

BOOK REVIEW

Niels Kastfelt. *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in Middle Belt Christianity*.

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In *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in Middle Belt Christianity*, Niels Kastfelt engages the religious and identity history of the people of Adamawa state, focusing on the emergence of Christianity in the Adamawa region, along with its evolution and interactions between colonialists, missionaries, indigenous Muslims, national politics, and the indigenous cultures of the people that were unfamiliar to the missionaries (11). Kastfelt situates the religious history of the Adamawa people in the Middle Belt, as this is where most of them continue to see themselves (11). The Middle Belt culture, people, and history are very peculiar, compared to Hausa Fulani in the North, Yoruba in the Southwest, Igbo in the Southeast, and other ethnic groups in the South-South. The Middle Belt people are often confused with the Hausa Fulani ethnic group in the North for two reasons (75). First, except for the upper Middle Belt, many ethnic groups of the Bauchi Plateau, Southern Kaduna, Niger Nasarawa, and Abuja speak Hausa today. In fact, in the post-missionary period, there were more Hausa-speaking churches in those areas than other ethnic language churches. Second, because of Nigeria's political boundary division following independence, the Middle Belt was forcefully merged with the North with regard to geographical location, against the people's wishes.

The merging of territories following independence has put Nigeria in a state of limbo regarding ethnic, cultural, religious, and political identities, as non-Hausa Fulani continue to disassociate themselves from the North, which they consider to be a Muslim-dominated region. From the very beginning of this book, Kastfelt describes the Adamawa people and ethnic groups before the region became divided, with Taraba and some parts of Gombe in what used to be known as the former Gongola. "In 1991 Gongola State was divided into Adamawa State and Taraba State" (11). Kastfelt notes that in the early 1800s, the Adamawa region of the Middle Belt was dominated by non-Hausa Fulani ethnic groups and a few nomadic Fulani people. At the start of Shehu Usman Dan Fodio's jihad, the Fulani warriors, a different group of Fulani, raided many parts of Adamawa, forced people to convert to Islam, and established an Islamic Caliphate (12–13). With the annexation of northern

Nigeria by the colonialists, these Fulani warriors upheld the rule and political structures of the Hausa Fulani Muslims, as they did in many other parts of Nigeria. This created much dissatisfaction among the non-Hausa Fulani ethnic groups because they saw the British favoring their opponent, the Fulani Caliphate, which was used by the British to rule non-Muslim ethnic groups indirectly.

Interestingly, Kastfelt periodizes his discourse into two eras, pre-World War II and post-World War II, because he believes the Second World War had a major impact on the religious history of the Adamawa people (31–32). This is a rare occasion in which a historian uses world history to date events in West Africa. Throughout his book, Kastfelt shows that the World War II era affected the progress of Danish missionaries in Adamawa, while the same conflict aided the Nigerian peoples' fight for their independence.

Kastfelt argues that Danish missionaries were the first missionary group to arrive in Adamawa in 1926 (18). The Danish Sudan United Missionaries worked among the Adamawa people and converted the non-Hausa Fulani ethnic groups to the Lutheran church, a branch of Protestant Christianity. Today this church represents the dominant Protestant Christian group in Adamawa, known as the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (23).

Kastfelt significantly contributes to knowledge in general in his discussion of missionary activities in Adamawa and the involvement of the indigenous people in missions during World War II. The missionaries trained the first generation of Christian political elites and indigenous leaders who took over the church's leadership in the 1940s (42). Kastfelt notes, "the move towards Nigerian church self-rule was further facilitated by the strained economic situation during the war" (32). According to Kastfelt, upon the occupation of Denmark by the Germans in 1940, financial support for the Danish missionaries ceased. The missionaries had no way of funding their activities except to depend on the local Nigerian Christians (30–31). Nigerian Christians and the newly converted Adamawa Christians now became the supporters and sponsors of the missionaries. This is an entirely hidden piece of knowledge that scholars rarely discuss. With the newly propounded missions theory of "reversed missions," Kastfelt's book adds to the academic discourse about reversed missions, reversed missionary sponsorship, and co-missions in Africa. Adamawa people at that time became both the recipients and the originators of missions.

Because of the diversity of the Middle Belt of Nigeria and the post-colonial situation in Northern Nigeria, very few people know that the Adamawa non-Muslim groups consider themselves to be Middle Belt people. They see themselves as part of the Middle Belt because of their shared identity, cultural diversity, and their long rivalry with Hausa Fulani since the Usman Dan Fodio jihad, just like the other non-Muslim ethnic groups of the Belt. This book stands out in the study of Nigeria's religious history because Kastfelt has clearly defined, described, and situated Adamawa non-Muslim groups within the Middle Belt. Information from this book can be used to understand the contribution of indigenous people to global missions.

Kastfelt discusses the financial involvement of indigenous people during the Second World War, when Danish missionaries ceased getting support from Denmark. His discussion of early indigenous evangelists and leaders of the LCC church is also brilliant.

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