



History and Hunger in West Africa: Food Production and Entitlement in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (Contributions in Afro-American and African Studies)

Laura Bigman

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As Africa entered the 1990s, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission on Africa declared the continent incapable of feeding at least one-fifth of its peoples. Africa is the only region in the world where per capita food production is actually declining. Even with imports, the average African gets only enough nourishment to meet 85 percent of the minimum daily calorie requirement. This book analyzes the contemporary food crisis in Africa from an historical perspective, using two West African case studies.

From the perspective of food production and entitlement, the volume traces the economic history of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde beginning with the slave trade, through the colonial and postcolonial periods to democratization and structural adjustment. Using the theory and methodology of political economy, the study argues that the way in which African societies have been integrated into the world market diverted resources from food production, exacerbated exploitation, thus affecting entitlement to the food produced. Conditions for national food dependency and the degradation of the environment ensued.

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