

IAN FOWLER and VERKIJIKA FANSO (eds), *Encounter, Transformation and Identity: peoples of the western Cameroon borderlands 1891–2000*. Cameroon Studies 8, New York NY and Oxford: Berghahn (hb £58 – 978 1 84545 3367). 2009, 256 pp.

This book is a *festschrift* for Shirley Ardener, a distinguished scholar in Cameroon and gender studies. It brings together the voices of African and European scholars, all of whom, in one way or another, have drawn inspiration from the works of Shirley Ardener and her late husband Edwin Ardener. Many of the contributions in this book pay tribute to her exemplary role in ‘fortifying Cameroon Studies’ – as Martin and Dorothy Njeuma put it in their preface – and in fostering recognition and collaboration among Cameroonian and Cameroonist scholars.

The book comprises twelve original essays focusing on the production of ethnic, political, religious and gendered identities among the peoples of the Cameroon-Nigerian borderlands. The contributions can be grouped into three sections. The essays in the first half of the volume adopt a historical perspective, focusing on the German colonial period. A second group deals with issues of gender, personhood and religion. The last two contributions highlight global dimensions of ethnographic research and scholarly encounter.

The opening chapter by Fowler provides an introduction to the subsequent essays, making an argument for understanding colonial and post-colonial identities as co-constructions of insider and outsider voices. Edwin Ardener’s (previously unpublished) essay examines the construction of ethnic and administrative identities in the Mamfe ‘Overside’. This region constitutes a classical example of border zones as sites of intense identity production, as theorized in his earlier work.

The following five chapters examine encounter, transformation and identity during the German colonial period, reflecting both insider and outsider perspectives. Chilver presents an epitome of extracts from the 1923 publication *Im Lande des Dju-Dju* by the German colonial officer Hermann Detzner. His book provides insight into the work and encounters of the Anglo-German Boundary Commission, and illustrates the salience of the Cameroon-Nigerian border zone as a site of contestation and latent violence. The subject of colonial violence is at the heart of Geschiere’s chapter on the commander of a German expedition, Freiherr von Gravenreuth, who was dramatically defeated and killed in the first battle of Buea in 1891. As he argues, the event was at the same time traumatic and productive; it led to a German punitive expedition and put Buea on the map of Cameroonian history. Ndobegang’s chapter, co-authored with Bowie, examines another dramatic death: that of the German explorer and trader Gustav Conrau. The focus here is less on Conrau and more on how the Bangwa of Azi perceived and reacted to his demand for plantation labourers, and how his death led to long-term shifts in local power relations. Rösenthaler’s essay centres on Nsanakang, a town in the Mamfe ‘Overside’ caught in violent struggle between the Germans and British towards the end of the German colonial period. She draws connections between the colonial encounter, village history, the circulation of associations and cult agencies, and present-day local politics. Finally, Verkijika Fanso examines early manifestations of southern Cameroons nationalism, which he interprets as a response to the Anglo-French partition of the German protectorate.

The next four chapters break away from the previous historical focus and centre on contemporary issues. Ifeka’s contribution takes us into the forest zone, to the Anyang of the Cameroon-Nigerian Borderlands. Inspired by Shirley Ardener’s work on female sexuality, gender and resistance among the

Bakweri, she examines transformations in ritual, gender and power relations, which she attributes to increasing market exposure. While providing rich ethnographic material, this chapter is conceptually overburdened, and would have benefited from more thorough editing. At the origin of Niger-Thomas's succinct essay on memorial statues of women of the *ndem* association is Ardener's curiosity about these objects. Niger-Thomas substantiates her elaborations on the meaning and decline of the *ndem* association with remarkable photographs, paying tribute both to Ardener and the women commemorated with these statues. Bowie's contribution deals with methodological issues of multi-sited ethnography, and with the imperative for collaboration and co-authorship with increasingly educated and critical interlocutors. Based on her research on the entangled past and present of the Focolare movement and the Bangwa in south-west Cameroon, she illustrates how both groups have expanded their networks across the globe. Lado's chapter provides an insightful and critical analysis of the discourse of inculturation, focusing on the use of wheat bread and grape vine in the Catholic Eucharist. Lado, himself both insider and outsider – Jesuit priest and Cameroonian anthropologist – approaches the issue from two perspectives: the anthropology of food and the anthropology of identity. Drawing on Mbembe, he argues that essentialist concepts, such as inculturation, fail to acknowledge the historicity of African societies and African Christians' ability to domesticate foreign symbols. The concluding chapter by Endeley and Lyonga describes a collaborative project between the International Gender Studies Centre in Oxford and the Department of Women and Gender Studies in Buea.

While of particular interest to scholars of Cameroon studies, this volume constitutes a valuable contribution to contemporary debates on border zones and the interstitial, recalling that influential Cameroonist scholars such as Edwin Ardener and Igor Kopytoff have long integrated frontiers and borderlands into their theoretical work. Finally, the volume encourages all of us to emulate the example of Shirley Ardener and to engage in meaningful dialogue, collaboration and co-authorship with our colleagues and interlocutors.

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INSA NOLTE, *Obafemi Awolowo and the Making of Remo: the local politics of a Nigerian nationalist*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute. (hb £60 – 978 0 74863 895 6). 2009, 328 pp.

This book is an impressive study of the illustrious political career of one of Africa's most influential nationalists, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a pre-eminent Nigerian statesman whose vision and tireless work defined a modernist Yoruba political project in an emergent Nigerian post-colonial nation state after the decolonization process in the 1940s. Insa Nolte is primarily concerned with the local and foundational aspects of Awolowo's career and how they in turn shape Yoruba and Nigerian politics.

Drawing on extensive colonial and missionary archival materials, critical readings of newspaper reports, comprehensive interviews of key political figures, and a judicious intellectual engagement with Africanist scholarship, this comprehensive work is framed in the context of the monumental social and political transformation of Ijebu-Remo, a confederation of Yoruba city states, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. With an emphasis on the

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