

Rolando Hinojosa. The prize committee commended Sagel's sympathetic portrayal of the struggles of the northern New Mexican Hispano community, and published the book in Cuba in Spanish under the name "Jim Sagel," though it listed Sagel's nationality as "Chicano."

Sagel's ethno-cultural categorization by the prize committee created waves within the Chicano literary community. Literary critic Juan Bruce Novoa criticized Sagel, insinuating that Sagel's ethnicity had been misunderstood by the Casa de las Américas, and negatively comparing Sagel's work that of Chester Seltzer, an Anglo writer who wrote under the Spanish pseudonym "Amado Muro." Many other Chicano critics and writers, most notably Tomás Rivera, Sandra Cisneros and Rudolfo Anaya, warmly received Sagel's work.

However, the disjuncture between Sagel's ethnicity, and the themes and language presented in his works, proved difficult to reconcile within Chicano letters; consequently, there was a reluctance to ascribe the term "Chicano" to his works. That Sagel's work authentically represents the people and environment of the New Mexican Hispano community is undeniable, as is that fact that his use of regional Spanish is extraordinarily precise. Nevertheless, his work has come to be called "Chicanesque," a term denoting works that sympathetically treat subjects relevant to the Chicano community, but that are written by non-Chicano authors.

But how did Sagel identify himself in relationship to his writing? In a 1992 *Confluencia* interview with Pilar Rodríguez, Sagel acknowledged the mixed critical reception of his work by the Chicano community, even as he suggested that his own Spanish-language literature played an active role in preserving Hispano culture and language. When explaining why he chose to write in Spanish about northern New Mexico's people and culture, Sagel asserted, "on one level, of course, we make those artistic decisions, but on another, I have to write about my life and this is my life." Through the documents now accessible to scholars via the

Benson's collection, it is possible to begin to understand the life that Jim Sagel recounted in his two languages and through his dual identity.

Seen in this light, Sagel's writing can be read as representative of a type of borderlands space. Existing in the world of the "Chicanesque," his work is placed in an undefined category that allows it to closely approximate "Chicano," while at the same time preventing it from being embraced by that term. Sagel's writing meticulously, personally and intimately captures Hispano life and language in the borderlands of New Mexico, yet Sagel's classification as a "Chicanesque" writer delimits what his work can potentially encompass and comprehend. Sagel's work thus occupies a difficult borderlands, in which life, love, literature and language are not entirely reconciled within critical concepts of ethnicity.



Joshua B. Forrest
*Subnationalism in Africa: Ethnicity,
Alliances and Politics*

Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004

279 pages

ISBN: 1588262278

\$50.00

Reviewed by Saheed Aderinto

Contemporary Africa is beset with numerous problems, which include but are not limited to corruption, political instability, disease epidemics, inter- and intra-ethnic bigotry and the failure of states to provide the basic infrastructure needed for the sustenance of civil order and quality of life for their citizens. While solutions to problems of development mostly take the form of national policies adopted by the ruling elites who claim to represent the interest of the entire nation-state, internal divisions through regional groupings and subnational cleavages sometimes emerge in order to terminate perceived injustices and place the aggrieved ethnic group/s on the desired path of advancement.

In *Subnationalism in Africa: Ethnicity, Alliances and Politics*, Joshua Forrest looks at the emergence of subnationalism and its implications for interethnic relations and the future of African states. The formation of subnationalist movements has its roots in the need to attain autonomy by seceding from the larger nation-state. The need to form a separate state is mostly informed by the failure of nation-states to address several development-oriented issues, which threatens the survival of the aggrieved group(s). The author outlines a dichotomy between uni-ethnic and interethnic types of regional autonomy seeking in Africa.

