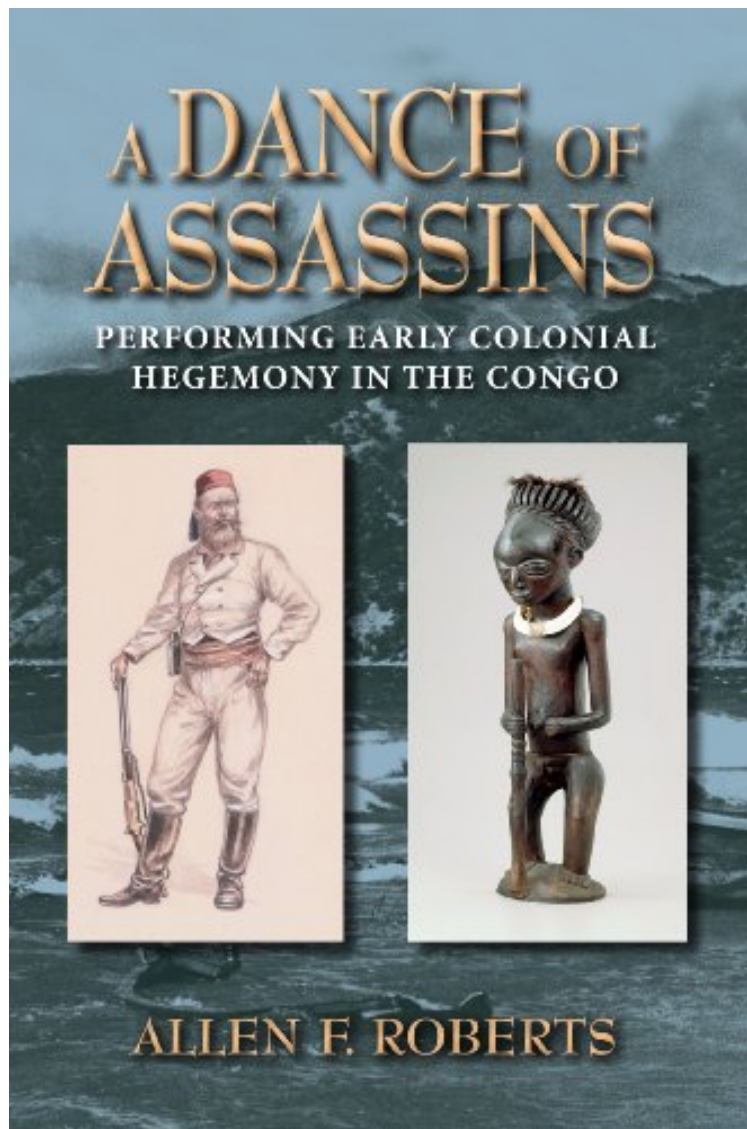


[Pdf free] A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo (African Expressive Cultures)

A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo (African Expressive Cultures)

Allen F. Roberts

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Allen F. Roberts : A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo (African Expressive Cultures) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo (African Expressive Cultures):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Burrowing into Congo history and cultureBy Robert E. SmithAllen F. Roberts. A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo. Indianapolis: Indiana

University Press, 2013. What a profound analysis of an incident in the colonial history of Congo (RDC). Roberts takes the power struggle between Emile Storms of Belgium and Lusinga Iwa Ngr'sombe of Congo 1882-1884, and turns it like a kaleidoscope to examine from three perspectives: colonial history, anthropology, and Belgian sociology/history. The incident itself is the attempt by Storms, a Belgian native (who ends up being a head-hunter!), to create an outpost of the Belgian empire at Lubanda on the southwestern shores of Lake Tanganyika, now Katanga Province. His three years there are described in abundant detail, thanks in part to the many documents he produced. He perceived Lusinga as a threat to his domination of the area, and in 1884 sent a band of armed men to defeat him, which they did by trickery, first dancing and bringing a gift of a rifle that Lusinga had requested. Then they attacked, cut off his head, and brought it back to Storms. Storms eventually sent the skull to the museum at Tervuren (now named the Royal Museum of Central Africa). The title of the book refers to the dancing of these assassins. The second perspective is that of anthropology, Roberts's profession. He spent two years in Lubanda in the mid 1970s, studying in depth the culture of the Tabwa people there and in the area, a culture influenced by Luba culture. Roberts uses this deep knowledge to analyze the dynamics of the bloody encounter between Storms and Lusinga a century earlier. A third perspective is that of Belgian sociology and history. Lusinga's skull ended up in the museum, where it joined scores of others being analyzed by anthropologists of that late 19th century, as they measured skulls and worked out schemas of what was popular at the time: tracing phony evolution from inferior (black) to superior (white) races. Roberts analyzes the displays of artifacts from Congo both in the museum and in the Storms's upscale Brussels home (he ended up a general). He places these displays in the context of the scientific and artistic fads of the day. Overall, one sees the colonial push to create the impression of the gift of Belgium's "superior" civilization to the benighted colonized Africans. And, in Congo, one sees the violent conquest of the country during King Leopold's reign. Roberts has a rich vocabulary and a profound knowledge of the issues currently debated by historians and anthropologists. The bibliography is impressive, with 31 pages of small print entries. Sometimes his statements are speculative, and the book can make difficult reading at points, but it leads to new insights into this amazing encounter between two ambitious and aggressive leaders, one European and one African.

