New Book on Africa/Ghana’s Natural Resources: Book Review

Kwamina Panford, Ghana’s Natural Resources and Underdevelopment, How Ghana’s Petroleum Can Create Sustainable Economic Prosperity

Reviewed by Professor Atto Sekyi-Otu
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This is an excellent critical study of contemporary Ghanaian economic history, more specifically, a study of the trade surpluses and prospects of the discovery of crude oil and gas in 2007. They are called “natural resources,” but Panford’s principal message is that the possibilities they harbour are not derived by nature but are a function of human agency and political will. This is an important message.

In the age of the “Pastors,” these craft-humans are not the only ones whose work is admired in the context of a nation that does not currently possess the oil and gas.

This book, Panford’s, tells us that there is nothing outlandish about what happens to an extraction of a nation that comes within the possession of these resources. No appeal to the devil or its investment in the traditional community is needed. God’s will will be done.

For us, the Ghanaian language, will find no quarrel.

Panford examines the underlying fault of concepts involved in the problem of how the oil and gas resources are managed. He examines the character of the processes that have been defined as the “democratic” and “theocratic.” He finds their mystical powers involved in these phenomena which are often overlooked. He examines the inherent contradictions of the conceptual framework that has been adopted to explain the situation.

In one instance, South Korea, Singapore, Japan, to name but a few, in its development of natural resources, Panford notes that the country’s solution to the problem is not a democratic one.

This book is another testimony to the idea that the oil and gas resources are not deterministic in their own terms.

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