

invalided home, Gwynne could only abandon the project in disgust. Blame for the failure was, of course, apportioned to the Dinka. (p. 228)

Paying no attention to historiography or recent trends in mission studies, this is no book for scholars. It may, however, be recommended to neophytes as an introduction to the breadth of missionary attitudes and experiences in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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*Grasland: Eine afrikanische Kultur.* By HANS KNÖPFLI. Wuppertal: Peter Hammer, 2008. Pp. 328, 694 colour illustrations. €59, hardback (ISBN 978-3-77950-197-8).

KEY WORDS: Cameroon, handicrafts, material culture.

'Grassfields: An African Culture' is a beautifully illustrated, large-format book about the material culture of the western part of the Cameroon Grassfields. The Swiss author, Hans Knöpfli, is well versed in his field. He lived in the area from 1956 to 1993, working for the Basel Mission as a pastor and a teacher. Having been trained as a carpenter himself, he soon became fascinated by the work of the local artisans. He spent time with them, inquired about their art, the materials they used, and the meaning of the elaborate ornamentations. People felt that he was appreciating their craft and told him about their work and lives, their dances and masquerades, and their knowledge. His consolidated findings are presented in this book, which is based on an earlier, English version in four volumes.

The book is arranged in five chapters. The first chapter outlines the social fabric of the western Grassfields cultures. The second chapter introduces the creation of the objects for daily use, often artistically decorated: calabashes, bark containers, woven mats and baskets, combs, wooden vessels, pottery, blacksmithing, woven raffia cloth, and many more. Chapter 3 addresses the court arts, particularly the local architecture, royal insignia, wood carvings for the palaces and their rich symbolic meanings, drinking horns for title-holders, the arts of brass-casting, and the fabrication and meaning of the blue-and-white royal cloth. The fourth chapter is concerned with music and games in the western Grassfields, including the creation of the different musical instruments, games, and toys. Chapter 5 discusses local religion, customs and conventions, myths and worldview, mourning rituals and funerals, masked dances, and rituals for twins. The five chapters are richly illustrated with photographs that document the different steps in the process of creating all these objects and artworks. They show artists, potters, and weavers working; the practice of musical instruments, rituals, and dances; libations and sacrifices dedicated to the ancestors. They also show residential houses and palaces, villages, and landscapes.

This book is not about theoretical elaborations and historical explorations. It fascinates by its richness in artistic detail, its wealth of illustrations, its straightforwardness in explaining the materials and individual steps necessary for the completion of a work, and the respect that the author shows for the people with whom he worked and who were ready to teach him. Hans Knöpfli does not simply describe the technical process but follows the people when they collect materials, prepare them for treatment, work in their studios, and relax in their social environment.

Hans Knöpfli not only observed people and talked to them. He also learned from them how to produce the objects himself. And he understood that the young people whom he had taught as students easily faced unemployment after leaving school. This gave him the idea of creating three artistic workshops in the Grassfields: in Bafut, Bali-Nyonga, and Bamessing. By this means, he both provided his students with useful employment and helped to prevent artistic knowledge from being lost. He developed an early form of fair trade by helping the artists to sell the objects made in his workshops in Cameroon and other countries. For his endeavours to reduce poverty and revive the arts and crafts in the Cameroon Grassfields, he received an honorary doctorate from the theological department of the University of Yaounde.

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*The Forger's Tale: The Search for Odeziaku.* By STEPHANIE NEWELL. Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2006. Pp. xii + 233. £44.95/\$46.95, hardback (ISBN 978-0-8214-1709-6); £20.95/\$22.95, paperback (ISBN 978-0-8214-1710-2).

KEY WORDS: Nigeria, biography.

*The Forger's Tale* looks at a 'minor poet and palm oil trader whose story lies buried beneath the grander narratives of imperialism' (p. 2). Born in a Manchester slum in 1881, John James Young would forge multiple identities for himself. As John Mount Stewart Young he was convicted of theft by forgery in 1899 and served six months in prison. As John Moray Stuart-Young he claimed friendship with Oscar Wilde. Leaving for West Africa in 1901 and eventually settling in Onitsha, he also became Odoziaku, the manager of wealth, or Odeziaku (a misspelling that identified him as a writer), or the palm-oil trader Jack O'Dazi. Remaining in Onitsha at The Little House of No Regrets in New Market Road, he would finally also become Dr John Moray Stuart-Young, one of West Africa's leading public intellectuals, a frequent contributor to its press, and a friend of its emerging leaders such as Nnamdi Azikiwe. His career provides Stephanie Newell with an excellent opportunity to apply 'queer' theory, and to write a book that goes 'against histories that present broad cross-cultural surveys of global imperial circuits' (p. 17), that acknowledges the agency of Africans, and that links colony and metropole in a 'both-and' model (p. 18).

As a Reader in English Literature at Sussex University, Newell is strongest in her analysis of Stuart-Young's prolific writings. She is particularly good in showing how he offered to West African readers a positive vision of their country that was ultimately derived from English pastoral. While he remained a convinced imperialist, his vision of empire was cosmopolitan: European and African would advance hand in hand. While he shared the European perception of Africans as childlike, he associated this with moral purity and cleanliness, in contrast to the filth of Europe from which he had fled. He was therefore proud to call the African a 'friend and a brother' (p. 117), and at his death he was praised by the market women of Onitsha as an honorary 'son of the soil' (p. 2).

Despite occasional caveats, Newell tends to contrast a repressive England with an Africa where 'gender flexibility would have eased the intense anxieties of men such as Stuart-Young about their own sexuality' (p. 13). This is unconvincing. The careers of his contemporaries Lytton Strachey and Maynard Keynes show that post-Wildean England was not uniformly constraining – a point on which