

SPEARS BOOKS

**FALL 2024
SPRING 2025**

10



**TURNING PAGES,
TEN YEARS ON**

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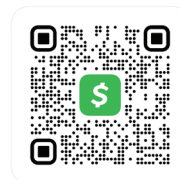
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TURNING PAGES, TEN YEARS ON!

Together, we are not just a publishing platform; we are a community of thinkers, creators, and dreamers, united by a shared passion for storytelling.

A lofty idea that had been steaming in the proverbial experimental room and gestation for years finally burst into the African publishing landscape in June 2014. Its vision – to decolonise and demystify publishing, as it were – as a **Platform for Alternative Voices**. It would serve as a veritable platform in the sense of being inclusive in as many ways as possible, aiming its scope from Dakar to Mombasa, Cairo to Cape Town, San Francisco to London and from Toronto to Rio de Janeiro. The idea was to offer African authors, individuals of African descent in the Diaspora and friends of Africa to tell their stories on their own terms – beyond the restrictive canons of Western orthodoxy. We also aimed to make the platform boom with “Alternative Voices” and norms – not only in terms of who we would publish but also in how the publishing process would work. Ten years on, this vision overflows with evidence of its accomplishments and is spurred on by the unquenchable thirst of the growing



community we have built. To commemorate this milestone, it is befitting to pause and reflect on the journey thus far, our impact, challenges and how we envision the unravelling of the next decade and beyond.

The Journey So Far: Milestones and Memories

Everyone who has been part of our journey since 2014 can best describe how they became part of the Spears family. Indeed, a few of our editorial advisory board members have reflected on their memories of first learning about Spears Media and under what circumstances they decided to get on board with its

vision. Suffice it to state that the first order of business was putting together an editorial board, followed by a production team. As founders, Lilian and I were determined to invite individuals who would embody and add value to the founding vision. Since 2014, we have been honoured to welcome twelve advisory board members from diverse academic backgrounds, interests and experiences. The first batch of members joined the board in 2014: Victor Gomia (Delaware State University), Kehbuma Langmia (Howard University), Primus Tazanu and Walter Nkwi (University of Buea). In 2016, we welcomed the second batch, which included Lilian Atanga (University of Bamenda) and Euclides Gonçalves (Director at Kaleidoscopio, Maputo, Mozambique). Joyce Ashuntantang (University of Hartford, Connecticut) got on board in 2021. Bridget Teboh (University of Massachusetts Dartmouth) and Eunice Ngongkum (University of Yaounde I) constituted the batch of 2022. In 2024, we welcomed Gil Ndi-Shang (University of Bayreuth) and Elizabeth Bifuh-Ambe (University of Massachusetts Lowell). Also, in 2022, Womai Song (Earlham College, Indiana) graciously accepted

Jude Fokwang
Executive Publisher

to serve as the pioneer series editor of the *Spears Studies in African and African Diaspora History*. Our advisory board members provide diverse disciplinary perspectives and strengths: communication, English, sociology, anthropology, history, linguistics, English, literature, education and gender studies. They have enriched the founding vision and continue to serve as vibrant ambassadors of our mission to decolonise African publishing. We celebrate their vitality, insights, and commitment to this cause, which is now collectively ours to nurture and grow.

The production team is indispensable in actualising the vision into real books that end up in readers' hands. Spread across several countries, our production team has been instrumental in ensuring that our titles are not only of premium aesthetic quality but also that they meet international book publishing standards and conventions. Ten years on, we celebrate Divine Fuh (University of Cape Town, Editor-at-Large), Emmanuel Ngang (Acquisition Editor, Social Sciences), Mokom Muluh (Copy editor, Canada), Francis Fokwang (Production Manager, USA), Lydia Kabinsen (Editorial Manager, Cameroon), and Lilian Ndangam (Managing Editor) for the diligence and enthusiasm with which they embrace each title from copy editing to printing and distribution. Each one of you has made our journey thus far possible.

A milestone of this calibre requires that we celebrate our authors and readers, who are essential to any successful publishing venture. Our mission statement details that we seek to "... foster a universal passion for reading by partnering with authors to help create great stories and share ideas that inform, entertain, and inspire, and to link them with readers in all corners of the globe." To this end, "We



Co-founders of Spears Media Press, Jude Fokwang & Lilian Ndangam

are particularly proud of our growing number of first-time authors in all genres of literature and scholarship. We have published award-winning authors in the humanities and social sciences and continue to attract scholars and writers of all stripes. Our platform also provides space for junior writers to mingle and learn from more accomplished and senior authors, who are often delighted to share their knowledge and expertise with junior writers. This empowering space furthers our vision of what it means to decolonise publishing."

Over the years, we have established and continue to build new partnerships with key actors in the African publishing landscape. First, we sought and gained membership with the African Books Collective (ABC) in September 2014. They have distributed our titles globally since then. "The African Books Collective is an African-owned, worldwide marketing and distribution outlet for books from Africa, including scholarly, literature, and children's books." Our partnership with the African Books Collective has also ensured that all our titles are

distributed globally in paperback and eBook formats. Thanks to them, our titles are available through ProQuest, Project Muse, and many other platforms, and it is always a delight to visit their stand at the African Studies Association annual conferences.

Some anecdotes about key milestones over the last decade are worth sharing. The first was the collaborative journey that started in early 2018 when I received a phone call from Prof Joyce Ashuntantang about her then-completed poetry manuscript, *Beautiful Fire*. While I was familiar with her name and scholarship, our paths had not crossed until that phone call. The publication of her poetry volume later that spring set us on a path that would culminate in that title winning the prestigious African Literature Association (USA) Book of the Year Award – Creative Writing (2020). We have vivid memories of putting together the package and mailing off copies of the book in October 2019 to the review committee per the instructions on the ALA website. When the news broke in January 2021 that the book had won the prestigious award, we were overwhelmed with joy



Celebrating Prof Joyce Ashuntantang’s ALA Book Award for her poetry volume, *Beautiful Fire* on Zoom, April 10, 2021



Mrs Mary Fosi Mbantenkhu fulfilled her dream of becoming an author with the publication of her creative non-fiction, *Sibi’s Adventures*

and a sense of fulfilment. We immediately began making plans to celebrate the award. As my Nigerian friends would say, we must “wash it.” Thus, on April 10, 2021, we held our second virtual (Zoom) event to celebrate Prof Ashuntantang’s ALA Award, bringing together participants from Europe, Africa and the Americas. Thanks to the visibility of Prof Ashuntantang’s works, we began to welcome authors outside of our initial Cameroonian network. The publication of *Bearing Witness* in 2020 (co-edited with Dibussi Tande) earned us a referral – Prof Tanure Ojaide (University of North Carolina at Charlotte, USA), who has gone on to publish two poetry volumes with our imprint. Prof Ojaide, in turn, referred our imprint to his colleague Razinat Mohammed (University of Abuja), whose fascinating novel, *Habiba*, we re-published in 2023.

Until *The Radio and Other Stories* (2021) came along, our bestselling title had been *Beautiful Fire*. Gil Ndi-Shang, a talented protégé of founding editorial advisory board member, Victor Gomia, turned *The Radio*, a creative non-fiction, got readers “tuning in” from all corners of the globe during the

first few months of its release, including in Ndi-Shang’s hometown of Luh in the far reaches of the northern parts of the North West Region of Cameroon. Since the book’s publication, Ndi-Shang has given invited talks at Bayreuth University, the University of Cape Town and most recently, Regis University. The book’s success was partly due to Ndi-Shang’s openness to embrace the role of a “street team” and social media in propagating news about the book’s content.



Gil Ndi-Shang effectively made *The Radio* a Facebook phenomenon

Lastly, we must highlight our most successful children’s book, *Sibi’s Adventures in Alahtene*, by Mrs Mary Fosi Mbantenkhu. Ma Mary, as I fondly refer to her, retired from the Cameroon civil service and had always dreamed of writing a book. As a first-time author, she had scribbled a collection of short stories that would fall within the category of creative non-fiction. Based out of Houston, Texas, where she lived with her daughter and grandchildren, we held a series of meetings to discuss the steps and what it would take for her to see her book published. Enthusiastic and determined, we worked meticulously with her to see *Sibi’s Adventures* published in the summer of 2022. Set in the early 1960s, *Sibi’s Adventures in Alahtene* bubbles with dozens of breathtaking stories about the intrigues of adult life and childhood in a rural community rapidly integrating into a newly formed African country. Ma Mary’s *Sibi’s Adventures* has done for the generations that grew up in the

1950s and 60s what Gil Ndi-Shang's *The Radio* did for those who came of age in the 90s.

Impact on Literature and Culture

Spears Books (the imprint of Spears Media Press since 2020) has become synonymous with excellence in African publishing. Our portfolio includes award-winning and first-time authors like Ma Mary, whose dream of publishing a worthy book was realised through our imprint. We feel fulfilled that our platform has indeed provided room for "**Alternative Voices**" in the varied stories and voices that have been amplified, most of which would have otherwise remained marginal or muted. Our literature portfolio includes fiction, creative non-fiction, drama, poetry and literary criticism. In the social sciences, we have covered books on gender studies, politics, history and ethnography. We also have a growing list of titles in education and African languages. Our most recent publications are biographical, a domain we hope to expand and prioritise.

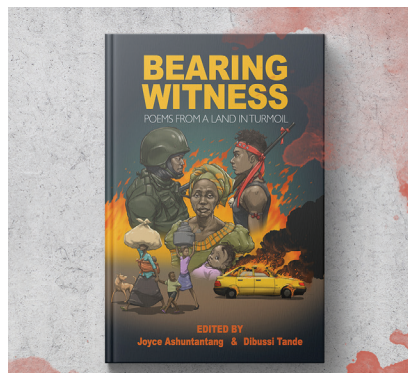
A few of our titles have been adopted as required or recommended texts in university courses in South Africa, Cameroon and the United States. We hope to gather reader testimonials to gauge the impact of our titles in amplifying underrepresented voices or shaping public discourse, especially in the North American market, where African books and voices have long been marginalised.

Challenges and Triumphs in Publishing

Since 2020, we have held virtual launches for our new titles, organised two successful Spears Poetry Festivals, held an open house in November 2023 to mark the International Day of the African Writer, and held countless one-on-one sessions with prospective

authors. We see our authors as stakeholders in the enterprise of storytelling, and sufficient energy is devoted to explaining our values, vision, and operations. Walking with each author, from submitting their manuscript to holding a published version of their book in their hands, has continued to inspire us despite the tremendous challenges we face.

Another highlight for us has been the opportunity to collaborate with different talents in the creative process of book publishing. We wish to spotlight award-winning artist, Toh Bright, who has designed numerous artworks for some of our book covers. Operating out of Yaounde, Cameroon, Toh Bright's front covers now enjoy global visibility from our online bookstore and all other reputable online bookstores worldwide.



Collaborating with Toh Bright, an award-winning Cameroonian artist has been a marvellous experience for many of our authors.

Harnessing digital media to ensure premium production and distribution has been a significant triumph for our platform. We had the good fortune to establish our imprint when print-on-demand technology was firmly recognised as an alternative to long-standing traditional printing platforms. Our mastery of industry-standard software for book design, such as Adobe InDesign, InCopy and Illustrator – to

name just a few, ensures that upon publication, our titles can easily compete with any of the giants in the industry. Our production and marketing team has also grown our social media footprint, and today, we have a presence on all the major social media platforms, including Threads and Blue Sky, which have risen as credible alternatives to X. Our YouTube channel also ensures that all our public events have a digital footprint and home where individuals who could not participate in real-time could watch or re-watch these events.

Like many other publishers on the continent, especially those represented by the ABC, our biggest challenge is distribution. ABC needs the infrastructure to print and distribute our titles in Africa. In the meantime, orders intended for the African market must be fulfilled from the UK, where the organisation is headquartered, a costly venture that is either shouldered by the author or sometimes by the press on behalf of the author. We have recently learnt with excitement that Lightning Source (the distributor employed by ABC) will soon be printing titles or fulfilling orders from South Africa.

A significant challenge is growing our readership in an age where books compete for attention with TikTok, Netflix, Instagram and Facebook. Many have decried the diminishing number of readers and, more pointedly, the fact that the culture of reading was marginal to most Africans prior to the digital age—that is, reading for leisure rather than to pass examinations. A counter to this claim has been made that many Africans read for leisure when books are affordable and available. The dearth of public libraries across the continent is a good reminder that, in numerical terms, reading for leisure is the preserve of a minuscule class in Africa. Even digital platforms

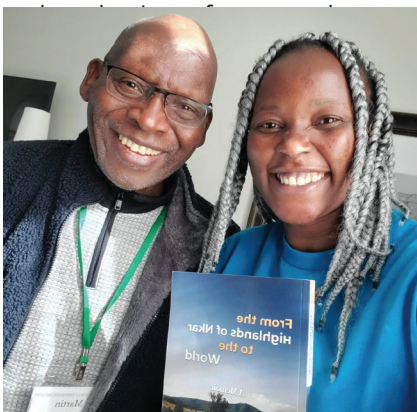
like Youscribe still have limited reach on the continent.

The Power of Community

A couple of months ago, Prof Joyce Ashuntantang asked if I knew a Catholic journalist who could attend a conference at the University of Notre Dame. I told her our fellow author, Mr Martin Jumbam, was an erudite Catholic journalist and would make a good fit. Thus, it was that Mr. Jumbam found himself attending a prestigious conference at the University of Notre Dame in October 2024, where another fellow Spears author is pursuing a postdoctoral fellowship. I enthusiastically recommended that Mr Jumbam reach out to Dr Kefen Budji, which he did. As expected, the conference venue allowed both our authors to meet. Prior to Jumbam and Budji meeting in person, both knew each other, at least virtually, thanks to a WhatsApp group that has brought all Spears authors together since September 2020. Bringing all our published authors under the same roof was intended to build community and provide networking opportunities beyond what Spears could offer. The above anecdote is just one powerful illustration of how this vision has come to fruition.

In November 2023, we followed up by creating a Spears Books Club (WhatsApp forum), a platform that brings together our published authors and readers under the same roof. Still in its infancy, we are equally excited by the opportunities this platform will provide for the cross-fertilisation of ideas and projects. The fact that readers can directly reach their favourite authors adds to our efforts in demystifying publishing.

We aim to continue building community beyond digital platforms through in-person participation at festivals, community outreach initiatives



Spears authors, Martin Jumbam & Kefen Budji meet at a conference at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA



Spears authors, Profs Joyce Ash & John Fobanjong autograph copies of their books for Prof Benn Bongang at the African Studies Association Conference, Boston, MA, Nov 2019

format, which we have been unable to provide due to limited resources. Producing audiobooks will open new vistas for us and enable collaboration with new voice talents, editors and distributors.

We recently partnered with Nuria Books in Nairobi to distribute our titles in Kenya. Nuria will distribute digital and physical books from its base in downtown Nairobi. We hope our negotiation with several bookshops in Cameroon will bear fruit in 2025, opening a new chapter in distributing

our titles. We remain open to other distribution outlets across Africa and will actively work with credible partners to bring our titles to African readers in physical and digital formats.

In Gratitude

On behalf of the Press, I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has been an integral part of our journey. Your contributions, support, and trust have been instrumental in shaping our publishing platform into a space that celebrates creativity, diversity, and the transformative power of words.

To our readers, we thank you for exploring the stories we share and for believing in the voices and ideas that emerge from our platform. Your enthusiasm fuels our commitment to delivering meaningful and impactful work. We welcome your feedback and commit to devoting resources to meet the needs of the 21st-century African reader.

To our authors, your creativity and dedication inspire us every day. Thank you for trusting Spears Books with your stories and enriching African storytelling with your unique perspectives. We look forward to our continued partnership in the years to come.

To our editorial advisory members, series readers, and peer reviewers, your meticulous efforts and unwavering commitment to excellence ensure that every piece we publish resonates with authenticity and quality. Your expertise remains the backbone of our success.