Pre-colonial patterns of collaboration among localities, villages, group leaders and politics provide the historical and cultural subcontext for examining the nature of subnationalism in modern Africa. However, pre-colonial patterns of alliance building cannot solely explain the intricate nature of different strands of subnationalism, which emerged in colonial and postcolonial Africa. To understand the nature and dynamics of subnationalism, Forrest argues that we need to turn to the colonial period when African nation-states came into existence through the artificial creation of European superpowers. However, post-independence woes intensified the aims, objectives and tactics of subnationalist agitation. Forrest identifies four major factors responsible for the emergence of African subnationalist movement: "state intervention and constructivist manipulation of regional affairs, long-term economic inequalities that reflect a materialist influence on movement formation, identity patterns, and the instrumentalist leadership of movement elites."

Drawing evidence from different parts of West, East and southern Africa, the author provides a well-structured narrative of the politics of subnationalist agitation, which in most cases was characterized by wars and violence between the nation-state and the autonomy-seeking group. The demands of the subnationalist vary from one part of the continent to another. In the case of Nigeria, the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) asked the federal government to provide

employment opportunities and infrastructure in the Niger delta region, which is severely devastated by oil exploration activities. The brutal repression of minority agitation and the lackadaisical attitude of the Nigerian state under the military dictatorship of General Sani Abacha allowed the Ogoni people to demand full political and economic control of the resources derived from their region. In most cases, the guns begin to talk after a failure of attempts by the central state and the autonomy-seeking group to manage the situation through peaceful negotiations.

Forrest brilliantly establishes the differences and similarities between uni-ethnic and interethnic types of subnationalism. One aspect of this analysis is the suspicion among interethnic subnationalists and the effect of internal division on the attainment of the goals of the secessionist movement. The minorities in the interethnic subnationalist movement tend to be afraid of the overwhelming influence of the majority. The most classic example is from the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970. The failure of the Biafran secessionist movement can partly be attributed to the limited support the Igbo majority received from other members of the alliance, most importantly the non-Igbo ethnic minorities—the Efik, the Ibibio, Ijaw and others. However, internal rancor is not limited to interethnic subnationalist movements. Within the uni-ethnic nationalist movement, different categories of leaders have had different views about the secessionist agenda and the best means of achieving the desired goal. In this case, the author points to the effect of the clash of interest between the educated members of the Ogoni and some local chiefs of the MOSOP.

One major limitation of the production of knowledge is that each piece represents an attempt to understand a phenomenon or a set of phenomena within the confines of time and place. In trying to achieve this purpose, a scholar gets into the unavoidable trouble of "exclusion." Forrest, like others who examine African issues from a continent-wide perspective, refuses to state that the part of the continent he is dealing with is sub-Saharan Africa. Scholars tend to treat the five North African countries (Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt,

Libya and Algeria) as completely different from their sub-Saharan counterparts, in terms of race, history, politics and culture. Some even believe they should be grouped with the Middle Eastern countries because of the cultural affinity they share with them. While time and space might have allowed him to confine his work to the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, I think it would be more desirable to state the reason he is leaving out the northern part of the continent. Better still, the title of the book or the introduction should indicate that the part of the continent under examination is Africa, south of the Sahara.

In another vein, the author misses an integral part of subnationalist movement. There is no gainsaying the fact that some autonomy-seeking agendas are products of the desire of some leaders to secede from the larger nation-state because of the need to rule over the autonomy-seeking group. Leaders sometimes sell their ideas to the larger group because of their own ulterior motive of emerging as the leaders of a separate state. In the Nigerian Civil War, for example, some commentators have pointed out that Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemaka Ojukwu's leadership of the Biafran secessionist agenda was partly informed by his desire to rule the Eastern region of the country. The profundity of this argument becomes clear if we consider his consistent interest in the emergence of a separate Igbo nation and most importantly his obtaining of the nomination form to run for the 2007 presidential election. Ojukwu's presidential agenda is under serious attack by other prominent and influential Igbo who believe that his thirty-year ambition should give way for the emergence of new, younger, and more dynamic members of the group.

Nevertheless, these shortcomings do not discredit the work, as it remains an excellent study of the nature and dynamics of subnationalist movements in sub-Saharan Africa.

