

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

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Kwamina Panford, Africa's Natural Resources and Underdevelopment: How Ghana's Petroleum Can Create Sustainable Economic Prosperity
 NY Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. 249 pp Bibliography Index \$125 Hard Cover E-Copy \$25

Reviewed by Professor Ato Sekyi-Otu, York University & Brafoyan, Central Region, Ghana

This is an excellent critical study of contemporary Ghanaian economic history, more specifically, a study of the fraught consequences 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 decreed by nature but are a function of human agency and political will. This is an important message.

In the age of the "Pastors," those crafty human-freedom-deniers adept at putting to profitable use the freedom they teach their flock to abjure, this book tells us that there is nothing ordained about what happens to an economy or a nation that comes into sudden possession of these resources. Appeals to the devil or its inverse, "adon ara kwan" (God's will in Akan/Ghanaian language), will find no quarter here.

Panford examines the unwholy family of concepts invoked to explain the catastrophes that have befallen economies and nations which happen to have acquired the black gold "resource curse," "the paradox of plenty," "the Dutch disease". He finds the mystical powers ascribed to these phenomena vastly overrated. He examines contingent circumstances and, above all, *actions* that brought disaster to some natural resource endowed nations and spared others. His resounding conclusion founded on careful scrutiny of the evidence from many nations is this: "The resource curse is not destiny nor is it cast in stone."

This is not foolish optimism nor an abstract philosophical assertion. Panford marshals evidence of modes of

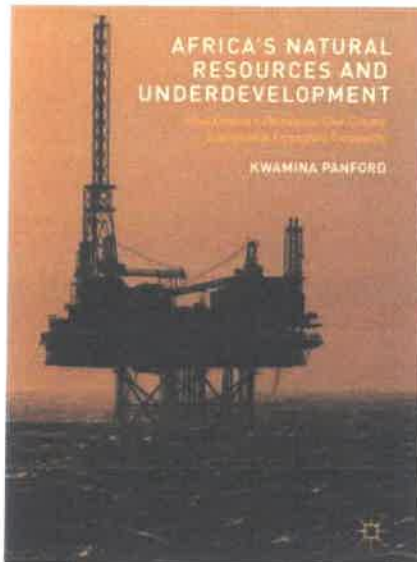
management, public policy, oversight and structures of accountability that have forestalled and can forestall disaster. These serve as so many cautionary tales for the prospects and perils of Ghana's infant experience with oil and gas.

Panford places the specific prospects of what is to be done with oil and gas within the more general question of the enabling conditions for economic transformation and shared prosperity. Here he extends his daring exercise in demystification into addressing what I call, facetiously, Korea envy, the shaming comparison of African wretchedness with South Korea's astonishing self-invention as an economic house of wonder – and more generally the famous "Asian

which brought about the great transformations. Above all, he stresses the importance of industrial policy for an integral project of development. And here he goes against the secular religion of our time. None of this could be done without the state. Demonymized by neoliberal dogma as inherently wasteful, corrupt and corrupting, Panford points out what is now an open secret, namely that none of these recent "miracles" occurred without the paramount role of the state. He has thus little time for

ideologists – don't believe the nostrum that only the left espouses "ideology" – who instruct us to "keep the state out" and leave it all to the "private sector." It can't be done. That was not the path pursued by the very apostles of the "free market," Britain and the United States, nor in their ascendancy and not today.

We are grateful to Panford for reminding us of such demonstrable truths and for the cautionary lessons he offers for ensuring that the potential wealth derived from our recently discovered natural resources will help alleviate our people's conditions of



Miracle." Kwamina Panford's answer to this other, related species of magical thinking? There is nothing miraculous about the "Asian miracle."

In each instance, South Korea, Singapore, Japan, to say nothing of China, he details the determining role of favourable geostrategic conditions and conscious resolute decisions, fuelled by political will,

existence.

PROFILE OF KWAMINA PANFORD, 2017

Kwamina Panford teaches Africa/Global Studies, Development/Natural Resources and Public Policy at Northeastern University, Boston. He is also affiliated with the grad program in Law and

Public Policy, School of Public Policy & Urban Affairs and the Center for International Affairs at Northeastern where he has been Chair of Department (2002-2005) and Vice Provost (2003-2008).

For Spring/Summer 2017 he was on sabbatical and a Carnegie Fellow at the Institute for Development Studies (IDS), University of Cape Coast. In recognition of his work on Ghana and other countries, he was awarded a Fulbright as a Senior Scholar Visiting Professor at IDS for 13 months in 2011-2012. He was also selected as a Fulbright candidate for 2013-2014.

Since 2009, his research and publications have been on Ghana's emerging oil and gas (OG) and other extractive sectors, mainly gold, diamond and timber. His latest book is *Africa's Natural Resources & Underdevelopment: How Ghana's Petroleum Can Create Sustainable Economic Prosperity* (Palgrave Macmillan 2017).

Besides publication of his work in *Africa Today* and Ghana's *Public Policy Journal* (Special Issue on OG), he provided critical input into Ghana's Petroleum Revenue Management Act (PRM Act 815, 2011) and was a key resource person for developing the curriculum on Ghana's OG for UCC's new OG Studies Institute.

He also led the technical team that wrote Ghana's first Public Interest and Accountability Committee's (PIAC) Report (2011) documenting Ghana's petroleum revenues and expenditures. In addition, he used his expertise to assist the Ghana TUC (main national trade union) to produce its first Policy Paper on OG.

He was one of the first researchers to study existing OG skills in Ghana. His other interests are Africa-China relations and the roles of Technology, Science and Human Capital in Africa's Development plus the African Union, the World Bank, IMF and WTO in developing countries.

Keta-Akatsi marks World Communications Day



Fr. Adzaho (middle) with some of the participants

The Keta-Akatsi Diocese recently celebrated the Diocesan version of the World Communications Day (WCD) at the St. Peter and Paul Parish at Afiaa with over 40 delegates from 20 Parishes and Quasi-Parishes.

The Mass was presided over by Rev. Fr. Franklin Adzaho, the Diocesan Director of the Department of Social Communications and concelebrated by the Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Paul Dzumador.

In a homily, the Pope's theme for the WCD: "The Truth Will Set You Free" (In. 8:32) *False News and Journalism of Peace*, was explained.

The participants were asked to communicate the truth about the Church, society and the environment through the use of technology and any social media platform.

In attendance were the St. Peter and Paul Choir and the St. Paul Choir of the Parish.