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Over the past years, many African nations have commemorated forty and fifty year independence anniversaries from European colonialism. Recently, scholars have devoted attention to the contexts and legacies of African liberation struggles that were hallmarks of the era famous for ubiquitous Afro-optimism and pan-Africanism. In this book, Meredith Terretta offers a critical analysis of “the history of the practice and discourse of Cameroonian nationalism, spearheaded by the Union des populations du Cameroun (UPC), as it unfolded in intersecting local, territorial, and global political arenas in the 1950s and 1960s ” (2). By examining the various local and international contexts that informed the UPC’s efforts to oust France from Cameroon, Terretta convincingly argues that the UPC demonstrated broad organizational pragmatism in pursuit of legitimacy. In this extensive analysis of French Cameroonian nationalism, Terretta also cites how the UPC made use of “two political concepts indigenous to the Grassfields region – *lepue* and *gung* - as the terms used to translate ‘independence’ and ‘nation’,” (13) respectively, in order to situate the liberation struggle in a culturally-relevant, discursive framework of “global” politics (4).

One of the strengths of this book is Terretta’s detailed ethnographic analysis of the formation of Bamileke identities over time. Critical to this endeavor, Terretta highlights how the meanings of *lepue* and *gung* were interpreted and reformulated by UPC supporters to gain support from Cameroonians throughout the liberation struggle. From the mid to late 1950s, the UPC sought to develop grassroots support at the local level. Bamileke identity was not only shaped by existing ethnic and kinship affiliations in central Cameroon, it was also influenced by the cosmopolitan and burgeoning nationalism of young Cameroonian women and men who, in the early 1950s, migrated to the Bamileke and Mungo regions looking for work. Critical to understanding the politicization of these youth, Terretta contends that the meanings of both *lepue* and *gung* were frequently interpreted, appropriated, and altered by UPC cadres to legitimize the liberation movement’s existence in the eyes of both local Cameroonians and international agencies. In addition to its local organizing efforts, the UPC also drew the attention of the international community at the United Nations by submitting thousands of Cameroonian signatures on petitions in support of liberation.

Although the UPC’s local and international efforts were critical strategies meant to augment and legitimate the UPC as a liberation movement, Terretta also

explores the divisions that shaped these strategies. She concludes that, although the UPC sought to fashion itself as a unified front, the organization was also affected by generational divides and gendered expectations. With the enactment of the French *loi-cadre*, colonial officials sought to empower loyalist chiefs and youth who would support France's intention to remain a colonial presence in Cameroon. The power struggle between the UPC and French colonial policies often resulted in protests and violent clashes among Cameroonians within the Mungo and Bamileke regions. With different Cameroonian actors jockeying for either full or mediated independence from France, new opportunities emerged for young men and women to challenge existing cultural and social norms. Many youth joined the UPC against their elders' wishes and became part of the nationalist cause. Pro-UPC Cameroonians also pursued nationalist strategies that highlighted customary practices of local political succession, especially when they advocated for the ascendancy of pro-independence "chiefs" like Fo Pierre Kamdem Ninyim. Since Fo Ninyem was sympathetic to the UPC cause, he was subsequently detained by French officials since his status as a "chief" was supported by many in the UPC. In this example of Fo Ninyim, Terretta demonstrates how colonial authorities actively infringed upon local cultural practices in order to thwart nationalists' ambitious.

Terretta also explores the international strategies of UPC members. Similar to other nationalist movements in Africa and elsewhere, the UPC "fashioned their independence-era political repertoire out of a combination of public discourse, print culture, symbols, political cartoons, clothing, religiosity, and the political symbolism of the UN in an international arena" (116). Critical to the UPC's quest for legitimacy, both in French Cameroon and abroad, was the liberation movement's petitioning efforts among a broad spectrum of Cameroonians. As Terretta shows, the signatures of Cameroonians were sent to the UN to pressure the French to leave the "Trust Territory." Given the sheer volume of petitions sent to the UN Trusteeship Council between 1946 and 1960, however, a fundamental weakness is the author's inability to analyze the rich primary sources now available. It would have been interesting to learn about the processes, methods, and challenges that must have faced UPC members while collecting, or soliciting, signatures. For example, were petition signatures peacefully solicited or coercively obtained, were they independently verified in anyway and, if so, what evidence did the UPC (or UN) use to validate the authenticity of the petitions? Moreover, in the years leading up to independence, the UPC sent roughly "fifty thousand petitions to the Trusteeship Council" advocating for independence from France, but in what concrete ways did these petitions play a role in generating legitimacy for the UPC at the local and international levels (113)? These minor

quibbles aside, Terretta highlights how the petitions themselves connected UPC organizers to the local Cameroonian population and helped to galvanize support for liberation. The UPC's petitioning efforts brought peoples' grievances about French colonialism in Cameroon to the attention of the international community.

Despite both the UPC's grassroots and international success in challenging lingering French colonialism in Cameroon, Terretta also underscores the fact that French officials and their Cameroonian sympathizers infiltrated UPC networks, exploited cultural practices, and made use of African loyalists in order to thwart the liberation movement. After banning the UPC and propping up the regime of Ahmadou Ahidjo, violence engulfed French Cameroon. Terretta contends "that Bamileke chiefs, guided by their own political concerns, those of their chieftaincies, and those of their emigrant populations, understood what was at stake as they chose to side with one trend or another in the territorial political arena of 1956" (173). Thus, Terretta reveals the complex intersections between Cameroonian nationalism and French colonial machinations as various actors sought opportunities for political and economic power in the waning days of French colonialism in Cameroon.

Given the variety of rich primary sources and level of analysis in this book, Terretta makes a significant contribution to the liberation history of Cameroon and, more broadly, to analyses of African liberation history. By emphasizing how "global" issues, contexts, and cultural practices overlapped to inform the legitimacy and strategies of the UPC, Terretta's book offers scholars interested in nationalist struggles a thorough example of the complexities of African liberation.

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