

Renne then moves on to consider how broader economic and political phenomena also affect local perceptions of fertility and development. Three chapters address aspects of state policy that intersect with individual and family ideas about fertility. The first considers health and sanitation, showing how colonial education about cleanliness and hygiene affected attitudes in the community, while the current lack of clean water and good health facilities makes it very difficult for people to actually carry out the practices they have learned. Next, she examines economic policies, especially those affecting land tenure, and shows how people have responded to these policies by continuing to emphasize the importance of having one's own children who will, it is hoped, look after the family home and land. Thirdly, she considers censuses and other efforts by the state to count people. She shows how Nigerians have come to understand the role of population in bringing resources and development to specific communities and regions; the specific example discussed is the creation of Ekiti State in 1996. And she makes clear that people are aware of the contradictions between policies of this type and those that advocate limiting family size (to four children). As one of her interviewees states, 'No government is feeding me and my children. It is part of civilization (*olaju*) to do this. What really [is] happening is that people should have fewer children so that they can care for them. That people should live a better life by giving birth to fewer children isn't a policy that should come from the government. . . . Having many children is in itself development, reduction in the number is not part of development' (pp. 191–2).

Renne utilizes quotes such as this to excellent effect throughout the book. These interviews help to convey the reality of people's lives as well as their thoughtfulness about the issues that confront them. She shows us people who want 'progress' and 'development', as they define and understand these ideas, for themselves, their children and families, and their communities. To a great extent, progress still means having children and followers, yet desire for education and improvement of conditions for families is leading couples to change some of their ideas and practices. They still want 'large' families, but the number of children that constitutes 'large' is now smaller than it was in the past. The economic and political uncertainties of contemporary Nigeria affect the outcomes as well. One wants to educate one's children, and that costs money; at the same time, in the light of all the uncertainty about the future, one still needs children to rely on for support, and the community needs a growing population for continuity and future resources.

In addition to the interview data, Renne incorporates statistical analysis from her surveys on a wide range of interesting topics. These analyses not only support the overall argument but also provide details for those interested in a specific topic, such as details on child-fostering arrangements. My only (minor) complaint about the book as a whole is that, given the obvious wealth of information that the author has about individuals and the community, I would have liked to have seen in-depth portraits or case studies of some of these individuals and families.

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TOYIN FALOLA (ed.), *Nigeria in the Twentieth Century*. Durham NC: Carolina Academic Press (hb US\$90.00 – 0 89089 129 X). 2002, 1064 pp.

This is a heavy volume in several respects. Its physical weight is enormous, the number of topics covered in the essays wide-set, the implicit ambition to

provide an overview of Nigerian Studies at the beginning of the new millennium serious. The book is the result of a conference held at the University of Texas at Austin in March 2002, in the annual series of African Studies conferences so handily set up by Professor Falola. The format of these conferences is quite open, and allows scholars of African Studies, both mature and green, and from diverse academic and geographical backgrounds, to interact and present their research. Many of the papers presented at these conferences find their way into publications. On the one hand, this format is very powerful, as it guarantees a continuous flow of research results and academic reviews towards a wider audience. On the other hand, as is the case with this book, there is a risk of uneven coverage of and unclear focus on the main theme.

What does the book offer? First, a series of 79 black-and-white, page-sized photographs, divided into several thematic chapters, but without further introduction, description or explanation other than the name of the photographer, Olusegun Fayemi. Although beautiful and a joy to look at, their meaning is puzzling: is this a pictorial review of Nigeria in the twentieth century, and, if so, is it meant to be documentary or artistic? These questions also apply to many of the textual contributions in this volume. In text, the book offers eight topical sections, each with between 5 and 18 chapters (64 in all), ranging from historiography via political woes and civil war to modern economies and traditional institutions, and ending up at nation building. The attempt to bind sets of papers together in this way is not always successful. The section on 'Creativity and Cultures', for instance, offers detailed case studies on aspects of the literary work of Wole Soyinka, Tess Onwueme, and Zulu Sofola, next to general papers on topics like 'gender and nationalism in contemporary literature' and 'politics in aesthetics: art as an instrument of nation building'. Divergent approaches like these are symptomatic of the whole volume.

The variation in format, methodology and subject matter between the contributions detracts from the merits of individual authors. Some of the chapters written by graduate students deserved a further polishing based on peer reviews and advice from senior colleagues. Overview articles like Barnes's contribution on Christianity and the colonial state in northern Nigeria, or Ogundiran's paper on archaeology, historiography and development, as well as several others, would have made a good nucleus for a much shorter and more focused publication, truly reviewing the state of Nigeria in the twentieth century. Other contributions, based on original research, could then have found a place in conference proceedings, with an option of republication in a peer-reviewed journal at a later stage. As it stands, gems of original research, like Tijani's article on communists and the nationalist movement, are lost in this bulky volume.

This is not only a heavy tome, but also an awkward one. Again, this pertains to the physical as well as the academic qualities of the book. By its sheer weight and volume, one will not pick it up easily to flick through the contributions and look up a reference. The fact that the layout of the pages is not really inviting, and the index is too general, only enhances this. In terms of content, the lightweight quality of many contributions makes it difficult to see the wood for the trees. A more rigorous selection of papers for publication and a closer focus on the objective of the book, rather than simply reproducing the format and atmosphere of the conference in published form, would have made for a more important and more welcome contribution to our knowledge of the state of Nigeria in the twentieth century.

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