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- 1 Africa has never been a passive receptacle for religious ideas formulated abroad, in Europe or the Middle East, but in recent decades it has emerged all the more clearly as a vibrant source of religious creativity. Indeed, as some of the contributions to this volume point out, afrocentric cults in the United States may come as pilgrims to a shrine in Ghana (Duchesne and Guedj), while Nigerian churches formulate projects for the re-christianization, not only of Africa but even of Europe and North America.
- 2 This is an excellent collection of carefully researched and documented case studies which explore some of the dimensions of this creativity. They are the result of a project formulated by the Institut français de recherche en Afrique in Ibadan, and so it is no surprise that half of the case studies are in some manner concerned with Nigeria, though they also reflect the demographic, political, and economic dominance of Nigeria within the region as a whole. There is a similar predominance of studies of Pentecostalism, a testimony to the spectacularly rapid expansion of this particular form of christianity in the past two decades.
- 3 The book's title qualifies these new religious enterprises as "transnational"—a term which, like so many others in the social sciences, has tended to lose any precise referent as it gains currency. The kinds of "transnational" networks described in the various contributions are of very different, in some cases incommensurable, orders. In some cases, they involve migrants who retain their religious affiliations as they cross international borders: Senegalese Mourides in Niger, in transit towards Europe (Bava) or Mossi adherents to the Assembly of God in Ghana (Laurent). In other instances, they are characterized by the creation of religious NGOs, not only by evangelicals

(Strandsbjerg) but even by practitioners of *vodun* (Tall) with the intention of establishing formal institutional linkages (and obtaining capital, symbolic and otherwise) abroad. Pentecostal churches in particular are actively involved in attempts to establish branches in other african countries, if not even further abroad (Fancello, Mary, Ojo, Noret, Adeboye, Moyet), or to disseminate their message through the mass media – books, films, television (Ukah, Moyet).

- 4 Paradoxically, the cumulative impression one gathers from the case studies as a whole is that the success of these new churches or organizations to transcend national boundaries has met with moderate success at best. New reform-minded muslim organizations in Senegal (Gomez-Perez), Côte-d'Ivoire, Togo, and Benin (Miran) have actually been far more anchored to their respective national homes than their predecessors, the Sufi brotherhoods. The success of some northern nigerian organizations in Niger (Loimeier, Hassane) is the exception which proves the rule, both given the dependence of Niger on its looming neighbor to the south and the fact that, along the frontier, both countries share a close cultural Hausaphone bond. While it is beyond the scope of a collection such as this to theorize the differences between muslim and christian (especially Pentecostal) religious “enterprises”, one theme which emerges clearly from the christian cases is the distinctly entrepreneurial style which characterizes them, a function of a saturated religious market where churches are competing against one another for a share of the market. Religious competition takes a substantially different form in islam, in terms of leadership over the community as a whole. Language barriers to transnational enterprises emerge as another theme of numerous studies, specifically those which discuss the attempts of nigerian and ghanaian churches to establish roots among their francophone neighbors. Indeed, a theme that consistently emerges in chapter after chapter is the extent to which transnational followers or international (why “transnational”?) networks of connections serve to bolster the position of churches, leaders, and institutions in their home countries, that global means are more often than not subservient to local ends. Perhaps the most flagrant instance is the relationship between afrocentric american devotees and the ghanaian proprietors of the Akonedi shrine near Accra, the very strength of whose connection arguably rests on mutually convenient misunderstandings and appropriations.
- 5 Although the contributions overall are of a consistently high quality, the collection as a whole tends to focus on leaders and on organizations rather than on followers or potential converts. Admittedly, the founders of pentecostal church, and often their successors, are of necessity both literally and figuratively charismatic, and may well exercise a different kind of fascination over academics as they do over their flock. Yet their very biographies reveal trajectories whereby they experimented with and ultimately rejected a variety of religious affiliations, a pattern which no doubt characterizes followers as well as leaders. In the spiritual market, there must be buyers as well as sellers, and it is precisely in the interaction between leaders and the mass of believers that the key to the rapidly changing religious landscape of West Africa is to be found, and not least of all the reasons behind the failures as well as the successes of the attempts of religious enterprises to transcend barriers of language, ethnicity, and nation.