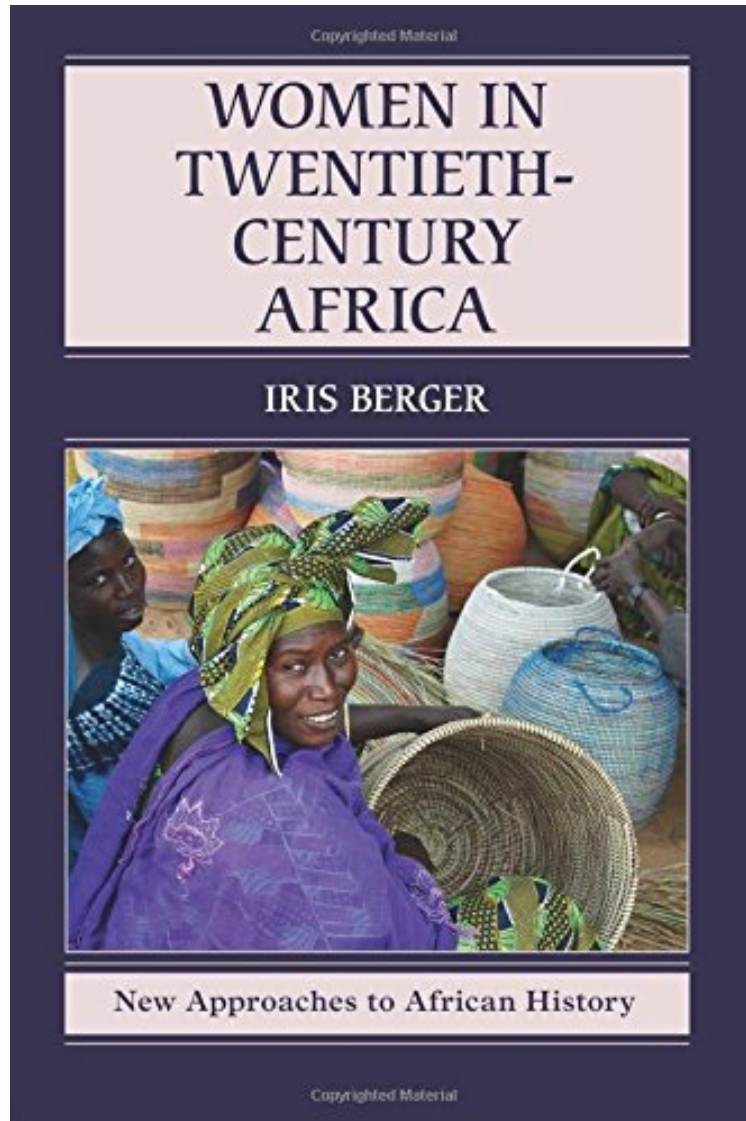


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## Women in Twentieth-Century Africa (New Approaches to African History)

*Iris Berger*

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**Iris Berger : Women in Twentieth-Century Africa (New Approaches to African History)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Women in Twentieth-Century Africa (New Approaches to African History):

During a turbulent colonial and postcolonial century, African women struggled to control their own marital, sexual and economic lives and to gain a significant voice in local and national politics. This book introduces many remarkable women, who organized religious and political movements, fought in anti-colonial wars, ran away to escape arranged marriages, and during the 1990s began successful campaigns for gender parity in national legislatures. The book also explores the apparent paradox in the conflicting images of African women - as singularly oppressed and dominated by men, but also as strong, resourceful, and willing to challenge governments and local traditions to protect themselves and their families. Understanding the tension between women's power and their oppression, between their strength and their vulnerability, offers a new lens for understanding the relationship between the state and society in the twentieth century.

"Finally, a lucid, concise and lively synthesis of scholarly work on women in twentieth-century Africa suitable for undergraduates. Berger features life history, fiction, and song to bring major dynamics in African history to life, firmly placing African women at the center of her narrative. She retains a strong authorial voice but succeeds in leaving the reader room for reflection and debate. The book also includes a useful discussion of references for further reading; it will prove a valuable resource for students and researchers. Women in Twentieth-Century Africa would be suitable for use in general courses on African history as well as more focused courses on women and gender." Barbara Cooper, Rutgers University, New Jersey

'Acknowledgement of women's contributions in the development of 20th-century Africa and the dynamic forces propelling them is advancing from obscurity to recognition. Berger examines these transformations as women confront issues ranging from 'marriage, family, and sexuality' to relationships with men. Using diverse examples, the author highlights the complex, contradictory challenges women of all ages face, marital status, faith, class, and urban or rural life. ... Berger shows how important continuities in attitude and institutions, controversies, and divisions persist. Women were transformed in various ways as they confronted new opportunities and new crises yet faced unfulfilled expectations and 'extreme vulnerability and powerlessness' in societies dominated by men ... Summing Up: Recommended. All levels/libraries.' Z. N. Nchinda, Choice

'Captures the complexities of African women's lives in the twentieth century. ... Each chapter contains rich accounts of social history that reveal the contradictory ways in which larger political, economic, and cultural forces shape the spaces women inhabit as mothers, wives, daughters, subjects, and citizens. Berger successfully challenges the often diametrically opposed representations of African women - as downtrodden or powerful - as well as the tendency to reduce African women to monolithic groups. The narrative demonstrates the ways in which women's experiences throughout the twentieth century were shaped by dynamic and competing ideologies of masculinity and femininity, local cultures, and the various stages in the life cycle. ...[Berger] has provided a rich synthesis of data drawn from old and new classics as well as examples from East, West, central, and southern Africa.' Judith A. Byfield, African Studies

About the Author Iris Berger is Professor of History, Emerita at the University at Albany, State University of New York. She is the author of *South Africa in World History* (2009), *Women in Sub-Saharan Africa: Restoring Women to History*, with E. Frances White (1999); *Threads of Solidarity: Women in South African Industry, 1900-1980* (1992); and the award-winning *Religion and Resistance: East African Kingdoms in the Precolonial Period* (1981). She is also the co-editor of *African Asylum at a Crossroads: Activism, Expert Testimony and Refugee Rights* (2015) and *Women and Class in Africa* (1986) and a past President of the African Studies Association.