Together, we are not just a publishing platform; we are a community of thinkers, creators, and dreamers united by a shared passion for storytelling. Thank you for being part of our mission. We look forward to continuing this journey with you, building bridges across cultures, ideas and continents.

EDITING AT SPEARS

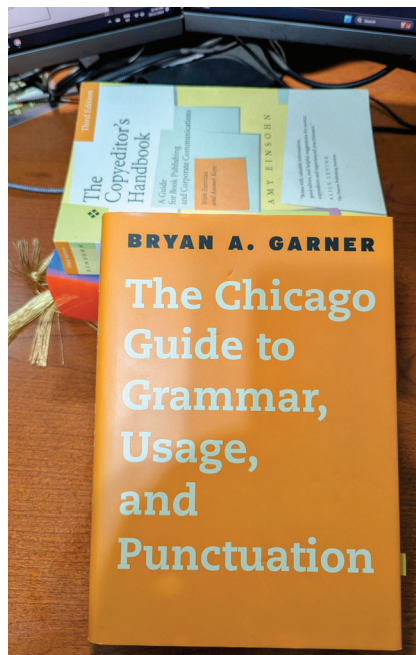
Lilian Ndangam Fokwang
Managing Editor



Reflecting on Spears@10 fills me with pride and a deep appreciation for the journey so far and the profound purpose we serve in amplifying diverse African voices. Over the past ten years, my role has evolved far beyond editing manuscripts; it has been about nurturing writers to share their narrative. The work has been as challenging as it has been rewarding, and it has transformed my understanding of storytelling, diversity, and the power of independent publishing.

The Craft of Editing

At its core, editing is a delicate balance of preserving an author's voice while ensuring clarity, coherence, and overall readability. Every manuscript I've worked on has required a unique approach, an understanding of the writer's vision, and a keen eye for the nuances that bring their story to life. Editing has taught me to listen closely—to the words, to the rhythm, and, most importantly, to the voice behind them. There's an artistry in editing that goes beyond grammatical



One of the many resources our editors employ at Spears Media to ensure our published titles meet international standards

precision; it's about sculpting language to make a story resonate more powerfully without overshadowing the author's authentic style. I have come to appreciate the various types of

editing—substantive, copyediting, and proofreading—as separate, yet interconnected stages. Substantive editing has been especially important when working with narratives from diverse cultural backgrounds. It requires delving deep into the structure, themes, and characters to ensure that every layer adds depth to the story without compromising its authenticity. Copyediting, on the other hand, is more meticulous, focused on refining grammar, syntax, and style while ensuring the manuscript adheres to our house guidelines. Proofreading, the final stage, is where we meticulously ensure that every detail is polished, preparing the work for its best possible presentation.

Each manuscript represents a collaboration—a dialogue between the writer's vision and the editor's expertise. Our editing process is intentionally thorough and collaborative, ensuring that every writer feels supported and valued. Together, we explore the layers of their work, discuss possible improvements, and bring each story to its fullest potential. Even when a manuscript is not accepted, we strive

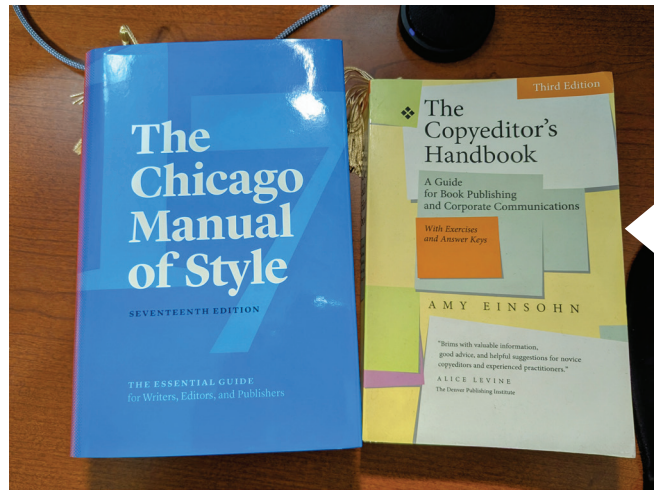


to offer constructive feedback to support the author on their writing journey.

House Style

Like all publishing houses, Spears has a house style that ensures that our publications meet professional and industry standards. One of the more persistent challenges in my role has been working with manuscripts that don't align with our house style. This is a pain point we emphasize to prospective authors. Adhering to the Spears house style when preparing a manuscript significantly streamlines the editing process and reduces the time needed for structural edits. While we deeply value authenticity and strive to honor each author's unique voice, we also have a responsibility to meet professional publishing standards. Prioritizing our house style ensures that the essence of each manuscript is preserved while maintaining the quality and consistency our readers expect.

Reflecting on these ten years, I am reminded of the privilege it is to contribute to Africa's literary heritage in a meaningful way. Editing for Spears is more than a job—it is a mission to amplify, protect, and celebrate the stories that reflect the heartbeat of a continent. It is a journey of constant learning, one that demands sensitivity, creativity, and a commitment to nurturing diverse voices. As I look to



The Chicago Manual of Style is the definitive guide to grammar, usage, and style in the English language. It is an indispensable resource for writers, editors, and students alike. At Spears Media, we swear by it!

the future, I am inspired to continue building this platform and championing the storytellers who share their powerful voices with us, their readers, and the world.

IN COMMUNITY WITH SPEARS AUTHORS & PATRONS



Can Spears Books be Part of the Solution to Ending Book Famine in Parts of Africa & Bridge the Literacy Gap Between Developed and Developing Nations?

By Elizabeth Bifuh-Ambe, PhD
& Terkuma Stanley Asongo
University of Massachusetts Lowell



There is a book famine in Africa. Children and adults in Africa are hungry to read and hungry to learn; yet a severe “book famine” often stands in their way. As Kofi Annan, the former U.N. Secretary-General, stated in his message on International Literacy Day 1997, “Literacy is quite simply the bridge from misery to hope.” Every society that wants to progress relies on literacy. Books undoubtedly contribute positively to children’s cognitive growth, starting from the early years when parents read to them and continuing until they are independent readers. Some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Books for Africa and Aid for Africa are attempting to address the issue of the lack of books in Africa.

Before its closure in 2020, Aid for Africa claimed to have shipped more than 27 million textbooks and library books to about 48 African countries; but of course, not all countries in Africa were recipients of those books. For example, Cameroon never received any books from Aid for Africa. Books for Africa, whose mission is to supply

educational materials to reduce or eliminate education costs and help children who otherwise would not attend school, claims to have delivered more than 60.5 million books to Africa (Books for Africa). Books for Africa commissioned a few studies to demonstrate the positive impact of donated books on students’ academic performance in Central Tanzania. These studies conclude that book donation programs can enhance literacy rates in Africa, given the establishment of appropriate conditions (Plonski 2011). The impact that Books for Africa creates is transformative. For many children in Africa, the gift of books truly is a gift of hope. For very poor SSA countries in particular, books in children’s hands play an important role in improving education quality.

But the question remains: How does one get more books into the hands of those that need them most in Africa?

These writers believe that the solution is two-pronged: provision and production. Some narratives have emphasized book provision or aid, while excluding production; thus, pitting both solutions as competing. We, however,

believe that for emergent economies in SSA, both approaches must be activated to solve the deeply entrenched problem of scarcity of books in many communities. Founded with a mission to foster a universal passion for reading, independent publishers like SPEARS Books can help reduce the book famine in SSA. With its gamut of publications that span African and Africana fiction, children’s literature, poetry, and academic works, that resonate with African readers, Spears Books is uniquely positioned for this task. Its publications are relevant, and the themes examined would be engaging to local African populations, and potentially motivate more people to read. This is particularly important, since culturally relevant content is often lacking in many educational resources that are available to these communities.

Despite the legion of administrative and other bottlenecks that are rampant in these communities, these writers think that through targeted distribution efforts, Spears Books can play an important role in alleviating the book famine. Their experience of working with authors of African origins



and exploration of themes that span the African literary landscape provides them with valuable insights into the specific needs and challenges faced by different regions in the continent. By leveraging these insights, Spears Books can partner with local organizations, schools, distribution centers, and other publishing houses to ensure that their publications reach those who need them most.

The 10th anniversary of Spears Books is a testament to their commitment to promoting literacy and growing a literate population worldwide. While this milestone calls for celebration, it can also be a moment of reflection that provides insights into opportunities for growth. By scaling up their efforts and exploring new partnerships, Spears Books can contribute significantly to addressing the book famine in parts of Africa. Potential

strategies could include increased collaboration with international and local NGOs, innovative distribution models, and fundraising initiatives to support the logistics of getting books into underserved areas.

While the challenges of the book famine and literacy gap are significant, independent publishers like Spears Books offer a promising solution. Through continuous publication of African literature and a strategic approach to production and distribution, they can potentially make meaningful inroads into local communities within the African continent. Spears Books commemoration of its 10th anniversary should be both a celebration, and a commitment to transformational approaches to production and distribution that can make meaningful impacts in improving literacy and educational outcomes across SSA, where these

values are most needed.

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African Books Collective has been a reliable partner, ensuring that our titles are visible at important book events and conferences such as the annual conference of the African Studies Association, USA.



With Nuria Books CEO, Mr. Bulle in downtown Nairobi, June 2024. Nuria distributes select Spears titles for the Kenyan market.

FROM THE DESKS OF WELL-WISHERS

I would like to use this opportunity to commend the team at Spears Media for their unwavering dedication and hard work in serving their community. They truly go above and beyond to illuminate the writing community, always striving to bring out the best in every script that comes into their orbit. Their relentless pursuit of excellence and selfless contributions are a testament to their profound commitment to making a meaningful difference in their community.

Their promotion of African writers and their efforts to seek them out allows us to read stories told by those attuned to our sensibilities, making their productions all the more relatable to the local reader and providing deep insights for those exploring other cultures.

Thank you, Spears Media, for providing us with a platform to tell our stories, as well as the opportunity to learn more about our society and culture.



Marcel Galega

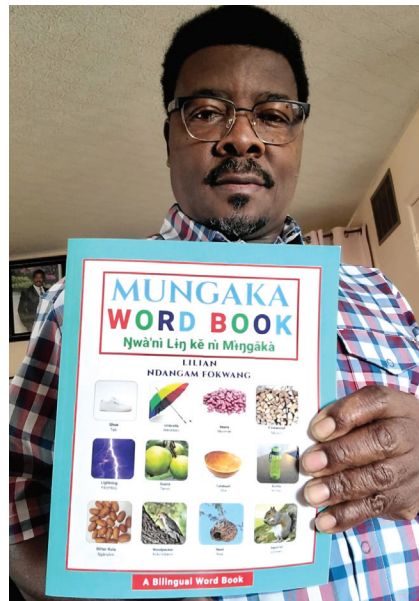


Marcel Galega has supported the Spears team from day one and remains a dedicated patron and avid reader of our titles

My hearty congratulations to Spears media and the men and women behind it.

I have known Spears Media for most of this decade of her existence and services to our community and beyond. From the onset and until now, I have been very proud of it. In fact, it was so comforting to know that one of us would jump-start such an endeavor that is purely our own.

I have numerous books from SM, which their authors autographed because I know them personally. I am also particularly proud to have benefited from some of her publications, through which I have gained almost total literacy in my mother tongue, Mungaka (M̄ngākà). I could not be



Fidelis Kaspa has benefitted from our titles on African languages

more appreciative.

Ten years is a long time from which growth can be assessed and determined. I believe the case of this publication has been that of great success and achievement.

I wish them a better tomorrow, and I believe this will come to pass based on the engagement and hard work of the powerful people behind it.

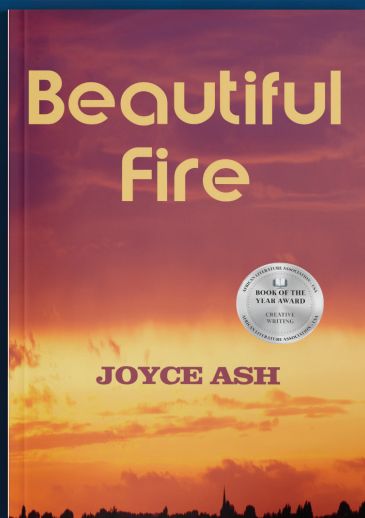
Happy 10th anniversary, and long live Spears Media!



Fidelis Kaspa

IN SPEARS, I FOUND MY TRIBE!

By Prof. Joyce Ashuntantang



How exciting for me to join the 10th-anniversary celebration of Spears Books, a trailblazing publisher dedicated to bringing equality to the marketplace of ideas.

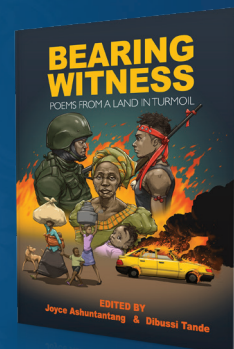
As an author and editorial board member, I've witnessed Spears' unwavering commitment to amplifying minority voices.

Its catalog boasts diverse titles, including my works, award-winning *Beautiful Fire*, *Bearing Witness* (co-authored with the erudite Dibussi Tande), and *Lockdown Chronicles: A Journey through Memory* (co-authored with the venerable Eric Chinje).

To be a Spears author is to be part of a movement. Spears positions its authors to thrive through multiple platforms. First, Spears organizes virtual book launches that squash distances and time zones and has created a book club to cultivate a reading community for these works while fostering a community for its authors to share ideas.

In the Spears team, I found my tribe!

I still remember in 2018 when Spears Books published my 3rd volume of poetry, *Beautiful Fire*. My university organized a book signing



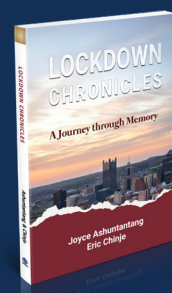
ceremony. I called Spears and asked if they could create a memorable poster for the event to enhance the ceremony. They complied without hesitation.

Spears has created a vibrant community of books, authors, and readers in ten years. There is so much to look forward to, including:

1. Expanded digital presence and accessibility.
1. Continued commitment to alternative voices.
1. Innovative storytelling formats and collaborations.

Thank you for embracing my work and empowering minority voices. I'm honored to have been part of this phenomenal endeavor from 2018 to the present.

Cheers! May the path remain straight.



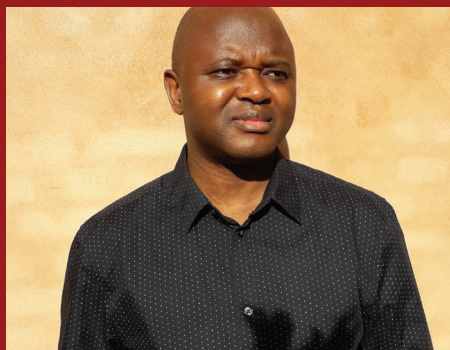
SPEARS BOOKS PUBLISHING AS A POLITICAL STATEMENT

By Primus M. Tazanu

I am sure we had had a prior conversation about me being on Spears Books editorial board but this particular day still sticks to my mind. It was on a warm Saturday afternoon in the summer of 2014, and I was on a ferry from the Danish town of Helsingør to the Swedish town of Helsingborg when I received an email from Prof Jude Fokwang requesting me to send a photo to be used on my profile on Spears website. The rest, as we say it, is history. I love the challenge and feel privileged to be on the editorial board of Spears Books.

Accepting this offer was, in part, an expression of loyalty to a friend and, secondly, an opportunity to make a political statement about African publishing, which is why I center my piece on the publisher's power. In the world of publishing, there are symbolic and material forces at work, beyond the quality of a manuscript. Publishers decide what and whom to publish, often taking into consideration the prospective audience. They may not mention this overtly, but it is widely known in the publishing world that publishers sometimes do not want to give visibility to some works.

