

# Civil Society and the Political Imagination in Africa : Critical Perspectives



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The essays in this collection explore the diverse, unexpected and controversial ways in which the idea of civil society has recently entered into populist politics and public debate throughout Africa. In the introduction, anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff offer a critical theoretical analysis of the nature and deployment of the concept - and the debates surrounding it. Building on this framework, the contributors investigate the "problem" of civil society across their regions of expertise, which cover the continent. Drawing on one another's work, they examine the impact of colonial ideology, postcoloniality and development practice on discourses of civility, the workings of everyday politics, the construction of new modes of selfhood, and the pursuit of moral community. The book shows how struggles over civil society in Africa reveal much about larger historical forces in the post-Cold War era. It also makes a strong case for the contribution of historical anthropology to contemporary discourses on the rise of a "new world order".

作者介绍:

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