

the clothing, and the rhetoric that surrounds it. Such visits also contribute to the excellent array of stories found by Sears in the more official documents consulted.

There is much to admire in Sears' analysis of this topic, especially in her persistent and convincing analysis of how cross-dressing laws interacted with racial politics at the time—two topics that seem unrelated at first glance. Overall Sears gives a nuanced, sensitive and in intelligent reading of a little-known law and its vast consequences for the culture of the city and the nation.

Ariel Beaujot

University of Wisconsin, La Crosse

TERRETTA, Meredith – *Nation of Outlaws, State of Violence: Nationalism, Grassfields Tradition, and State Building in Cameroon*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014. Pp. 367.

This book is a valuable contribution to the current effort to reframe and reinvigorate our understanding of the nationalist period in African history. It illustrates richly how far our understanding has improved, and pushes us to go farther. The first generation of scholars examining the era of African decolonization celebrated African nationalists donning the mantle of modernity, joining the inevitable triumph of human progress. This gave way, in the post-colonial decades of despair, to accounts which highlighted the multiple, fractured, even self-delusional qualities of nationalist movements. Nationalism and nation-building agendas were in some cases seen as impositions by certain state-linked groups on a general population ignorant of or hostile to this agenda. Terretta offers quite a different picture, telling the story of Cameroonian nationalism led by the popular *Union des populations Cameroun* (UPC). It is not a triumphal story, because the UPC's progressive nationalism was defeated by the colonial French regime and the postcolonial Ahidjo regime which followed it. But it is an account which reveals the nationalist movement here to be far from superficial or imposed.

The story is told in terms of the connections and influences between three layers of activism: the local, the territorial, and the international. Part I examines the history of the Grassfields region of French Cameroon from the nineteenth century through the colonial period. Chieftaincy governance involved different types of power in complex relations: chiefly and notable, visible and invisible. Politics was about, importantly, pursuit of *lepue* (sovereignty) on behalf of the *gung* (chieftaincy/state). As German and then French administrators tried (rather erratically) to manipulate chieftaincies to serve colonial needs, these political ideas adapted. As the French perverted chiefs' power by recognizing only the visible forms of power, notables turned to sacred sites, spiritual knowledge and other invisible forms of power to defend *gung*. As Grassfielders migrated south toward the economic hub of the Mungo Valley in the twentieth century, these politics traveled with them and took on new forms. Many emigrants found modest success

in new economic roles, but were not allowed to colonize the valley in ways they might have done without colonial oversight. Instead of cutting ties with home, however, they invested in and reinvented them, becoming “titled emigrants” (p. 91) in Grassfields politics, and adopting the colonial ethnic category Bamileke to name this wider community.

Part II traces the rise of UPC nationalism in the Mungo Valley where locals, Bamileke sojourners, European planters, and the colonial administration, all competing for land and labour, generated the grievances which drove nationalist discontent and the organizations which structured it. UPC organizers, informed by French Communists (among others) articulated programmes for addressing economic and political problems, linked to rejection of French plans for imperial association and demands for the unification of British and French Cameroon. Some chiefs back in the Grasslands – born in this colonial generation, supported and informed by titled migrants with interests in the Mungo Valley, and deposed by colonial edict – helped connect these nationalist ideas to their evolving local politics. In time, *gung* came to connote both chieftaincies and the Cameroon nation, and the pursuit of *lepue* entailed both realms.

The ways the UPC sought its goals in a variety of international forums are outlined in Part III. Cameroon’s status as a United Nations mandated territory led them to make their case at the UN. Accra became a link to Pan African, Afro-Asian, and non-aligned networks that were alive with possibilities in these years. The links from the local, through the UPC, to these worlds of anti-colonial and progressive ideas were strong. Ordinary Cameroonians sent thousands of petitions to the UN, invoking principles of national self-determination and drawing on the emergent universal human rights discourse to make their case for *lepue* at the level of both the chieftaincy and the nation. When the UPC was declared illegal in 1956, and an underground guerilla force formed, *maquis* trained abroad according to Maoist principles deployed local spiritual technologies to protect themselves in the Cameroon forests, and to recruit support. Terretta’s last chapter crosses the date of independence through the 1960s to trace how the UPC fight for full independence from France was resisted by the post-colonial Ahidjo regime allied with French interests and using colonial tactics, tracing how this confrontation degraded into a climate of aimless violence. The UPC nationalist dream collapsed as the post-colonial state failed to build a new order.

The book is not without its flaws, however. The webs running between the three realms are complicated and dynamic, and resist easy description. Nonetheless, detail sometimes obscures argument, and confusions slip in. We are told, for example, that European land holdings in the Mungo valley “peaked” both in 1936 (p. 63) and around 1945 (p. 74). Both Bamileke and French actors are sometimes referred to as “chiefs” (p. 86). Some elements of the argument are made too briefly to be clear. The two maps provided are inadequate for locating spatial relations important to the argument in Part I.

But these blemishes are minor when weighed against the compelling force of Terretta’s approach. Historians are now beginning to see the need to understand how African as well as European ideas were at play in nationalist thought. This

account pushes further, rendering the former powerful, resilient, and adaptable. They are not a residue which provide activists with unchanging values, but tools and concepts which adjust to both the radical changes wrought by colonial rule, and to the very different contexts of the Grassfields, Douala, and cosmopolitan Accra. Bamileke political ideas did not get displaced by nationalism; rather they informed it, while themselves being informed by the wider world. Tracing these linkage is one of Terretta's most powerful contributions. This study provides an insight into how and where we might trace the history of modern African political thought, as it developed through the era of decolonization and since. The UPC's progressive vision was not, as the French colonial rulers liked to think at the time, facily borrowed from afar, but developed both by well-known party leaders and "previously unknown actors – traditional chiefs, local politicians, ordinary farmers and workers, and women" (p. 3). Its global reputation needs to be linked to its local inspiration; the story has to be lifted from the axis between colony and metropole that has too long restrained it. Scholars seeking to understand the character of African nationalism have in this book a wealth of ideas about how better to capture its substance, complexity, and vitality.

Philip Zachernuk
Dalhousie University