In a roundtable conversation in the 1960s, renowned African American writers, including James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, and Lorraine Hansberry, bemoaned the white American marginalization of African American



Dr. Primus Tazanu, Editorial Advisory Board Member since August 2014

writings and authors. These authors observed that most publishers in the USA considered African American literature marginal, as work that did not belong to the mainstream. Publishing houses in America were more interested in Euro-American writers, whose works the publishers believed belonged to the mainstream. Such decisions are political, but importantly, they demonstrate the power of representation the publisher wields.

Defining the mainstream is a question of power, where publishers either include or exclude works that embolden agendas they prioritize. Publishers give visibility to voice. Spears Books is doing exceptionally well in this political marketplace, widening opportunities for authors from various backgrounds to tell their stories as well as publish authors' research on diverse themes. At Spears, irrespective of the theme and the identity of the writer, there is the belief that everyone's work is potentially publishable because we all have different stories to tell. Works published by Spears reflect this claim; people from many nationalities have had their works published on themes covering the environment, language, gender,

pedagogy, development studies, poetry, fiction, identity, politics, and history (just to name a few themes).

As an editorial board member, I have had the chance to review the fascinating works of some of the authors, and the feeling is incredible when a manuscript I reviewed gets published. In accordance with our belief at Spears, these honest but friendly reviews are meant to suggest/recommend to authors, especially the young ones, how they could improve their manuscripts. We are aware that harsh comments may demotivate aspiring writers. This is perhaps one of the critical attractions of Spears Books, where authors, even those we reject, do not feel discouraged in their attempt to get their work to the public.

Still on the political front and this time, in terms of representation, prospective authors, especially Africans, who want to publish high-quality work, see people who look like them on Spears's editorial board. On a personal note, I have friends, acquaintances, and colleagues who want to publish with Spears because they recognize people who look and (probably) think like them. To say Spears Books is demystifying publishing is not an overstatement. Everyone can get their work published, provided the piece meets the quality requirements.



Dr. Primus Tazanu & Cynthia Fokwang at the Workshop on Defiant Scholarship in Africa, Yaoundé, Cameroon, 18 – 20 June 2024

Spears Books has established itself as one of the leading African publishers by doing things correctly but differently. In fact, ten years is a milestone in a competitive sector where new media technologies provide people with the opportunity to self-publish and obtain books in electronic format. That Spears continues to grow strong is a testament to the fact that it meets the demands of our times in terms of quality, depth, and diversity.

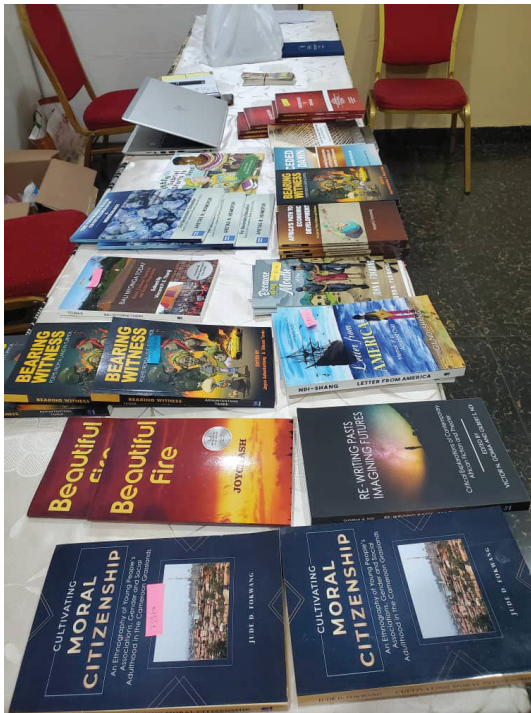
Without Spears, people would still get their stories to the public in one way or another. The key is that Spears Books provides a platform for authors and prospective authors to assess themselves. This, again, is a political statement; Spears's unquestioned

visibility, profound repository, and unshakable reputation make it stand tall in the business of publishing.

Spears Books will continue to grow and will probably be *the* publishing platform on Africa in the decades to come. Our greatest challenge will be handling the many manuscripts coming to us.

This reflection will be incomplete if I do not mention the indefatigable brains behind Spears Books: Dr Lilian Ndangam and Prof Jude Fokwang. They work tirelessly to make sure Spears meets all standards of publishing. Their names are already in the annals of African publishing.

Happy 10th anniversary to us!



Spears Media Press book stand at the Workshop on Defiant Scholarship in Africa, Yaoundé, Cameroon, 18 – 20 June 2024. Ms Cynthia Fokwang marketed our titles at the conference.

MY AHA MOMENTS AT SPEARS MEDIA PRESS

Prof. Bridget Teboh
University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth,
USA



This has been an incredible decade for Spears Media Press, and I am honored and humbled to be a part of something so special, so relevant, and so inspiring! Prior to 2020 when I joined the team of Editorial Advisory Board members, I had heard about Spears Media Press, read some of the published works but I had not really engaged with the platform and its activities. So, in 2019 at ASA Boston, a couple of us--colleagues from the Cameroon Studies Association-NAASC found ourselves after a couple of interesting panel presentations and discussions on the Cameroons, including my own presentation, the "Politics of Belonging," in the lobby of Marriot Copley Place Hotel, Boston, still discussing various issues among them the challenge of publishing and the lack of "Africa-focused/centered publishing houses."

We soon congregated in one of the rooms that had extra snacks and drinks (people get hungry at these conferences, you know) to share ideas, interesting ASA conference moments, or our experiences, believing our stories

can help us celebrate our rich history together. That is how I gained firsthand information from Dr. Jude Fokwang on Spears Media Press and related activities. A year later I was invited to join the board. I agreed without hesitation because I knew that Spears Media Press believes, like me, that knowledge production in and about Africa should be grounded on indigenous philosophies and experiences and expanded to include muted voices (women and ethnic minorities). I have since been pleasantly surprised and filled with pride.

What I've seen at Spears Media Press

Today, we gather here at Spears Media Press—an appropriate place for this important discussion about publishing, as we explore the dimensions of a new global landscape and examine the strategic positioning of both African and Diaspora contributors as well as literate and non-literate authors in shaping a new, innovative order. Spears Media Press brings us together to explore the strategic roles Africa and her Diaspora continue to play in shaping a new publishing global

reality, having fostered African-centered publishing and decolonizing publishing across genres, disciplines, methodologies and knowledge production among other things.

As a historian, a gender historian with 25 years of teaching experience, I've seen the lack of respect for Africa(ns) and African publishing houses that permeates every sector, especially academia. Today's global world is characterized by interconnectedness and interdependency, where every society and nation has something to offer and a role to play in the collaborative pursuit of global objectives. Unfortunately for Africa these global explorations have involved unfavorable contacts and interactions. Africa's experience with global connectivity has been negative. Africa's children are seen as "the poorest of the poor." For decades, Africa has been battered, bruised, looted and dismissed as a place without history, culture, development, or hope. For all that Africa has given the world and continues to give the world, Africa has become an integral and relevant part of the global community despite its disadvantages.

Decolonizing publishing in Africa,



Dr. Kefen Budji, Spears author & Prof Bridget Teboh, Editorial Advisory Board Member at the African Studies Association annual conference, San Francisco, CA, December 2, 2023

therefore, starts with decolonizing the persistent negative image or representation of Africa and African women (transgressive, wicked or defiant). In our work, any decolonizing project is understood as challenging the status quo, defying and dismantling the norms, assumptions and gate-keeping practices that have historically shaped who and what gets published. This begs the question, who has the authority to speak for the other? What Edward Said pointed out years ago still holds true today: "The act of representing (and hence reducing) others almost always involves violence of some sort to the subject of representation" (Said 1985; Chakrabarty 1992). As Africans, we must speak to get out of the web of colonial subjugation and subjectivity that is evident everywhere, especially in academia and the publishing world. For me, it meant using unconventional research methods and tools, especially those that enabled women to tell their stories in their own words. This, I believe, is key to decolonizing publishing, a core goal of Spears Media Press.

How can Africans speak?

Thus far, there seems to be a secret or unwritten consensus among Westerners and Western publishing houses that Africans can only speak in certain situations, in specific privileged languages and given certain conditions approved by Western standards. The assumption is that Africans don't have the necessary conditions and resources to enable them to speak. Well, gone are those days! Africans are decolonizing publishing. Africa has risen like a phoenix and has taken control through Africa-centered publishers like Spears Media Press, founded in 2014 as a platform to decolonize publishing in three ways: decolonizing publishing; centering diverse Africana voices; and lastly engendering editorial policies that support collaborative knowledge production and distribution.

Regarding production and distribution, the books must be accessible, affordable and easy to understand. Consequently, over the years, I've come to value and privilege jargon-free, accessible and affordable books.

Spears books meet this requirement.

For these reasons, I am particularly pleased to be an Advisory Editorial Board Member at Spears Media Press. The feeling of fulfillment and pleasure of meeting like-minds and other board members during our quarterly scheduled board meetings to discuss projects, events and the direction of Spears Media Press cannot be underestimated. Publishing new quality books of different genres, for different audiences and in different African languages sits at the core of decolonizing publishing and defiant scholarship. The excitement of reading some of these books that constitute defiant literature and scholarship is intoxicating. From Jude Fokwang's *Cultivating Moral Citizenship* (based on an ethnography of young people's associations, gender and social activities in my own neighborhood and people in Old Town Bamenda), to Augustine Ndamang's *Ceded at Dawn*, Joyce Ash's *Beautiful Fire*, Langmia's *Paradise of Pain*, Kefen Budji's *Boundless*, Gwanfogbe's *Basel Mission*, Atanga and Mboumien's *When the Sun Turns Red*, Fondong's *Renewing*

the Promise, John Fokwang's *A Dictionary of Popular Bali Names*, Fobanjong's *State of the Continent... Africa*, to Ntube's *Litany of a Foreign Wife*, to name just these few, there is no shortage of the diversity of genres and subjects covered, nor is there any doubt that Spears Media Press has a reason to celebrate!

The book launch events have been a great success and are well attended. I had the pleasure of attending some of these launches, and they were amazing reminders for me personally of just how important it is to tell our own stories and leave an indelible mark for posterity.

Spears has taken it upon itself to address the question of publishing African books and content without being pinned down by the lack of funds or controlled by those with money--a brave new world order and Africa's quest for identity and place in it. Spears' mission thus grew out of the need to publish our own stories without fear or favor; without someone telling us to change our topic in favor of wanton sensationalism or to write what they want. Therefore, Spears Media Press is NOT saying: "don't publish this, publish that instead," nor is Spears imposing its opinions on anyone like some "big" name publishers.

Continuity and Hope for the Future

Spears Media Press strives to bridge the cultural and intellectual divide, between the literate "elites" and ordinary, often voiceless persons, enabling both oups to learn from each other's unique experiences in recognition of the importance of collaboration in the publishing world, for mutual growth and understanding in this age of globalization and



Dr Divine Fuh, University of Cape Town & Spears Editor-at-Large with Prof Bridget Teboh at the ASA Conference San Francisco, CA, December 2, 2023

rapid change. As Board Members, we focus on paradigms of equality and the desire to succeed. We help Spears Media by directing the affairs of the platform and selecting proposals for publication. Since 2015, Spears Media Press has dedicated itself to publishing quality books, some by award-winning authors, and helping many authors fulfill their dreams, mentoring young writers, most of them first-time authors, despite the challenges encountered. These challenges have motivated the Spears leadership to remain committed to providing quality publications at affordable prices. In its tenth year, Spears has continued to grow and gain international recognition

for its work in publishing, academia and contributions to society. Its success is sustainable. This is one of the surest confirmations of success and attainment.

Personally, I am inspired by Spears' innovative ongoing projects and new projects. Such is the uniqueness of Spears Media Press, a publishing house whose leadership is consistently seeking the opportunity to grow and thrive. For instance, there are two new book series: *Spears Studies in African and African Diaspora History* and *Spears Studies on Gender in Africa*. I have engaged with these two series. I am currently working on a book, "A Dictionary of Moghamo Names," inspired by the Bali version, as well as a Coffee table volume tentatively titled, "Being in Pictures': Women's Adventures and Family Gatherings in Southern Cameroons/Ambazonia."

The success of Spears Media Press brings a strong sense of fulfillment and achievement to all of us. So, let's continue to promote fair publishing practices, mentorship and equity. No doubt, Spears is unstoppable and will continue to be successful, as the "spear" in its name, I'm convinced, is to symbolically pierce through any challenges to reach its goals or target audience. Spears Media Press deserves all the praise. From the Executive Publisher at Spears Media Press, Dr. Jude Fokwang, to the members of the Editorial Advisory Board; to the Editorial committee; to authors, members of staff and everyone involved in Spears' vision and working hard to advance it and make it a reality, I say, congratulations! May the next ten years be even more successful and fruitful!



AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF THE BIRTH OF SPEARS MEDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE

Walter Gam Nkwi

Wednesday morning of 7th August 2014 unraveled a transformative experience for me. The city of Bamenda was not only bright but fresh and brimming with life with some rays of the morning sun. There seemed to be a song in every heart; if the heart was young, the music issued at the lips. There was cheer in every face, and water from the Bamenda Station waterfalls puffed like champagne foam between the rocky funnels in its fault scarp. The eucalyptus trees that stood firm in the fault scarp were in bloom, and the fragrance of the blossoms filled the air. The Bamenda up-station hill, overlooking the city, was green with lush vegetation, interspersed by eucalyptus trees and hanging rocks, giving the city a delectable, dreamy atmosphere.

Meanwhile, I was attending the Pan African Anthropological Association (PAAA) conference, which was held at the Catholic University of Cameroon (CATUC) from 7-9 August 2014 on the premises of the St. Joseph Metropolitan Cathedral, Big Mankon. During the coffee break, Jude approached me (our second meeting), Henry Kam Kah and a few others whose names I have forgotten. Here, he shared

his dream of having founded a publishing house. My reply was spontaneous. I agreed to join hands with him to realize his dream in whatever way I could.

Becoming part of a publishing house

The strengths of Spears Media are not in doubt. Transparency and a level playing ground are the twin words that could best describe the strength

“The first decade of Spears Media is profound and significant if we look at the volumes that have been “milled” out and the numerous hands that have been placed on deck to support this initiative.”

satisfied my thirst to see publications and publishing houses in Africa. It was a bold step to break with the hegemonic North regarding publishing conventions and restrictions. Jude Fokwang had a vision not to publish for publishing’s sake but to bring cutting-edge scholarship to the fore in the humanities and the social sciences. He shared his plans to publish history, literature, sociology, anthropology, gender, and women’s histories, to name a few. Over the years, I have been an eyewitness to see this dream grow into fruition. This has also given me visibility and allowed me to add my bit by bringing my contributions on board.

of this publishing house. Books are published based on merit and contribution to knowledge rather than on a “man-know-man” basis. Besides, royalty is not a secret. It is calculated and sent to the author with or without their knowledge. Many authors have appreciated this move in the open. Editorial board members also benefit from getting free books. Frequent meetings take place online involving those in the diaspora and Cameroon. The publishing house is also structured on disciplinary boundaries.

Spears Media is structured into a book series and partitioned



Dr. Walter Nkwi at the Pan African Anthropological Association conference, Bamenda, 7-9 August 2014



into the History and Gender series, etc. I am in the History series (Spears Studies in African and African Diaspora History) as a co-editor with Dr. Womai Ignatius Song. My vision in this series has been to encourage the writing of history that shifts from the conventional, ensuring that research resources should not cloud Afrocentric history. Here, the new generation of scholars is challenged to produce a history that aligns with what Patrice Lumumba echoed during the All African Conference in 1958. In the spirit of centering the African experience, the *Spears Studies in African and African Diaspora History* series, while open to cutting-edge research in other realms, is particularly interested in the social history of the African World; social history popularly defined as the study of the changes in the patterns of daily life of a group of people with emphasis on how the subjects of the study lived with respect to music, dance, marriage, architecture, family life and so on, and the changes occurring over a period of time. This type of history focuses on uncovering patterns of continuity and change (Hobsbawm, 1971: 24; Ajayi, 1980: 33-40).

