

attempt to refocus the debate on the message of her robe. However, Grant McCracken's 1990 book *Culture & Consumption* has convincingly argued that messages transmitted by clothing have a limited reach. Therefore, it might be misleading to equate language and clothing.

These conceptual issues call for an extended discussion about a potential theory of dressing, which is not realized in the book. Therefore, its value lies primarily in the richness of the contributions and the fresh insights into African societies through different dressing practices and a wide range of meanings of clothes.

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Shobana Shankar, *Who Shall Enter Paradise? Christian origins in Muslim Northern Nigeria, c.1890–1975*. Athens OH: Ohio University Press (hb US\$80 – 978 0 8214 2123 9; pb US\$32.95 – 978 0 8214 2124 6). 2014, 240 pp.

Shobana Shankar's *Who Shall Enter Paradise?* provides a study of Protestant Christian evangelization in the Muslim region of Nigeria through the colonial and early independence eras. Unlike most previous studies of Christianity in Nigeria north of the Niger-Benue, where the focus is on Christian conversion among traditionalists, Shankar concentrates on the stories of Muslim people who decided to become Christians. This differs from previous studies also in that she builds her narrative not on church records and government archives, but upon first-hand accounts such as autobiographies, memoirs and oral interviews. These sources allow Shankar to reconstruct the evolution of Christianity in the region as a minority religious experience. As much as the sources permit her, she further tries to refine her investigations towards a consideration of African women and their lives as Christians in a Muslim world.

*Who Shall Enter Paradise?* offers a potentially groundbreaking approach to researching the history of Christian evangelization in Africa. Rather than try to understand developments from the perspective of governments, mission societies, African communities or religious leaders, Shankar grants all these things space only as background to a narrative about the growth of a religious status, that of Christian in a Muslim world. Her idea has both cultural and social implications. Islam, as defined by Muslim clerics, is the normative cultural experience in the world she constructs. In this intellectually sophisticated world, command of Arabic and the teachings of the prophet Mohammed set the standard for cultural authority. But the arrival of Europeans and 'boko' – a term that means 'book' or written language, but was used to represent all forms of Western knowledge from written English to technology to medicine – created for all Africans, Muslim clerics included, a potential competing standard of cultural authority. To the extent to which Shankar writes about politics, it is about how men with political power – i.e. British colonial authorities, Muslim rulers, Christian missionaries – sought to control and exploit the authority of 'boko' among African people, always, as she illustrates, with mixed results. Shankar is more interested, however, in showing how people without political power used Western knowledge as a tool for creating and maintaining the religious status of Christian. She dedicates one chapter to a discussion of Ethel Miller, a fundamentalist feminist evangelist who fearlessly rode her bicycle across the countryside, visiting potential converts. A second chapter adds to her earlier research on medical missions in

the region by talking about the Christian world that came into existence in the leper treatment stations that the colonial government granted missions permission to establish. Shankar concentrates her narrative on indigenous evangelists, teachers and nurses, and their growing facility with utilizing whatever cultural prestige they could garner from their command of 'boko' to preach Christianity. The result is a study that shows two things. The first is how Christianity was preached among African Muslims by Africans as distinct from missionaries. The second is the liminal but still vital niche in which Muslims allowed Christians to live within their midst.

Shankar could have said more about the contours of this niche. In her narrative, European constructed worlds came and went; relations between African Muslims and African Christians, however, were determined by Africans themselves. It would have been helpful to know more about the parameters of those relations. Several times she makes use of the notion of 'crypto-Christianity', but she never develops what she means by the idea. As she relates, many Muslims were eager to possess Christian bibles and admired and respected individuals learned in Christian ways. What aspects of Christian practices, then, had to be secreted away? Shankar does an impressive job of mining the archives of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), the largest of the Protestant missions working in the area, for data about the African Christian evangelists working for that mission society. She mentions missionaries representing the Church Missionary Society and the Sudan United Mission, the largest of the other Protestant missions working in the area. Yet she does not mention African evangelists working for those societies. Some consideration of their experiences would have helped place the stories she does relate in a broader context.

*Who Shall Enter Paradise?* challenges a good many of the truisms about West African Muslims and their attitudes toward Christianity put forward in the past by Western scholars. In this regard, the book has as much to offer historians of Islam as it does historians of Christianity. Social historians seeking to reconstruct gender relations during the colonial era will also find much of value in the book. Scholars looking to comprehend African Christianity as a lived religion, however, may be the group most enabled by the path Shankar lights up.

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Jeggan C. Senghor, *The Very Reverend J. C. Faye: his life and times. A biography.* Bloomington IN: Author House Publishers (hb US\$31.99 – 978 1 49186 953 6; pb US\$23.95 – 978 1 49186 954 3; e-book US\$3.99 – 978 1 49186 981 9). 2014, 380 pp.

This book is worth a burst of kora and drums in celebration: it is the first scholarly discussion of the prominent Gambian patriot and nationalist leader Reverend John Colley Faye (1908–86). Despite his leading role in the pre-independence politics of the smallest, oldest and most loyal British possession in West Africa, Faye has been somewhat ignored by scholars both outside and within the Gambia. As there is little historical writing about the Gambia even by local scholars, an attempt like this should not go unnoticed or uncelebrated. And finally, unlike their colleagues in former British West African colonies, Gambian political leaders have the dubious distinction of reticence: the only Gambian notable to