

There could be no colonial state without the actions of such men in warfare and everyday life.

Thaddeus Sunseri
 Colorado State University
 Fort Collins, Colorado

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Thaddeus.Sunseri@Colostate.edu

Meredith Terretta. *Nation of Outlaws, State of Violence: Nationalism, Grassfields Tradition, and State Building in Cameroon*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014. xiv + 367 pp. Maps. Acknowledgments. Abbreviations. Notes. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. \$32.95. Paper. ISBN: 978-0821420690.

In 1956 the southern part of Cameroon entered a period of popular unrest followed by an armed rebellion and a ferocious repression by French and Cameroonian troops. The violence lasted until the late 1960s. This territory had been part of a German colony placed under French trusteeship by the League of Nations in 1919. It achieved independence in 1960 under the French-controlled government of Ahmadou Ahidjo.

The armed rebellion of the Union des Population du Cameroun (UPC) developed mostly in two areas: the Bassa country in the coastal hinterland, and the so-called Bamileke, in the western highlands, or Grassfields. Meredith Terretta's book focuses on the latter. The rebellion here had been variously interpreted as a revolt of the rank and file of the chiefdoms against their leaders, a communist-led movement in a Cold War context, a nationalist endeavor to achieve true political independence, a local manifestation of the Pan-African movement, or a mix of everything in various proportions.

Several excellent studies have been published on this popular rebellion, both in English and French. Terretta remarks, however, that the many studies, both scholarly and popular, that have proliferated since the democratization movement of the 1990s have produced a narrative that is too plural and fragmented to serve as a coherent expression of Cameroon's national history. Hers is a timely endeavor, and the book achieves a thorough discussion and synthesis of all the components of the UPC movement. The author also expands the narrative by including the local spiritual, political, and cultural content of the nationalist movement as well as the contributions of subaltern actors, thus bringing to fruition a turn that has been taken by several scholars in the 1990s.

The book's argument develops in three parts of two chapters each. The first part is a tentative synthesis of Grassfields political traditions and Bamileke identity, including an account of the settlement of Bamileke migrants in the Mungo valley from the 1920s. The second part presents a historiography of local politics in the Bamileke and Mungo regions, based on the notions of independence (*lepue*) and chiefdom/nation (*gung*). The author then presents a discussion of the role played by the chiefs in the rebellion—a topic that had been hotly debated right from the origin of the unrest.

The UPC sought redress from the General Assembly of the United Nations without much success, given the pressure exercised by Cold War international politics on independence movements suspected by the West, not without bad faith, to be manipulated by the Communist bloc. The Pan-African movement provided its support to the rebellion and gave shelter to UPC exiles, mostly in Accra. The third part of the book discusses the way the movement went global while losing ground locally in the face of widespread wanton violence and ferocious repression. The conclusion attempts to assess the impact of state repression under the Ahidjo regime, the development of a culture of violence and impunity that contributed to later developments, and the frustrations of successive generations. Despite attempts at reconciliation and public confession, most Bamileke have turned inward, making it difficult for social scientists to shed light on such a painful episode of the decolonization process.

The book is reasonably compact (262 pages of text), with a very dependable critical apparatus. It is grounded in a thorough use of state and other archives from several countries, the published literature, and journals, tracts, and pamphlets, as well as some forty interviews. Altogether it is an excellent piece of scholarship and should become a reference on the Bamileke participation in the UPC upheaval.

Nevertheless, certain caveats seem necessary, especially concerning part 1. In its attempt to ground the UPC movement in the local spiritual, political, and cultural traditions, it relies on discourses and tropes constructed under colonization by missionaries, colonial administrators, local intellectuals, and the media. So far, not a single scholar has attempted to unravel the vexed question of who quoted or copied whom, with the result that a pidginized version of Bamileke culture has been recycled in the French language and then quoted by local chiefs and informants as genuine tradition. This situation has been observed in other parts of Africa as well. The melting pot of the Mungo diaspora played an important role in the production of such tropes, including *lepue* (independence) and *gung* (country) in a colonial and postcolonial context.

The digest of Grassfields history that is presented in the book (33ff.) is not very well informed either and relies on Western notions of power as government, chieftom, justice, and diplomacy to translate the principles of sacred kingship that pervade Grassfields civilization. This approach is inadequate, in my view, with many important local variations erased and denied in Bamileke country under the derogatory and colonial blanket term of “chieftaincy” (instead of “kingship”) and under the impact of extreme violence during the revolt. Detailed ethnographic research still needs to be done on neglected topics such as “body techniques” (*techniques du corps*; see Marcel Maus), agricultural systems, material culture, and divination (which the author considers only in terms of the single technique of the tortoise test, whereas there are many other practices in Bamileke land). Such work will be needed before we are able to balance a common Grassfields civilization, or ecumene, grounded in sacred kingship in a frontier situation,

against the significant local variations, and to see how historical trajectories bridge the *longue durée* of the Grassfields with the colonial and independence moments.

Jean-Pierre Warnier
Institut des Mondes Africains
 Paris, France
 jp-warnier@wanadoo.fr

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HEALTH AND DISEASE

Adia Benton. *HIV Exceptionalism: Development through Disease in Sierra Leone*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. xii + 176 pp. Figures. Notes. References. Index. \$79.00. Cloth. \$22.50. Paper.

It was estimated that in 2007 official development assistance for HIV/AIDS totaled \$7.4 billion, which was nearly half of all official development assistance for health and four times more than the amount devoted to the next highest funded health area (see Jennifer Kates, Eric Lief, and Jonathan Pearson, *U.S. Global Health Policy: Donor Funding in Low- and Middle-Income Countries, 2001–2007*, Henry J. Kaiser Foundation, 2009). Judging from data on donor spending, then, it is obvious that HIV is exceptional. Adia Benton's new book, *HIV Exceptionalism*, raises important questions about this exceptionalism specifically and targeted health and development programs more generally. Her descriptive analysis of HIV programming in Sierra Leone makes clear the challenges faced by real people connected to HIV interventions, be they program implementers or people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). Her book contributes to the growing scholarship critically examining HIV/AIDS interventions in Africa and highlighting the disconnect between interventions as they are designed and prioritized in corridors of power and how they are implemented and received in sub-Saharan African settings.

HIV Exceptionalism draws primarily from research and related work spanning twenty-seven months over four years (2003–2007) in Sierra Leone, a country with a relatively low HIV prevalence (1.5% of the population, according to the latest UNAIDS estimates). Benton uses ethnographic methods (e.g., attending and participating in support group meetings and HIV awareness activities), in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and analysis of secondary materials, including reports and policy statements from UNAIDS and other HIV intervention organizations.

HIV Exceptionalism has five chapters (plus an introduction and conclusion). The introduction offers Benton's definition for HIV exceptionalism: "the idea that HIV/AIDS is always a biologically, socially, culturally, and politically unique disease requiring an exceptional response" (8).