The attempt here is to understand African history from the perspective of the daily lives of Africans, using micro-history as an example. One source of inspiration which I much felt could inspire new scholars is for them to draw from the work of Stephen Ellis (2002: 25), who at one point cites the celebrated British historian philosopher, R.G. Collingwood, who maintained that “the work of a historian is the effort to penetrate the thinking of those who were implicated in the events of the past.” Ellis concludes that “(...) perhaps, one should think less in terms of African history and more in terms of world history in which Africa has its part. All the labels on periods are *ex post facto* (...) Africa should not be thought of in terms of timelessness.” In other words, Ellis argues that there should be an attempt to present and date African histories according to how the Africans saw them. From that perspective, European periodization, with its terminology of interwar, post-war, post-independence, pre-colonial, modernization, industrialization, colonial and post-colonial, can often be simply to contribute to the local history of our respective regions (Harniet-Sievers, 2008). This has been my dream in this series.

The first decade of Spears Media is profound and significant if we look at the volumes that have been “milled” out and the numerous hands that have been placed on deck to support this initiative. Despite this, I still see areas of continuous growth. Scouting for manuscripts to be published, re-working the proposal form to be more elaborate, and searching for more volunteers could go a long way toward strengthening the already strong position of Spears Media. Advertisement channels are good, but I think we need to create more, as many people do not still know about Spears Media and its activities.

SPEARS POETS CELEBRATE THE ANNIVERSARY IN VERSE



Eunice Ngongkum

Spears Books

Eunice Ngongkum

Since birth you have grown like a rose
Peeping out from between green leaves
Eager to make someone happy.
Ask not why I see you like this
Reaching out to minds bubbling with
Songs and thoughts, deep as the ocean.

Believe me people of all sorts
Open wide the eyes of their brains
On the volumes you have churned up
Keeping in mind your objectives.
Such is the mark of brilliant work.



“Celebrating Spears at 10: Why it Matters Publishing with Spears”

Lola Nkamanyang Perpetua K

Spears Media Press,
The genius of error-hunting,
The editorial surgeon with exemplary expertise
In transforming works into readable English.
The vaccine whose sting cures the brain-child
Of all structural and grammatical infections,
Ever lurking to contaminate the work.

From the ridges of lines of print, you weed out all infestations:



Lola Nkamanyang Perpetua K

Making insertions and deletions,
Checking quotations and punctuations,
Arrowing and asking questions;
For the brain-child must be free from linguistic contagions.
To the author you return a bleeding manuscript,
That looks like a butcher’s slab,
Making me feel that I missed many English lessons.
For a manuscript to earn a seat in the delivery chamber of
your production house,
Where works that have passed through the knives of
your editorial surgeons
Wait in endless queues for release dates,
Your reading lenses track, sieve and delete,
With suggestions of fine alternatives,
For the brain-child must be healthy,
To resist the stings of critics,
And gain a seat among men and women of letters.

In your production house, many rooms under one roof reside:

With services like editorial, production, marketing, authors’ forum, and book launch events,
You seem to drive home the message that the work of the publisher continues even outside the publishing maternity.

Five minutes with Spears is just enough to feel that one was in a classroom, taking lessons on how to write, edit or market a work.

September 23rd, 2024





Nsah Mala



In Praise of Spears Books

Nsah Mala

Specialised publisher out to decolonise
Publisher premised on professionalism
Eschews predation while exposing talents
Amidst constraints, keeps titles affordable
Rigorous, robust and respects commitments
Supports, stimulates, and sustains creativity

Believes books are better than battles
One of a few Cameroonian publishers
On time with sales and royalties reports
Keen on advancing African knowledges
Sailing like waves to spread our cultures

5 October 2024, Lille, France



My Journey with Spears Books So Far

Nsah Mala

Since 2019 when this decolonising platform
Published my French poems *Les Pleurs du mal*,
Even before then they'd published my book chapter
Among others in *Re-Writing Pasts, Imagining Futures*,
Reviews of books like Gil's *The Radio* and translations
Seeking to uncover why *The Forest Must Scream*

Books for children such as *Little Gabriel Starts to Read*

Onwards we've worked on project like *Bearing Witness*
Organically, we collaborate on anthologies, volumes,
launches,
Knitting new creative and intellectual initiatives for our
Earth's
Survival, such as *Congo Basin Anthology*, African Ecocriti-
cism...

5 October 2024, Lille (France)



Tenth Anniversary Wishes for Spears Books

Nsah Mala

May your future be filled with fruitfulness
As you keep on promoting our penmanship
Giving budding and established writers a stage
Let nobody you know pass away with their idea
So that we (intellectuals, writers, publisher) soar
And through the pen we can confront all dangers

Upwards like tropical trees always climb
Guarding your creatives like a Kangaroo
Announcing them everywhere like a Radio
Providing them with a trustworthy bedrock
On which creativity or knowledge flourishes

More happy returns, Spears Books!
Aluta continua, ad literarum!

6 October 2024, Lille (France)



SPEARS MEDIA PRESS

A Reflection

Prof Langmia hails Spears Media Press for achieving an important milestone in the decolonisation of publishing in Africa

It has always been difficult to take the first step to dare into the Lion's den. By this, I mean embarking on a project that is uncommon, unconventional and for the lack of a better term, risky. Professor Jude Fokwang decided a few years ago to dare to enter the Lion's den to start what most people thought was impossible. There were lots of creative talents loitering on the footpaths of what we now call Eurocentric publishing houses, gathering loads of rejection letters because they wanted to remain real to Afrocentricity. They were rejected for pushing alternative forms of creative writing that were distasteful on the tongues of Euro-American publishers. Frustration and apathy became the mantra for most Afrocentric publishers as more of their works piled on their dusty shelves. Then came Spears Media publishing house launched by Professor Jude Fokwang from Colorado, USA. We all breathed a sigh of relief.

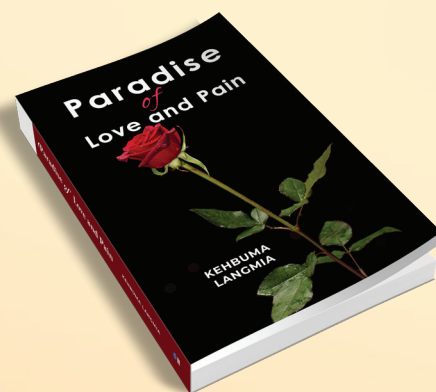
Today marks the 10th anniversary of what I can refer to, without being hyperbolic, as a gargantuan success. In fact, with respect to fiction and nonfiction publications from the continent of Africa, I know not yet of one successful



Prof Kehbuma Langmia of Howard University is one of the pioneer members of the Editorial Advisory Board

publisher that has been able to match the likes of Spears Media. Their process of manuscript submission, feedback, typesetting and publication quality and, best of all, their book launching skills through the use of advanced digital technology features are second to none from the continent of Africa that I know of.

Keep soaring!
Happy anniversary



Kehbuma Langmia
Howard University

CELEBRATING SPEARS BOOKS

10th ANNIVERSARY OF PUBLISHING

Marie N. Fongwa, PhD, MPH, MSN, RN
Professor, Azusa Pacific University
Azusa, California



and Dr. Anthony M. Ndi were cleaning up the draft of my now-published pocket-size guidebook for teaching and learning, *The Student-Discussant Role in Doctoral Education*, when I told Dr. Ndi that I was going to check with mainstream and popular publishing companies to see if any would be interested in reviewing my work for possible publication, when he suggested I check with Spears Books, specifically with Dr. Jude Fokwang. As soon as our discussion ended, I called Dr. Fokwang, and his response was quick. I informed him of my need and asked him a few questions, which he adequately answered, including the point that my work would fit in the non-fiction category of the publishing company. We agreed for me to send him my book draft for evaluation, which I did.

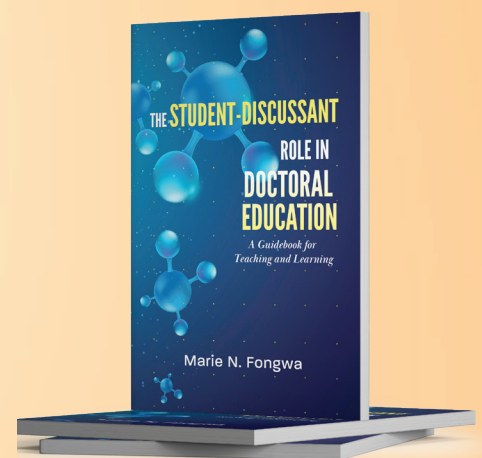
The outcome of the book draft evaluation was that Spears Books would publish my book if I were interested. Of course, I was excited and anxious to see my work in print! Dr. Fokwang quickly gave me a tentative schedule for the proof and final

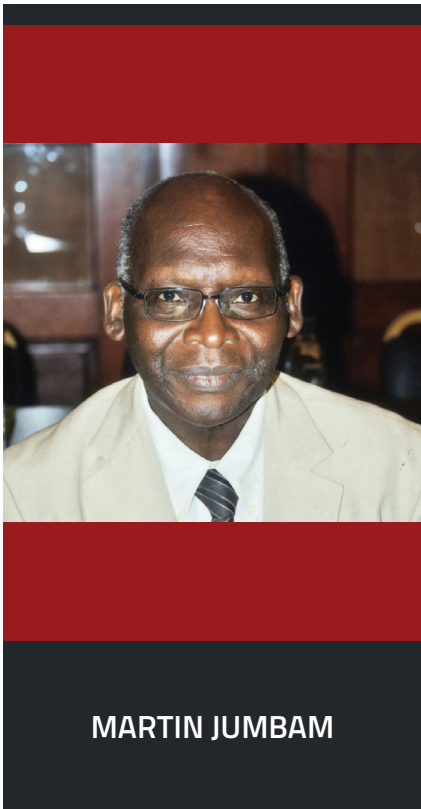
product. Based on that schedule, my pocket-size book was published in July 2022. I am grateful to Spears Books, and I congratulate the company for ten years of supporting and promoting what was challenging for many African authors, especially in the West.

I believe Spears Books' vision of decolonizing publishing is being achieved. Freeing African authors from influences and attitudes that prevent and/or delay the publication of their works is a big deal. For the company to have room for fiction, non-fiction, children's literature and poetry, gives authors a wide categorical latitude for their specific publishing needs. Spears Books is encouraging, supportive, resourceful, timely, guiding, and reasonable in terms of cost.

Although Spears Books celebrates centering Africana voices in contemporary publishing, it is a very friendly, dignified and fast-growing company open to authors from all racial and ethnic backgrounds. What Spears has done in the past ten years snugly fits in the slogan of *leave no one behind* in contemporary publishing. African authors who might have faced

difficulties from mainstream and dominant publishing companies for one reason or the other, found home with Spears Books. And that is beautiful! It must be respected that Spears Books is for high-quality published works. Congratulations to Spears Books and may the publishing company's door remain open for all deserving authors.





MARTIN JUMBAM

I OWE IT ALL TO COVID!

lyrics of love I sang for her. In vain did I beg, plead, cajole, and even fondle her ticklish ribs, hoping she would listen to the voice of my pleading and kindly turn on the fount of my inspiration so I could come up with something new and refreshing. When it seemed that my efforts were in vain, I then threw a hook into the depths of my archives to see what it could pull out for me to dust and refurbish for the eye. And it did come out with something interesting, a seed that had lain fallow for many years and had seemingly died. But, as the biblical saying goes: "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn 12:24).

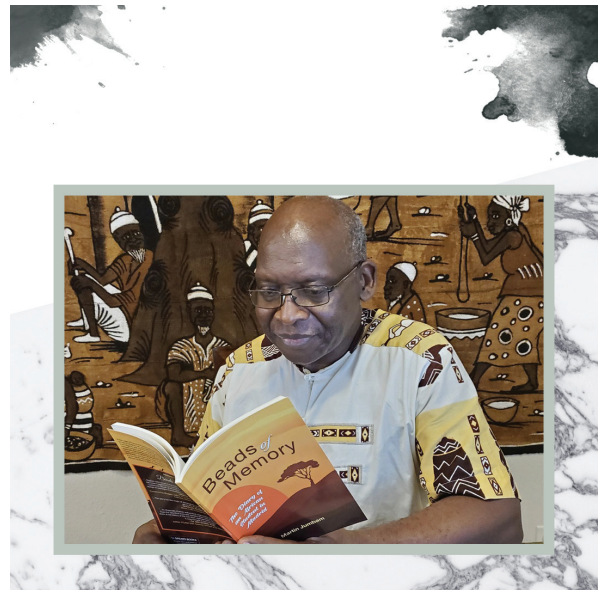
That grain that died and germinated again was a diary recounting the adventures of an African student in the Spanish capital of Madrid that I wrote in the 90s. I printed a few hundred copies at a small printer shop in Douala but tried in vain to convince people to buy even a few copies! I attended a meeting of translators and interpreters, my colleagues, in Yaounde, and despite all the pleading not even a single copy did I sell! I had no luck either with the members of the General Certificate of Education (GCE) team marking the exams in Buea. I drove from Douala to Buea, copies of my sweat in hand, and the best I got was

an invitation to leave a few copies with the officials, with strict instructions not to call them—"We will call you!" Of course, the expected call never came.

Over 30 years later, as COVID-19 ruled the world with unrelenting fury, I tumbled on an old copy of my book, with its leaves already heavily yellowed by the passage of time. I was, however, determined to escape the chaos outside by immersing myself in a world once created by my mind. All this happened shortly after I became aware of Spears Books. My friend and ICT teacher, Tande Dibussi, a solid Cameroonian blogger of international repute, had invited me to contribute to a collection of poems he was editing for publication with another Cameroonian, loudly acclaimed the world over as a poet of great standing - Professor Joyce Ashuntantang. The fruit of their endeavor, which I did not participate in, was the widely-acclaimed *Bearing*

As humanity reeled from the unforgiving harshness of COVID-19, I hunkered down in my son's apartment in San Jose, California, watching the ensuing chaos on the television screen. The word "Lockdown!" echoed everywhere. The fear of death dripped like tears from every eye, from east to west, north to south—with good reason, as death, the reaper, gleefully wielded its harvesting fork with unrelenting fury the world over. Suddenly, a line from Dante's *Inferno*, which T.S. Eliot borrowed in *The Waste Land*, sprang to mind: "I had not thought death had undone so many!"

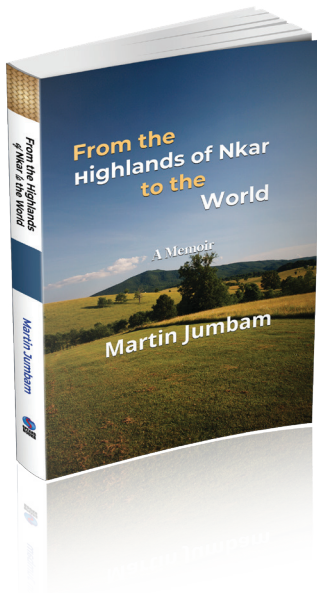
With my boys glued to their computer screens from morning until evening, I turned to Mother Muse, the Capricious Lady, who alone holds the key to my fount of inspiration. But, she ignored me, turning a deaf ear to all the





Witness: Poems from a Land in Turmoil, a collection of poems by over 70 Cameroonian poets, calling for a halt to the senseless war then ravaging, and is still raging in Cameroon. I agreed to participate in the book launch with a short review. That’s how I came to know about Spears Books.

