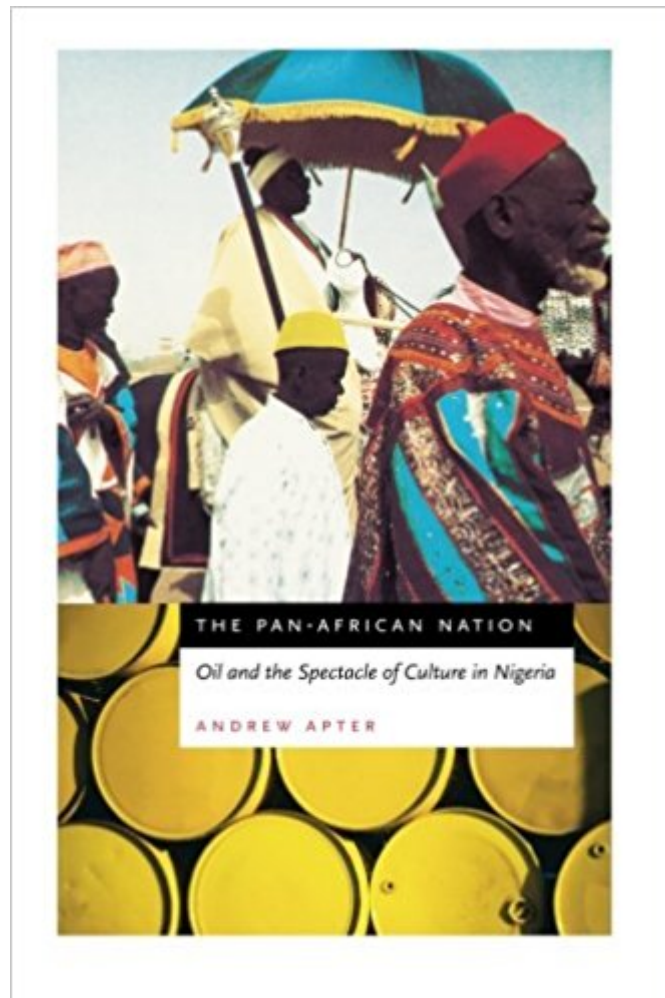




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# The Pan-African Nation: Oil And The Spectacle Of Culture In Nigeria



## Synopsis

When Nigeria hosted the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977, it celebrated a global vision of black nationhood and citizenship animated by the exuberance of its recent oil boom. Andrew Apter's *The Pan-African Nation* tells the full story of this cultural extravaganza, from Nigeria's spectacular rebirth as a rapidly developing petro-state to its dramatic demise when the boom went bust. According to Apter, FESTAC expanded the horizons of blackness in Nigeria to mirror the global circuits of its economy. By showcasing masks, dances, images, and souvenirs from its many diverse ethnic groups, Nigeria forged a new national culture. In the grandeur of this oil-fed confidence, the nation subsumed all black and African cultures within its empire of cultural signs and erased its colonial legacies from collective memory. As the oil economy collapsed, however, cultural signs became unstable, contributing to rampant violence and dissimulation. *The Pan-African Nation* unpacks FESTAC as a historically situated mirror of production in Nigeria. More broadly, it points towards a critique of the political economy of the sign in postcolonial Africa.

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## Customer Reviews

"This is an important book on an important topic. In *The Pan-African Nation*, Andrew Apter exposes FESTAC '77 as a foundational cultural moment. Here, FESTAC becomes both a way of thinking about nation-building and also a way of linking specific cultural forms to the political economy of oil. This is a provocative interrogation of the question of culture and its relation to the nation." - Michael Watts, University of California, Berkeley"

When Nigeria hosted the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977, it celebrated a global vision of black nationhood and citizenship animated by the exuberance of its recent oil boom. Andrew Apter's *The Pan-African Nation* tells the fascinating story of this cultural extravaganza, from Nigeria's spectacular rebirth as a rapidly developing petro-state to its dramatic demise when the boom went bust. According to Apter, FESTAC expanded the horizons of blackness in Nigeria to mirror the global circuits of its economy. By showcasing masks, dances, images, and souvenirs from many of its diverse ethnic groups, Nigeria forged a new national culture. In the grandeur of this oil-fed confidence, the nation subsumed all black and African cultures within its empire of cultural signs, and erased its colonial legacies from collective memory. As the oil economy collapsed, however, cultural signs became unstable, contributing to rampant violence and dissimulation. *The Pan-African Nation* unpacks FESTAC as a historically situated mirror of production in Nigeria. More broadly, it points toward a critique of the political economy of the sign in postcolonial Africa.

This book provides a historically informed and persuasive story connecting the beginning of the slave trade all the way up to the Ogoni tragedy, 419 scams, and the spectacle of petroleum boom and bust. Given increased corporate interest in Africa and especially Nigeria as the 'next Gulf' (see book *The Next Gulf* by Andy Rowell, James Marriott & Lorne Stockman), it is important to read literature like Apter's and get a different view of the world from the neoliberal, corporate-led globalization, 'war on terror' worldviews currently prevalent in development literature and political economy literature in general.

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