



Sovereigns, Quasi Sovereigns, and Africans: Race and Self-Determination in International Law (Borderlines)

Siba N'Zatioula Grovogui

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Sovereigns, Quasi Sovereigns, and Africans was first published in 1996. Minnesota Archive Editions uses digital technology to make long-unavailable books once again accessible, and are published unaltered from the original University of Minnesota Press editions.

In this trenchant critique, Siba N'Zatioula Grovogui demonstrates the failure of international law to address adequately the issues surrounding African self-determination during decolonization. Challenging the view that the only requirement for decolonization is the elimination of the legal instruments that provided for direct foreign rule, *Sovereigns, Quasi Sovereigns, and Africans* probes the universal claims of international law.

Grovogui begins by documenting the creation of the "image of Africa" in European popular culture, examining its construction by conquerors and explorers, scientists and social scientists, and the Catholic Church. Using the case of Namibia to illuminate the general context of Africa, he demonstrates that the principles and rules recognized in international law today are not universal, but instead reflect relations of power and the historical dominance of specific European states.

Grovogui argues that two important factors have undermined the universal applicability of international law: its dependence on Western culture and the way that international law has been structured to preserve Western hegemony in the international order. This dependence on Europeandominated models and legal apparatus has resulted in the paradox that only rights sanctioned by the former colonial powers have been accorded to the colonized, regardless of the latter's needs. In the case of Namibia, Grovogui focuses on the discursive strategies used by the West and their southern African allies to control the legal debate, as well as the tactics used by the colonized to recast the terms of the discussion.

Grovogui blends critical legal theory, historical research, political economy, and cultural studies with profound knowledge of contemporary Africa in general and Namibia in particular. *Sovereigns, Quasi Sovereigns, and Africans* represents the very best of the new scholarship, moving beyond narrow disciplinary boundaries to illuminate issues of decolonization in Africa.

Siba N'Zatioula Grovogui is assistant professor of political science at Johns Hopkins University. He previously practiced law in his native Guinea.

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