After rescuing my manuscript from oblivion, I dusted it and immediately thought of Spears Books. Professor Jude Fokwang acknowledged receipt but warned me not to expect a quick response due to the volume of work he and his team had. That was fine by me, and even if I never heard from them, I would have simply shrugged it off as just another rejection we writers are so accustomed to. However, a few days after his initial contact, he again called to say he had read my manuscript, found it interesting, and that Spears Books would publish it. I shouted, “Hallelujah!” and thanked him. That’s how I opened the door to Spears Books with

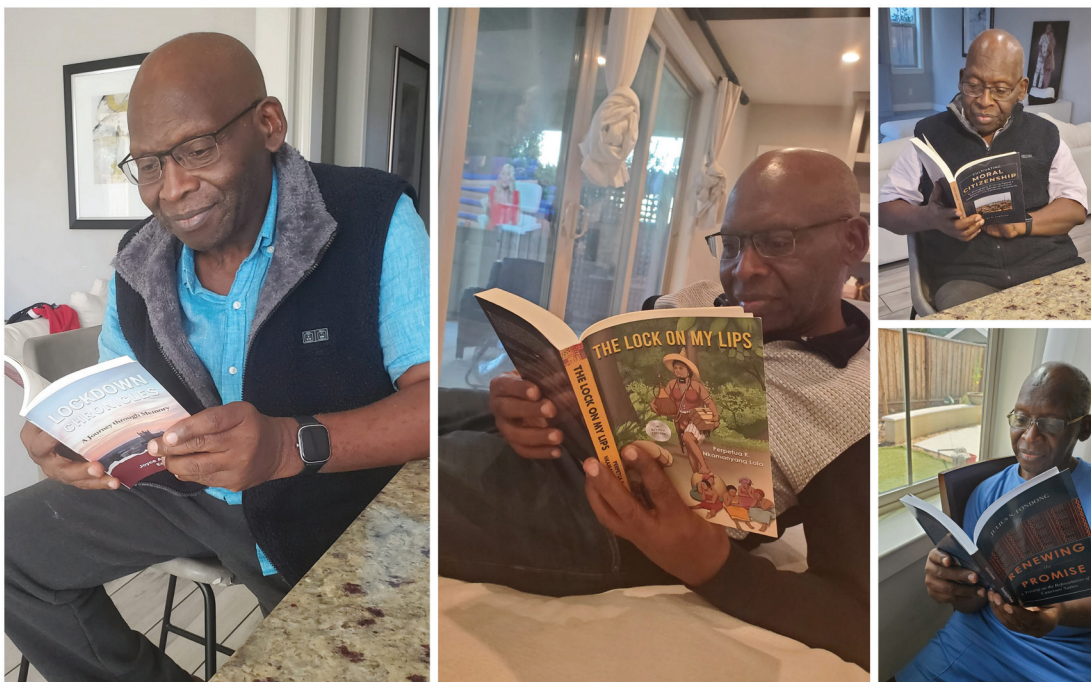


the publication of *Beads of Memory*. If you ask me if anything good ever came out of COVID-19, I will unhesitatingly say YES! My long-forgotten but recovered fruit of my imagination – *Beads*

of Memory!

My second book, *From the Highlands of Nkar to the World*, a semi-autobiography, came from the encouragement of friends—particularly again my ICT teacher, Tande Dibussi, who had always wondered when he would be reading my autobiography. Another friend, who was also on my back to put all that I had written about my life into a book form, is my long-time Sierra Leonean friend, Professor Abioseh Michael Porter of Drexel University in New Jersey. Professor Jude Fokwang also gently prodded me in the ribs to write my life story. When I ran out of excuses as to why it couldn’t be done, I finally went to work, and the result is another Spears’ child born from the thighs of my imagination: *From the Highlands of Nkar to the World*.

I owe it all to COVID!

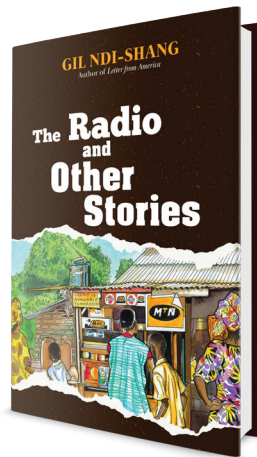




TUNING IN TO THE RADIO

Lessons Learned on Book Marketing
Gil Ndi-Shang

Generally, book culture is facing an existential challenge from the current screen culture. This situation has also affected reading culture globally. The time that hitherto would be dedicated to books is now divided between video games, YouTube clips, WhatsApp chats, TikTok reels, etc. Publishers and authors have to devise new methods and strategies of not only perpetuating the book/reading culture but equally seizing the opportunities of the same screen culture to propel the symbolic and material values of the book. The cold and solitary aura of the book now has to contend with other media outlets to retain the attention of the readers. Having a well-written book is not enough anymore. As authors, we must make our books win the readers' attention, for it has to battle with other products of its kind but also of a different nature. Here are some of the lessons I learnt with regard to the marketing of creative books, as a Spears-published author.



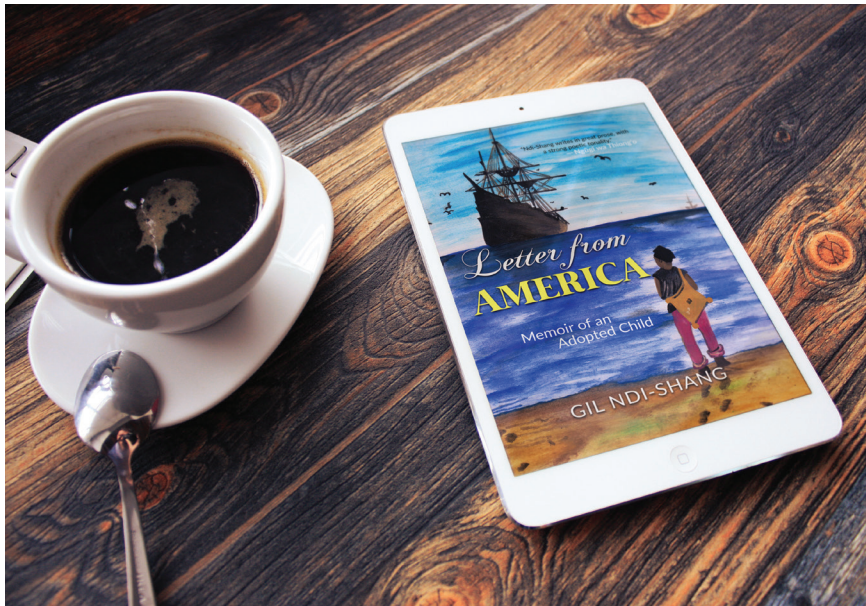
1. Author-Publisher collaboration.

I remember asking Spears Book's Executive Publisher, Prof. Jude Fokwang, if he dedicated as much time to other authors as he did to me (both during and after the publication). However, Jude is someone who pays particular attention to detail and as a seasoned scholar himself, he probes into the motifs behind authorial choices, not to impose his views, but to carefully examine the possible implications and outcomes with the author. This sense of balance greatly ensured a smooth collaboration with the Spears team.

2. **Ownership.** The spirit of ownership is very crucial in book marketing. Given the time that the Spears team and I had spent on the manuscript, we were quite confident of its likely appeal to the readers. Due to the symbolic association of intellectual production with depth and insights, marketing a book can be a rather mundane exercise, almost intellectual dishonesty, if one is not deeply convinced that its content would add value to the reader.

3. **Street Team.** The groundwork that converted *The Radio* from a book into a veritable phenomenon was done by the street team, a group of foot soldiers (better still "online warriors") who consistently shared and promoted the book on their media handles and other strategic WhatsApp groups. They consisted mostly of former schoolmates from Government Bilingual High School Nkambe who flooded their social media handles with the flyers beautifully crafted by the Spears Team.

4. **Online Book Launches.** Spears Books has a habit of not only accompanying the author during the manuscript preparation process but also makes it a point to "mid-wife" and organise an



online “born house” for its books. The Spears book launch, one of a series of other book launches (including one by HUMA, University of Cape Town, in South Africa), significantly enhanced the virality of *The Radio*.

5. Academic Connections. Connections in academia have proven crucial for the visibility of *The Radio and Other Stories* (2021) and my earlier book, *Letter from America* (2019). This has been in the form of book reviews in magazines/newspapers; university book launches; as well as meet-the-author events, mostly online. In some cases, this has led to lecturers effectively ordering copies for the number of students in their class. Students can constitute a multiplier channel for a book if they are convinced of its quality and value.

6. Solidarity/Collaboration amongst Spears Authors. I benefitted enormously from the ingenuity, generosity and selfless support of other

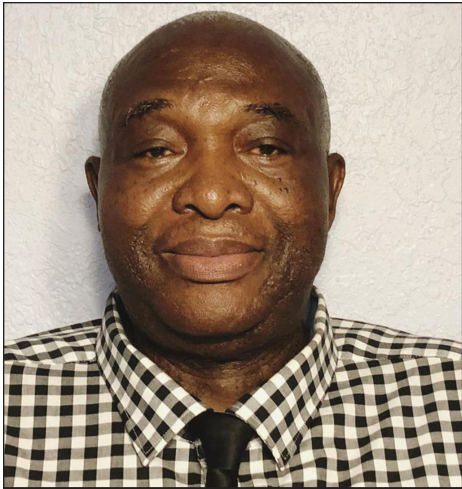
Spears-published authors. Some of the Spears authors also assisted in editing parts of the book. Given the record of accomplishment of these authors, they constitute a symbolic guarantee of quality for their acquaintances, customers and fans know that they cannot be associated with any creative products of doubtful quality.

7. Authorial Social Media Presence. By the time we published *The Radio*, I had a robust social media presence, especially on Facebook. I shared some of the stories included in *The Radio* on my platforms, and many people encouraged me to do justice to those stories by publishing them. I consider *The Radio* as a contribution to the field of digital humanities, for social media was both the space of conception, expression and reception of these stories.

8. Adaptability. We must adapt to changing times and fine-tune our publicity strategies to reflect and tap

into contemporary trends. My multi-pronged approach enabled me to make the book felt on traditional media (TV channels and radio stations) as well as adapt the strategies to adapt to new social media formats, such as sharing snippets and insights from the book on my YouTube Channel but also as status updates on Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp. It is difficult to equate social media presence ipso facto with book sales. Nevertheless, the more (social) media presence, the better, especially in the long term.

9. The nature of the content. I wanted it to tell part of my life story but also to paint the larger picture that would strike a chord with readers from my generation but equally to speak to a larger context of shared humanity. I wanted it to be both sad and joyful, like life itself. I am an adept of Kafka’s ideology that: “We need books that act on us like a misfortune we would suffer greatly, like the death of someone we would love more than ourselves...- a book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us” (Franz Kafka, *Letter to Oscar Pollak*, 1904). Nevertheless, I also believe as Primo Levi that: “Sooner or later in life everyone discovers that perfect happiness is unrealizable, but there are few who pause to consider the antithesis: that perfect unhappiness is equally unattainable. The obstacles preventing the realization of both these extreme states are of the same nature: they derive from our human condition which is opposed to everything infinite” (*If This is a Man*, 1947). This balance, for me, constitutes one of the fulfilling aspects of the book.



Mr. Richard Kumengisa

1947-2021



"To the well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure."

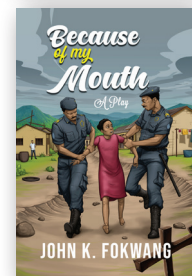
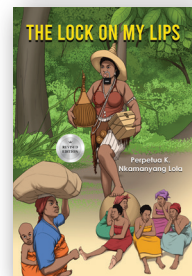
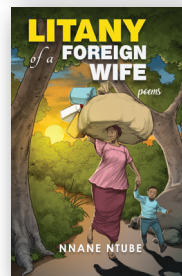
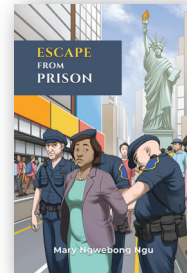
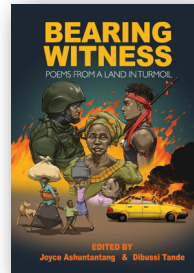
— J.K. Rowling



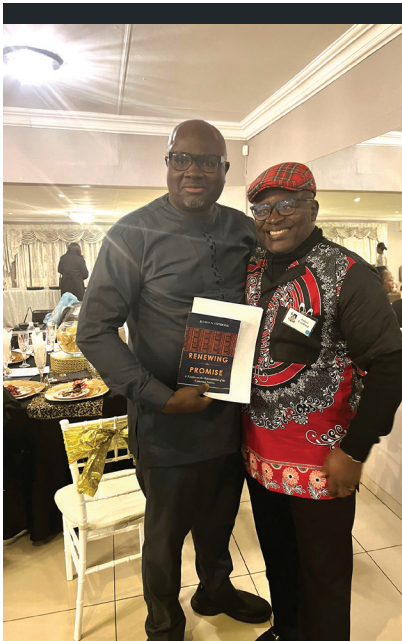
Professor Mathew B. Gwanfogbe

1943-2024

A TREASURED PARTNER: TOH BRIGHT!



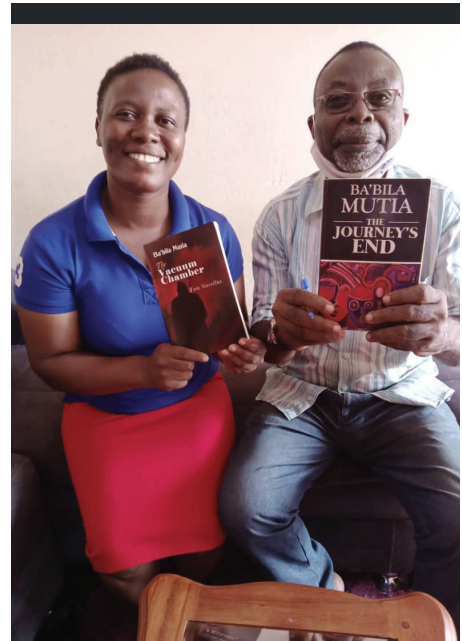
IN COMMUNITY WITH SPEARS AUTHORS & PATRONS