A Dance of Assassins presents the competing histories of how Congolese Chief Lusinga and Belgian Lieutenant Storms engaged in a deadly clash while striving to establish hegemony along the southwestern shores of Lake Tanganyika in the 1880s. While Lusinga participated in the east African slave trade, Storms's secret mandate was to meet Henry Stanley's eastward march and trace "a white line across the Dark Continent" to legitimize King Leopold's audacious claim to the Congo. Confrontation was inevitable, and Lusinga lost his head. His skull became the subject of a sinister evolutionary treatise, while his ancestral figure is now considered a treasure of the Royal Museum for Central Africa. Allen F. Roberts reveals the theatricality of early colonial encounter and how it continues to influence Congolese and Belgian understandings of history today.

"Ultimately, this is an excellent, well-crafted meditation on the collision of colonial and indigenous worlds, and how the indigenous world has enfolded and come to its own terms with an irruption that invading world has largely never understood.... Highly recommended." ?Choice "The dynamics of narrative history making, competing local histories, the equivalence of individuals in the colonial process, together with the display of trophies of conquest, and considerations of their deaths as a never-completed transition are explored in this significant and cutting-edge analysis." ?Arthur P. Bourgeois, Governors State University "The beheading of the Tabwa ruler and slave trader Lusinga Iwa Ngr'sombe by warriors loyal to the Belgian commander Emile Storms sets the stage for *A Dance of Assassins*, a beautifully written and compelling account of the drama, intrigue, and pathos of the 'theatrical enterprise' that characterized colonial conquest and the making of histories in central Africa. Anthropologist Allen F. Roberts convincingly presents the entangled and contradictory perspectives that inform the dynamics of power and history and memory in colonial and post-colonial central Africa." ?Christine Mullen Kreamer, Smithsonian Institution "A *Dance of Assassins*" is an engaging, vigorously researched historical ethnography that uses a set of micro-level events and interactions to reveal the complexity and nuances of the early colonial encounter in what would become the Belgian Congo. This book would be of interest to upper-level undergraduates, graduate students, and scholars in African Area Studies, Anthropology, History, Museum Studies, and even Performance Studies." ?Anthropos "At the end of the day, *A Dance of Assassins* makes a compelling case for the necessity of ethnography?quality ethnography?in the interpretation of history as a means of opening the past to a more equitable exchange of voices and the 'what-might-have-beens.' It is also, as John Mack notes in his endorsement, a 'veritable page-turner.'" ?African Arts "Allen Roberts uses... [the] assassination to explore the encounter between late nineteenth-century European and Congolese, specifically Tabwa, cultures. There is no scholar more familiar with Tabwa culture, art, and customs, as revealed in his many writings over the last few decades. But Roberts proves equally adept in describing a European culture steeped in an arrogant worldview that it claimed to be 'scientific' and progressive but was often little more than a justification for European conquest." ?Journal of African History "[The] broader themes [of this book] conjure up a bitter and dramatic sense of the colonial past, still contested

and poorly understood by both Belgians and Congolese. It imaginatively shows how much may be learned by examining the colonial record from a combination of African and European (and other) points of view. It also suggests how material culture may teach us to fashion new analyses." ?Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute" As close as a thoroughly scholarly and intimately researched monograph gets to a veritable page-turner. In the hands of consummate narrator Roberts, this precisely engineered keyhole of a story opens a door on the ambiguities of colonial encounter. A Dance of Assassins blends historical writing and anthropological interpretation at its best, and tells it all like it was?and is?in all its complexity and nuance." ?John Mack, University of East Anglia" A Dance of Assassins... is a deeply engaging account of the complex struggles that connected the lives of Europeans and Africans in the earliest days of the colonial encounter in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Elegantly written, this book challenges prevailing thinking about colonization and its effects on Africans and Europeans." ?H-Net s H-AfrArts About the Author Allen F. Roberts is Professor in the Department of World Arts and Cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is author (with Mary Nooter Roberts) of A Saint in the City: Sufi Arts of Urban Senegal, which was awarded the Herskovits Prize.