



Régions montagneuses de l'Ouest du Cameroun

## PREFACE

In 1979 (No 25), the Editors of *Paideuma* were kind enough to offer hospitality to seven papers, prefaced by a note from Christraud Geary, discussed at a colloquium in August 1978 at Cuisles, France. This colloquium itself can be regarded as a consequence of the initiative of Claude Tardits who, in 1973, had organized in Paris a conference, financed by the C.N.R.S. on the contribution of ethnology to the history of the civilisations of Cameroon. This occasion brought together some of the persons who had, in the course of the previous two decades, worked in the Grassfields of Cameroon. A series of happy circumstances and contacts ensued, across three continents; by 1975 Jean-Pierre Warnier's initiative had created an informal working group, some of whose members were able to meet in 1978. Since then there have been informal meetings at the University of Yaounde, followed, in July 1982 by another at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, this time on a single topic suggested by Claude Tardits, that of Grassfields Palaces and Royal Residences.

Most of the papers presented, some inevitably *in absentia*, are published here while others received their first airing, in rough drafts. I should mention some not to be found here, among them a contribution by Viviana Baeke, Université Libre de Bruxelles, on Mfumte, an ethnographically rather blank area hitherto (monograph forthcoming); a brief note by V.G. Fanso (Dept. of History, Yaounde) on the Bambui palace (to be published locally); and a contribution by Peter Valentin (Basel) on *cire-perdue* work in the Mont Febe Museum, part of his work in progress.

I should record two contributions by Christraud Geary (Boston University), the one a preview of material since presented at length, in *Things of the Palace* (1982) in the series *Studien zur Kulturkunde*, the other an informal presentation of her research in the photographic archives and collections of Europe and America. The colloquium had the benefit of the presence of Edwin Ardener (St. John's College, Oxford), Shirley Ardener (Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford), Bryan Cranstone (Curator, Pitt Rivers Museum), Fiona Bowie (Wolfson College, Oxford, who had recently returned from the western Bangwa-Chang area), Ian Fowler (U.C.L.) and of Michael Ndobegang (Boston University).

Michael Rowlands was invited to discuss the material symbolism of Grassfields Palaces and his note, little altered, concludes this symposium, and helps to set the sights for further research in the Grassfields. At the time of writing seven of the authors are teaching or doing field research in Cameroon; a team, afforded by the archaeologist Raymond Asombang, is examining the metallurgical complex centred on We; and there seems every likelihood that the Bali-Chamba, whose history runs like a red thread through that of many parts of the Grassfields, will be comprehensively studied from the north and south.

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