Julius Fondong & a patron
at his book launch,
Johannesburg, South Africa



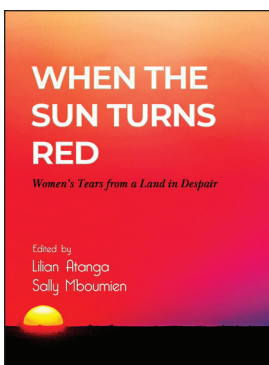
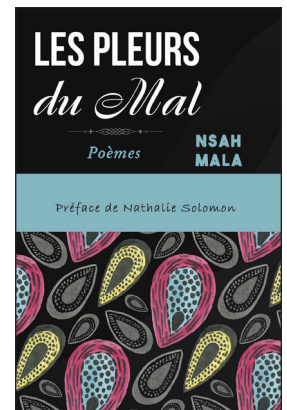
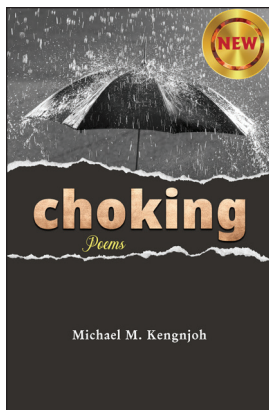
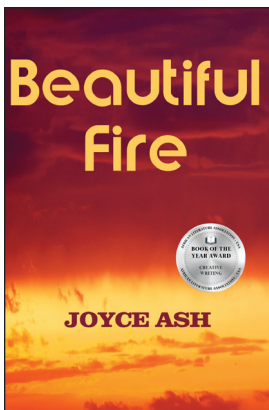
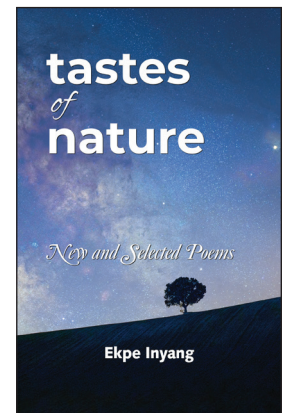
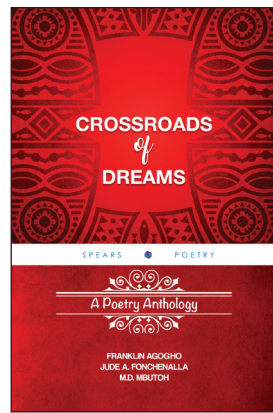
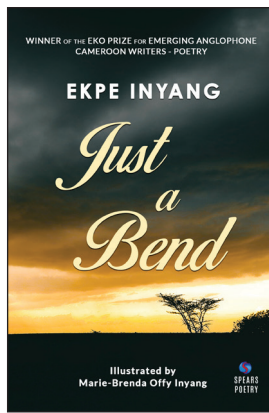
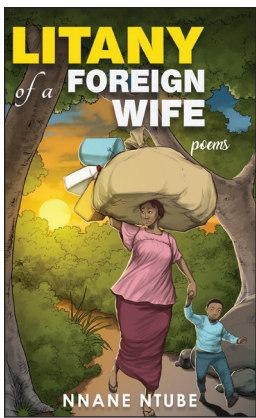
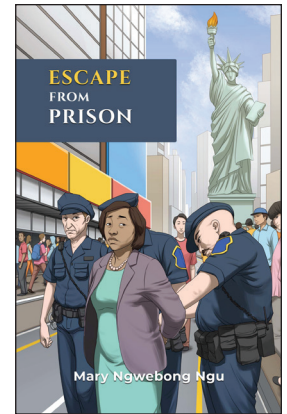
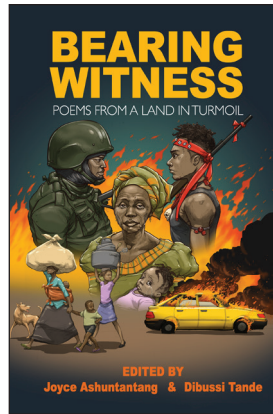
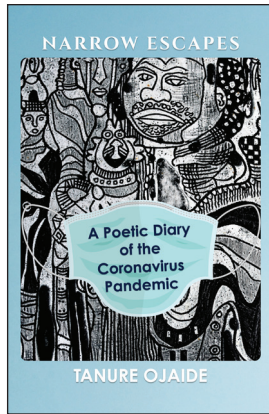
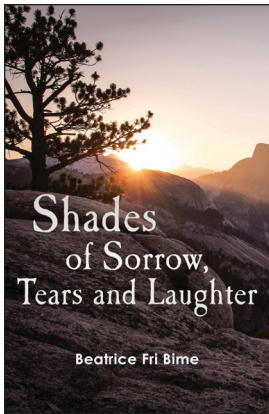
Perpetua K. Nkamanyang
Lola & George Ngwane,
Abuja, Nigeria

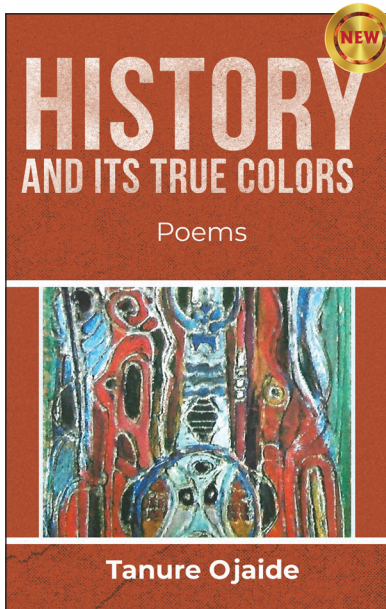


Nnane Ntube & Prof Babila
Mutia, Yaounde, Cameroon



Kefen Budji launches her debut novel in Bamenda, 2016





April 2024 ■ 158 Pages ■ 6 x 9
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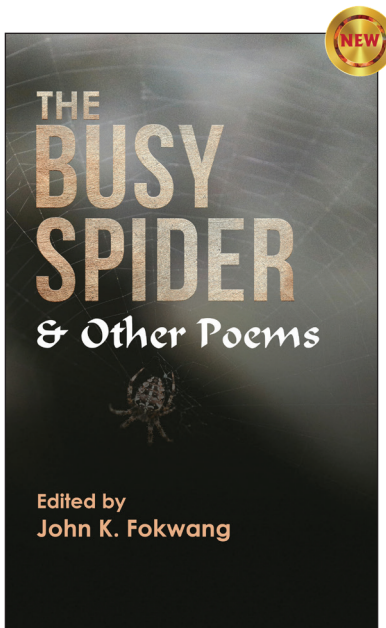
History and Its True Colors

Tanure Ojaide

History and Its True Colors is the poet's reflection on history from the multiple positionalities of creativity and self, personal relations, society, nationality, race, humanity, and life. The nine unique and yet interrelated movements of the collection not only memorialize the African past but also represent the journey to the past, for its remains still affect human experiences today. It is a past that has not fully passed because the past and the present are connected and capable of shaping the future. The poems also reflect a journey within and without the poet's life experiences.



Tanure Ojaide holds the position of Frank Porter Graham Professor of Africana Studies at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, North Carolina.

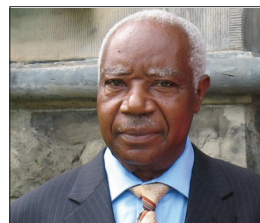


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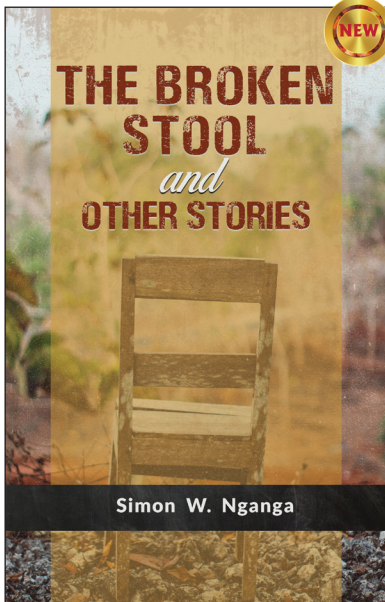
The Busy Spider and Other Poems

Edited by John K. Fokwang

The Busy Spider and Other Poems invites young readers on a delightful journey through a world of rhyme and wonder! This charming collection of poems is perfect for nursery, elementary, and early secondary school children. Each poem brings to life a playful cast of characters, from a tireless spider weaving its web to curious woodland creatures, mischievous domestic animals, and a colony of ants....



John Koyela Fokwang was born in Bali Nyonga in Southern Cameroons. He has edited several children's and teachers' literary works and is the author of the bestselling *Dictionary of Popular Bali Names*.



The Broken Stool and Other Stories

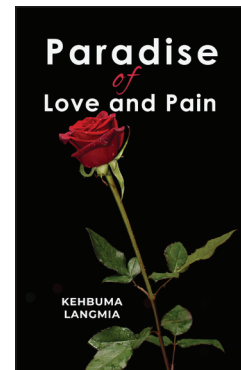
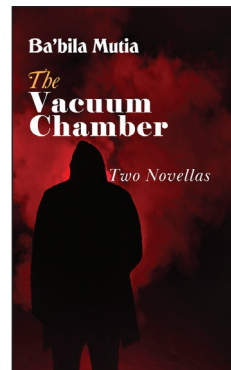
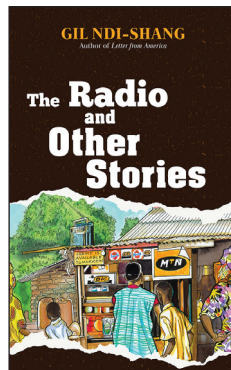
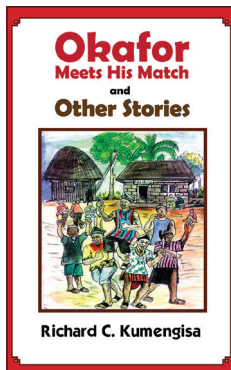
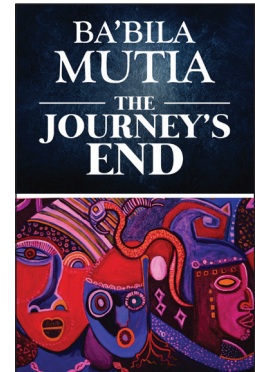
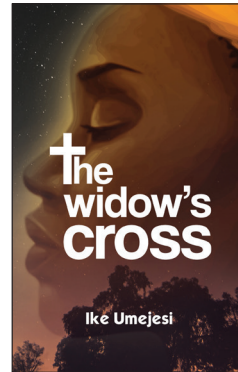
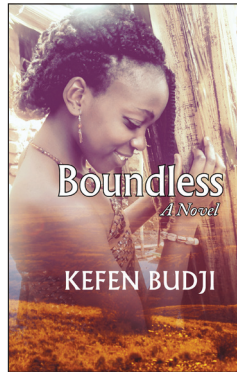
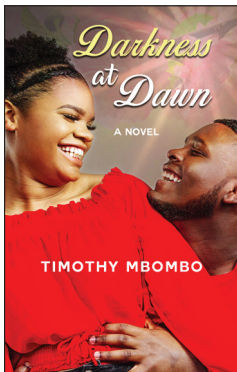
Simon W. Nganga

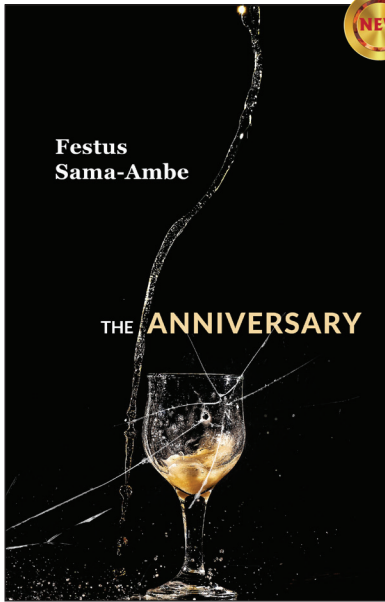
In these ten engrossing stories, Simon Nganga explores the meaning and consequences of choices that are usually considered national and society-wide from the eyes of individuals residing in local markets and villages. With unmatched precision and easy-to-read language, each story takes us through the characters' effort to make choices as they desperately search for meaning in their ever-changing lives, with deeply unsettling results.

May 2024 ■ 86 Pages ■ 5 x 8
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Simon W. Nganga holds a PhD in General Linguistics from the University of Bayreuth, Germany. The Broken Stool and Other Stories is his first book of fiction.





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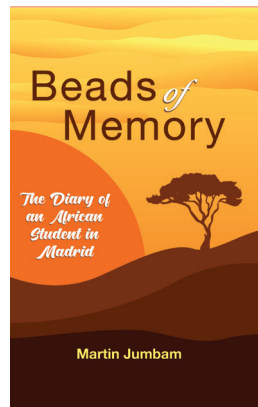
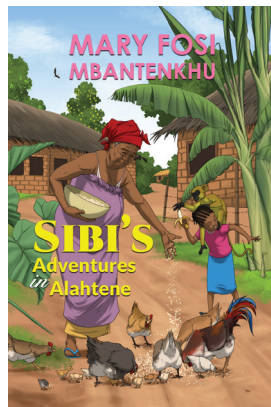
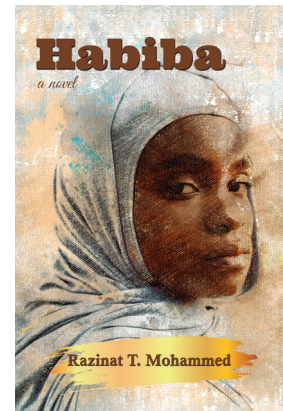
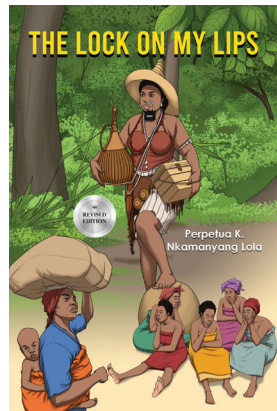
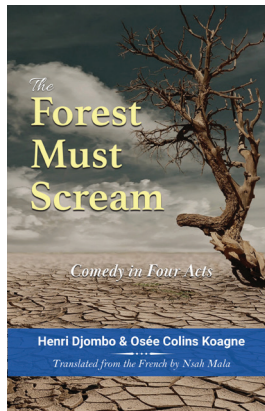
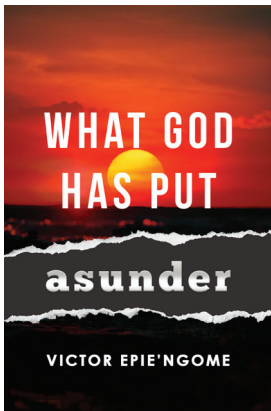
The Anniversary

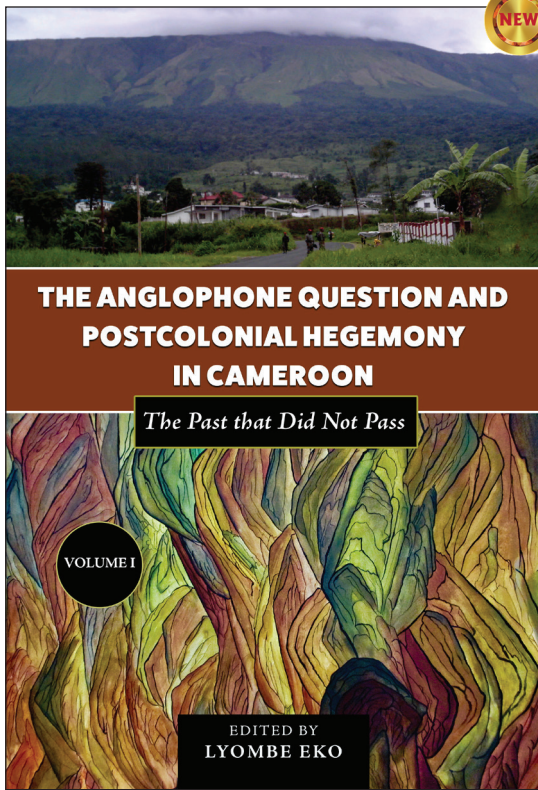
Festus Sama-Ambe

The Anniversary is a thought-provoking play that mirrors the socio-political challenges faced by many Africans, particularly in Cameroon. The narrative unravels the nonchalance of a dictatorial regime to the suffering of its people and the eventual uprising against the long-standing oppressive leadership.



Festus Sama-Ambe hails from Bafut in the North West Region of Cameroon. He is a member of the Anglophone Cameroon Writers' Association (ACWA).





