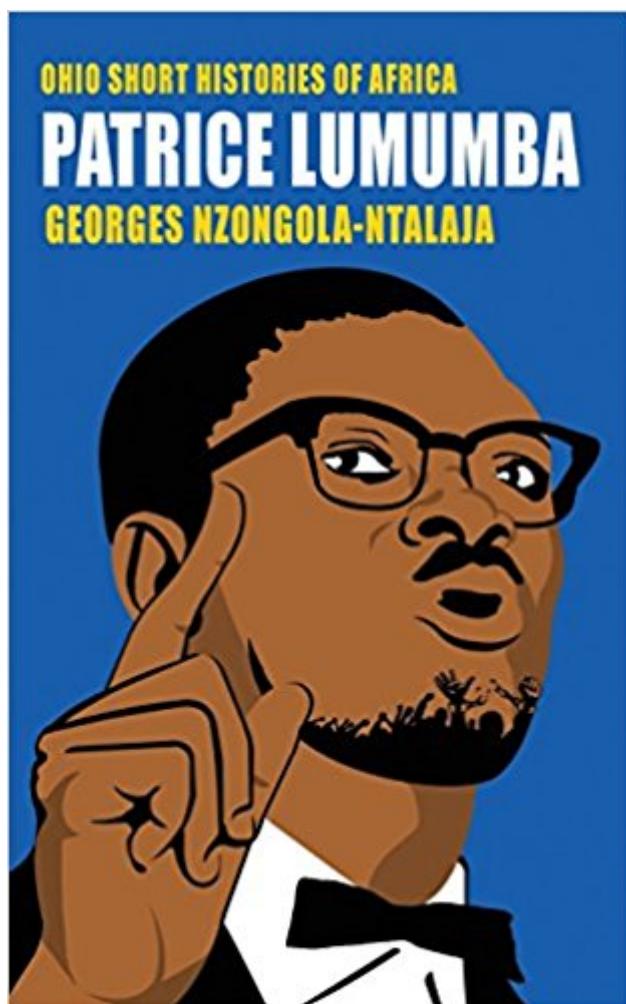


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Patrice Lumumba (Ohio Short Histories Of Africa)



Synopsis

“The contribution [Nzongola-Ntalaja makes] to the literature of Patrice Lumumba, and the Congo, is ironically not concentrating on Lumumba’s iconic Cold War death but instead placing his life and words into the proper cultural, economic, and historical context of Congolese history. I would highly recommend [Patrice Lumumba] for students in African or Congolese politics. [It challenges] us not to dwell on his death but breathe life into his words, because the questions Patrice Lumumba raised about self-determination then are still relevant for all of us today.” Christopher Cook, African Studies Quarterly

Patrice Lumumba was a leader of the independence struggle in what is today the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the country’s first democratically elected prime minister. After a meteoric rise in the colonial civil service and the African political elite, he became a major figure in the decolonization movement of the 1950s. Lumumba’s short tenure as prime minister (1960–1961) was marked by an uncompromising defense of Congolese national interests against pressure from international mining companies and the Western governments that orchestrated his eventual demise. Cold war geopolitical maneuvering and well-coordinated efforts by Lumumba’s domestic adversaries culminated in his assassination at the age of thirty-five, with the support or at least the tacit complicity of the U.S. and Belgian governments, the CIA, and the UN Secretariat. Even decades after Lumumba’s death, his personal integrity and unyielding dedication to the ideals of self-determination, self-reliance, and pan-African solidarity assure him a prominent place among the heroes of the twentieth-century African independence movement and the worldwide African diaspora. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja’s short and concise book provides a contemporary analysis of Lumumba’s life and work, examining both his strengths and his weaknesses as a political leader. It also surveys the national, continental, and international contexts of Lumumba’s political ascent and his swift elimination by the interests threatened by his ideas and practical reforms.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lumumba was a pivotal player in the history of African nationalism, in the same league as Mandela in terms of his influence. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja provides an excellent short introduction to Lumumba's life and historical significance. — David N. Gibbs, professor of history, University of Arizona

Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja is a professor of African, African American, and diaspora studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and professor emeritus of African studies at Howard University. He is a past president of the African Studies Association and the author of *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History*.

In a few words, this biography is short but tells you a lot about Lumumba's life. Anyone who wants a concise narrative about the subject will love this.

This is a wonderful but clearly biased effort on the part of Mr. Nzogola-Ntalajia to memorialize Patrice Lumumba. I too lived thru this crisis from the opposite side of the ocean but with concern for family members who were in harms way in the new Independent Congo in 1960. Mr Lumumba was in some ways his own worst enemy when trying to forge diplomatic relationships with the West and the convenience of trying to black mail them by using Cold War Russia as a negotiating ploy was grand standing at the worst and lethal in reality. Most players in this drama would agree in perfect hind sight that having worked thru this process with Lumumba rather than stringing up puppet wires to Mobutu would have been more beneficial to the Congolese people than to orchestrate a coup that created an even worse monster than the greatest Lumumba fears. Little credence was given to the intensity of tribal differences at the time of Independence and the role it played in Lumumba's demise. Given the cowardly acts of the US/CIA involvement and the long history of abuse by Belgium's extraction of wealth from the Congo, it is also hard to ignore the weight of those interests

in not allowing Lumumba to become the populist leader that he might have been. In retrospect, most of wish that he could have tried and the culpability for those who supported his assassination deserve all the criticism leveled.

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