Dec 2024 ■ 462 Pages ■ 7 x 10
 9781957296418 ■ \$46.95 ■ Paperback
 9781957296425 ■ eBook



Lyombe Eko is the William S. Morris endowed professor in Innovation, Information and Journalism at the College of Media and Communication, Texas Tech University. Before he joined Texas Tech in 2015, he was an associate professor and Director of Graduate Studies at the University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

The Anglophone Question and Postcolonial Hegemony in Cameroon

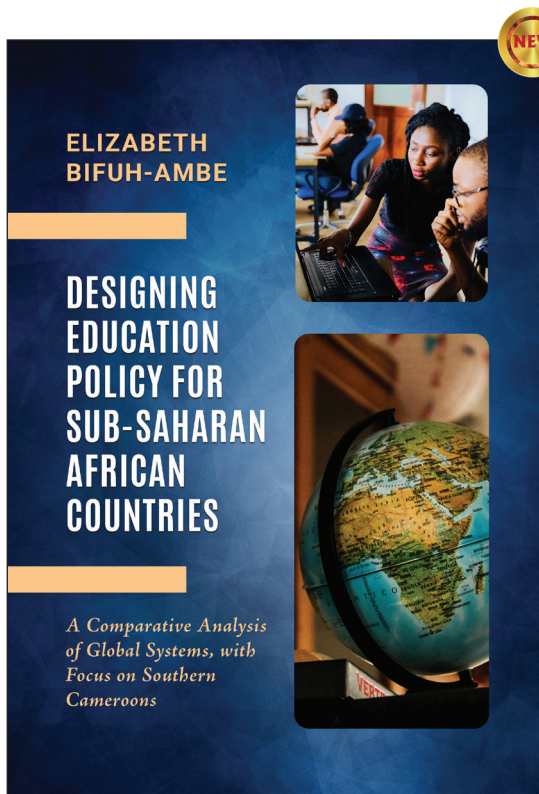
The Past that Did Not Pass

Edited by Lyombe Eko

The Anglophone Question & Postcolonial Hegemony in Cameroon: The Past that Did Not Pass is a comprehensive collection of essays and analyses that explore the historical, colonial, postcolonial, legal, and international relations aspects of the politico-cultural and linguistic crisis between the English-speaking former British Southern Cameroons (now divided into the Northwest and Southwest regions), and the French-speaking majority of the former French Cameroon, *la République du Cameroun*. This conflict has shaken Cameroon to its core since the 1990s and led to an armed conflict between the government of Cameroon and Anglophone non-state armed groups. The premise of this book is that the Anglophone Question, the problematic situation of the muted English and Pidgin-speaking minority in French Cameroon, is one of the unfinished items of business of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles of 1919, that resolved the conflicts of that great conflict. The Anglophone conflict has been exacerbated by the authoritarian republican chieftaincy that was installed in Cameroon after independence and reunification. This neo-patrimonial, kleptocratic regime of Cameroon, has, with the support of its international partners, emphasized the argument of force rather than the force of argument, thereby creating yet another frozen African conflict.

CONTRIBUTORS TO VOLUME I

Lyombe Eko
 Tanjong Ashuntantang
 Womai I. Song
 Innocent Awasom
 Dibussi Tande
 Hansel W. Ngala
 Jude Fokwang



Sept 2024 ■ 296 Pages ■ 6.125 x 9.25
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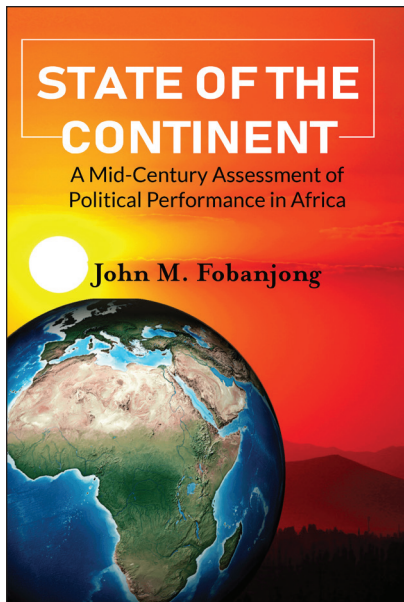
Elizabeth Bifuh-Ambe, PhD is Associate Professor at the School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Lowell (UML), where she teaches courses in Literacy Development and Clinical Diagnosis and Assessment of Literacy.

Designing Education Policy for Sub-Saharan African Countries

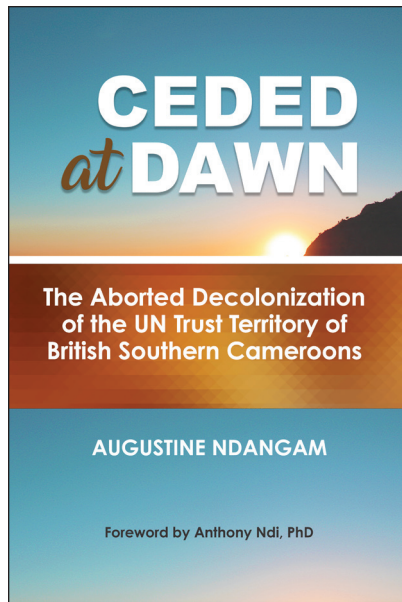
A Comparative Analysis of Global Systems, with Focus on Southern Cameroons

Elizabeth Bifuh-Ambe

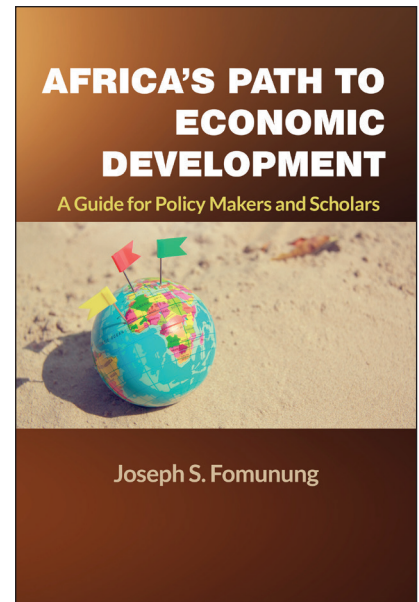
In *Designing Education Policy for Sub-Saharan African Countries: A Comparative Analysis of Global Systems, with Focus on Southern Cameroons*, Elizabeth Bifuh-Ambe embarks on a profound examination of the educational challenges and opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on Southern Cameroons, which, although part of Cameroon, has a different linguistic, cultural, and political heritage that puts it at odds with La Republique du Cameroun. She describes the barriers inherent in the current educational system imposed upon the English-speaking citizens of Southern Cameroonians; barriers that are experienced by students and teachers at all levels involving matters such as disabilities, financial hardships, disease, lack of creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and engagement of students as active learners and innovators at all levels of education (general, technical, vocational, non-formal, and tertiary). Drawing from the best and finest models of education around the globe, such as the United States., Finland, South Africa, Germany, Singapore, and Ghana, she recommends a transformational blueprint for Southern Cameroons based on hybridity. Educational hybridity is grounded in the philosophy that cross-fertilization of indigenous African core values with Western tenets is the best approach to harness the sociocultural and psychological ethos of Africans, create links between school and the workforce, and bridge the skills and socioeconomic gaps that continue to exist between developed and developing nations in the Global South. It is a viable solution that will empower not only the citizens of Southern Cameroons but most of Sub-Saharan Africa and provide the competencies needed to successfully adapt to international contexts, speed up the engagement of Africans as equal partners in global affairs, and leverage their contribution toward the explosion of scientific and technical knowledge that the rest of the world enjoys. This book fills the gap created by the scarcity of academic resources on education policy for sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, it is only a first step toward policy design and implementation. Implementation will require the involvement of stakeholders at various levels and, above all, political will.



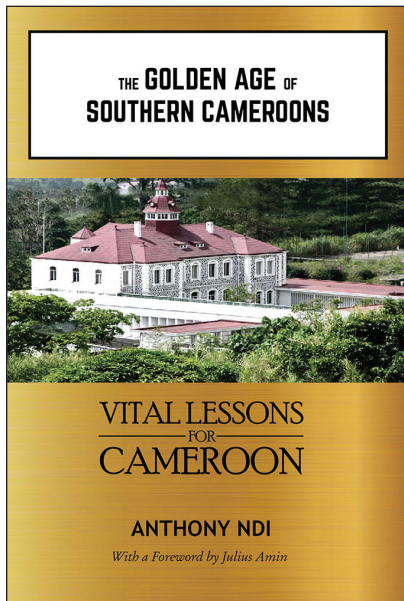
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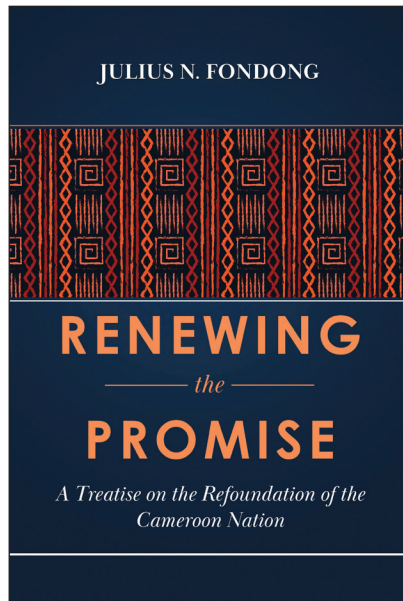
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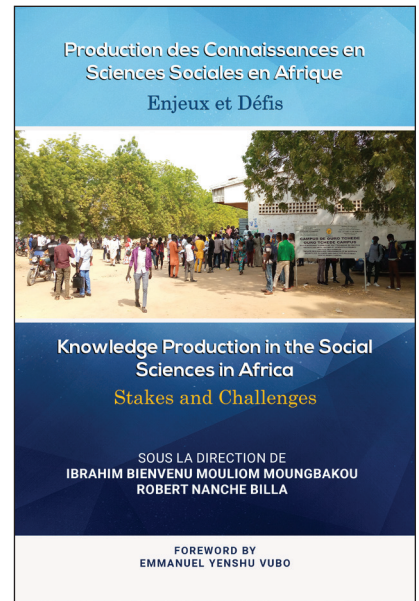
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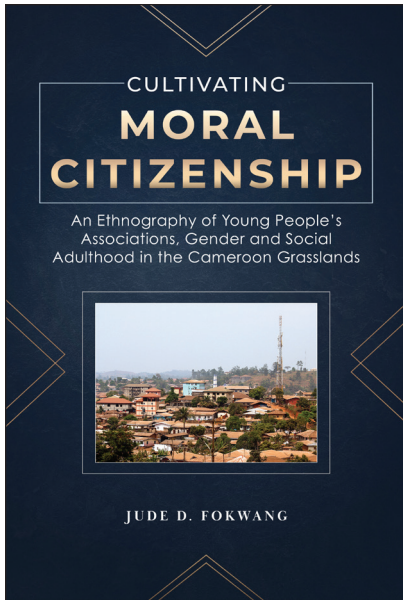
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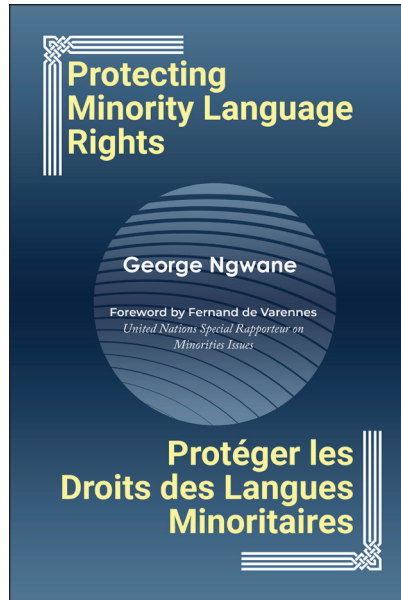
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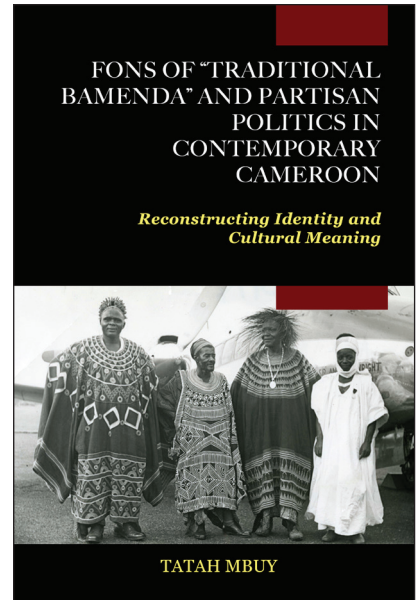
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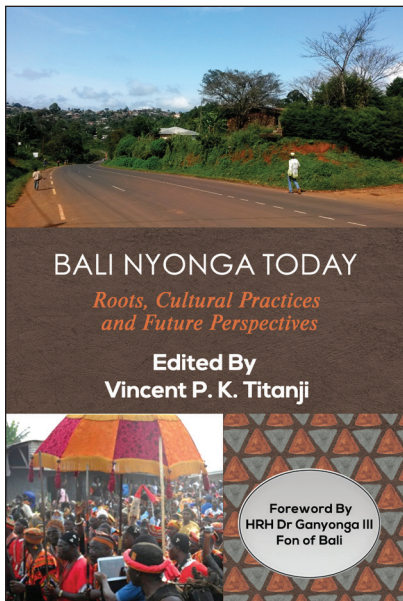
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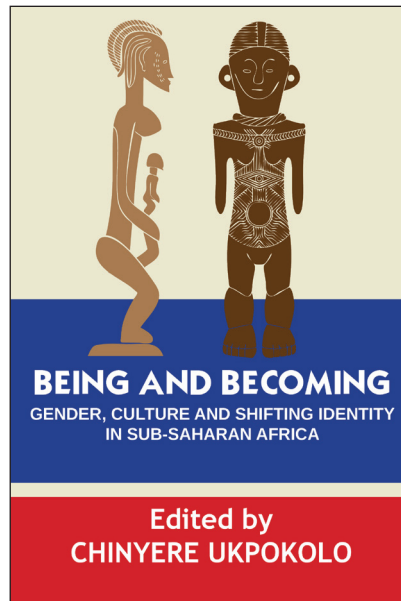
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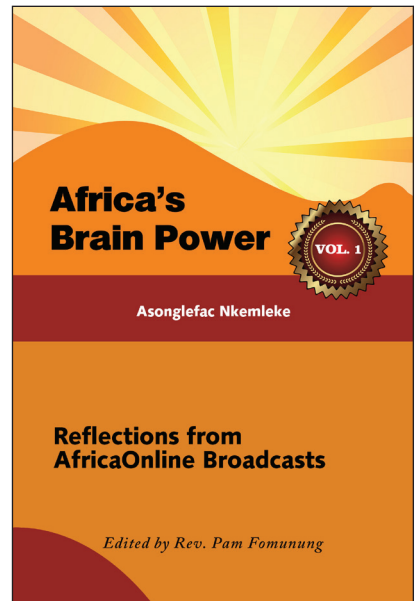
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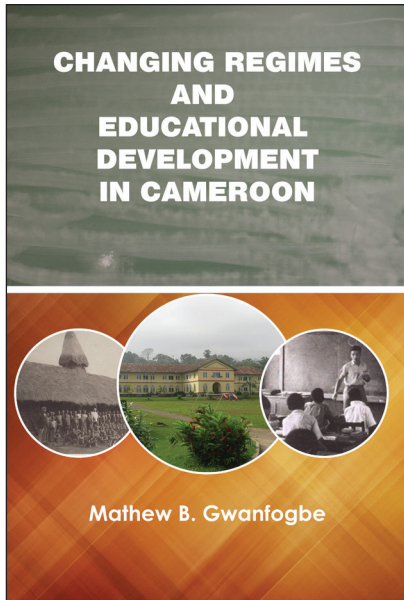
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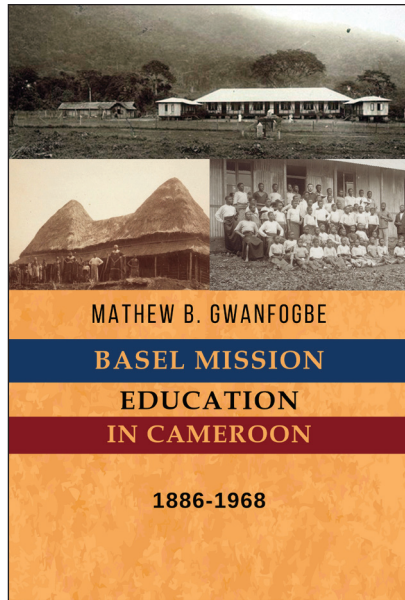
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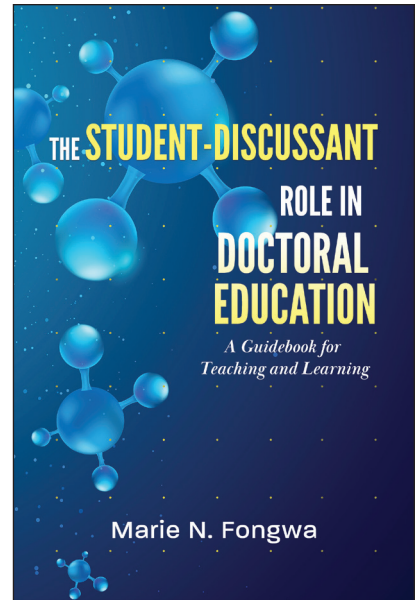
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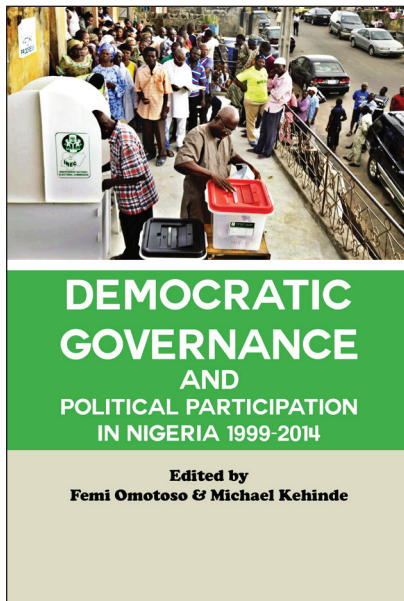
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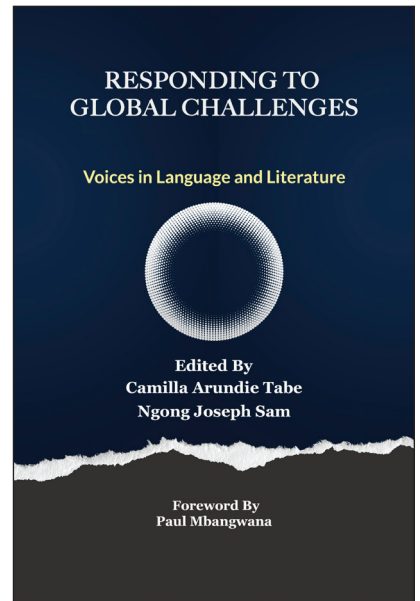
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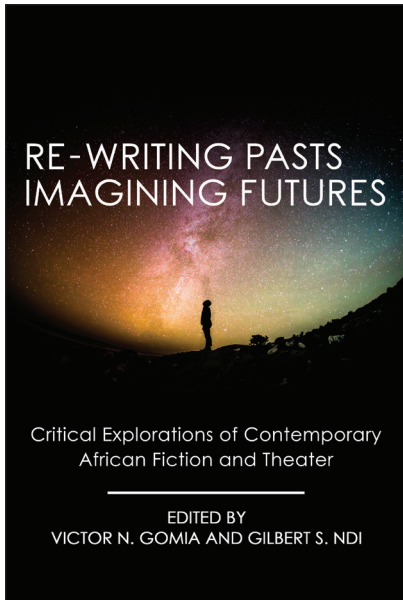
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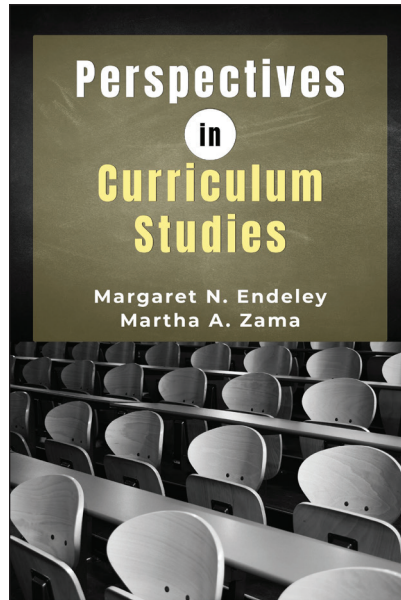
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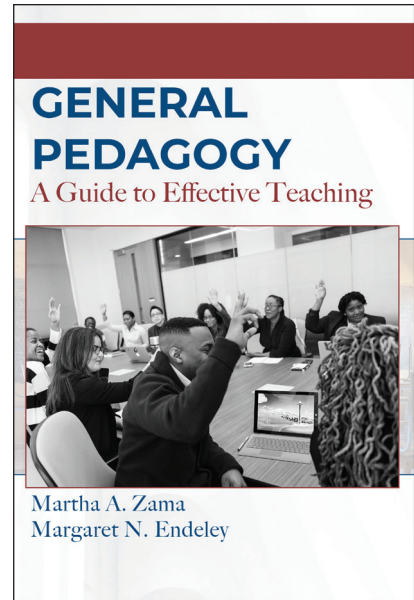
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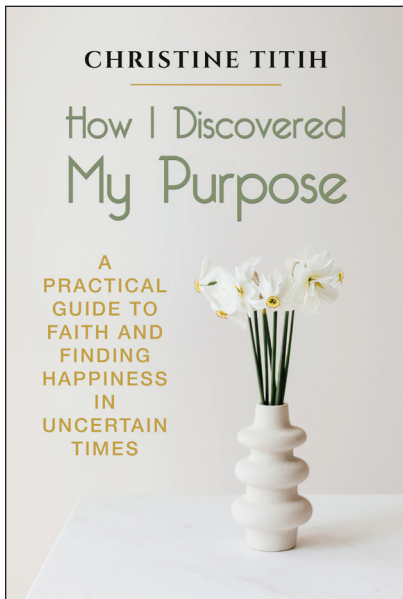
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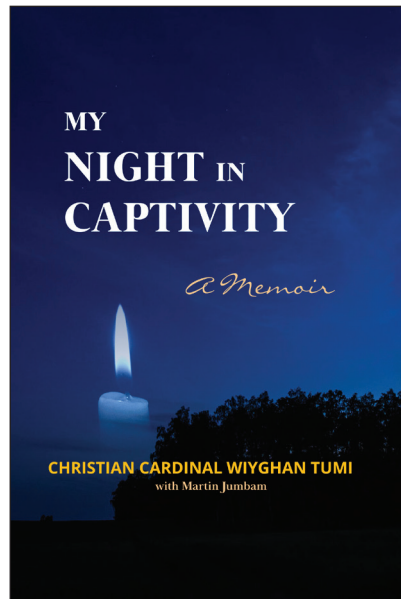
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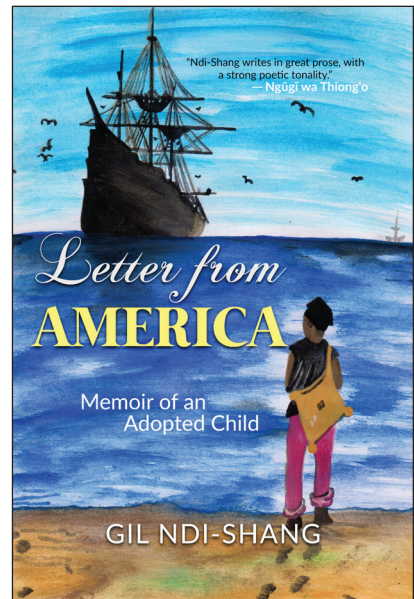
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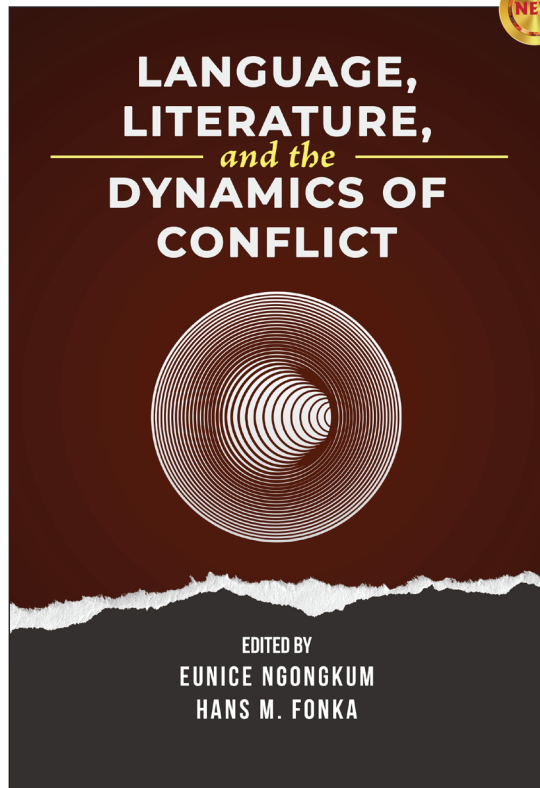
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Eunice Ngongkum holds a PhD in African Literature from the University of Yaounde 1 where she is presently Professor of African literature and culture in the Department of African Literature and Civilisations.

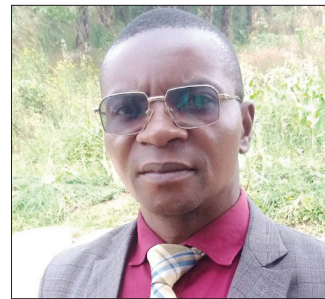
Language, Literature, and the Dynamics of Conflict

Edited by Eunice Ngongkum & Hans M. Fonka

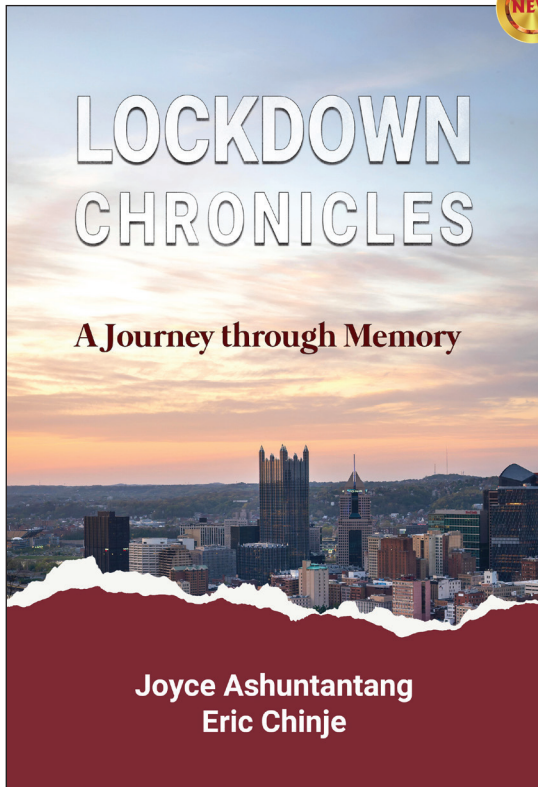
Informed by a global space animated by various conflicts, this book brings a refreshing perspective on how the disciplines of literature and language engage this phenomenon. In its shift from a purely political interrogation of conflict, the volume provides a broad analytic canvas on which human behaviour in such contexts can be examined. This is an ultimate invitation to a re-visioning of socio-cultural parameters of identity construction, borders, natural resources, religion, cultural values, beliefs, governance, ideology, and globalisation. The book's varied perspective, animated by a rich diversity of literary and linguistic approaches, gives it an interdisciplinary emphasis that will appeal to readers across disciplines. Its ultimate message is that conflict is not subject-bound. The liberal analysis of different aspects makes the volume an invaluable asset not only to literature and language scholars but also to everyone with inclinations towards conflict creation and management.

“The multi-faceted approach to conflict, an inexorable component of the human condition, gives this collection of essays an irrefutable place in today's conflict-ridden world. The personal, national, gender, environmental, and linguistic reflections spring from the local to embrace the global. The result is a powerful affirmation of the crucial place of language and the literary arts in attending to conflict management and conflict resolution....”

— Nol Alembong, Professor of African Literature and Culture,
 University of Buea, Cameroon



Hans Mbonwuh Fonka is a lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Bamenda, Cameroon, where he also serves as coordinator of English Language. He is an Editorial Advisory Group member of Applied Linguistics for Cambridge Scholars Publishing.



Sept 2024 ■ 148 Pages ■ 5 x 8
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Joyce Ashuntantang (Joyce Ash) is a poet, actress, interdisciplinary scholar, and Professor of English at the University of Hartford, Connecticut.

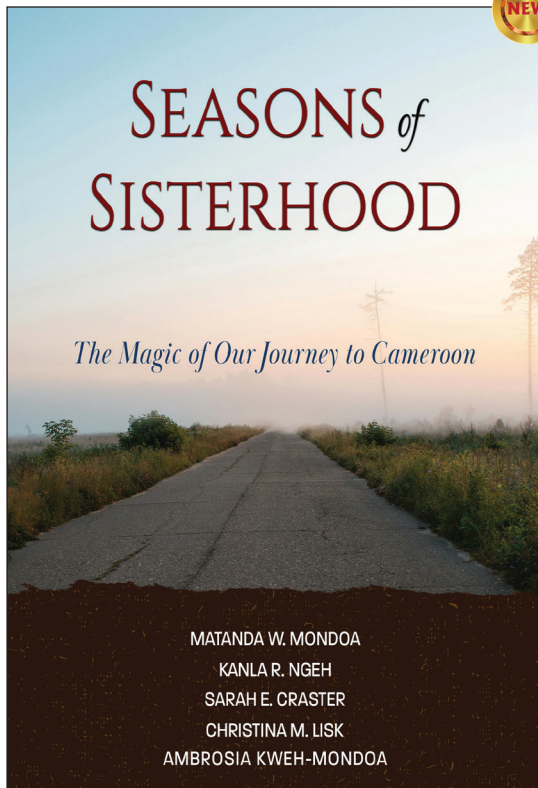
Lockdown Chronicles A Journey through Memory

Joyce Ashuntantang & Eric Chinje

Lockdown Chronicles: A Journey through Memory comprises a collection of letters exchanged during the pandemic lockdown in the USA between two distinguished Cameroonians: the celebrated interdisciplinary scholar, poet, and professor, Dr. Joyce Ashuntantang, and the accomplished international communication expert, Mr. Eric Chinje. Their heartfelt correspondence, spanning over a year, grapples with profound existential questions about the place of religion in their lives and the overarching question of human purpose on earth. However, what will stay with the reader are fragments of their personal life stories, which drip from memory as they cope with the boredom, stress, and anxiety brought about by the pandemic. These intimate glimpses into their lives create a rich tapestry of experiences, emotions, and reflections, making *Lockdown Chronicles* a poignant book and a shared journey of discovery and resilience.



Eric Chinje is a Cameroonian-born and raised Communications and Media expert. He is also a visiting scholar at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia.



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Seasons of Sisterhood

The Magic of Our Journey to Cameroon

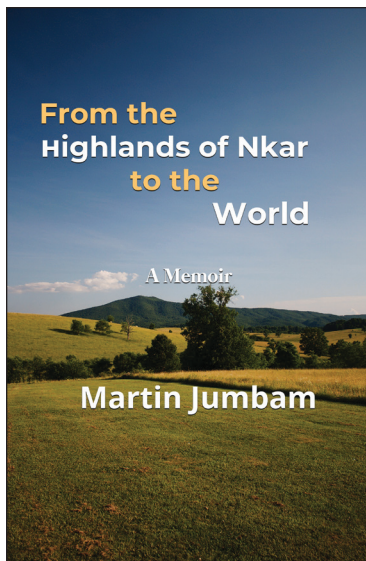
Matanda W. Mondo, Kanla R. Ngeh, Sarah E. Craster, Christina M. Lisk & Ambrosia Kweh-Mondo

In 2016, five women of different generations and life experiences took a month-long trip that changed the course of their lives. With perspectives from the African diaspora and American travellers, *Seasons of Sisterhood* showcases how a beautiful sisterhood bloomed in Cameroon.

In the aromas of freshly grown teas and the mist of waterfalls, faith and identity are explored. The colours and sounds of Cameroonian markets sing alongside the narrators' voices. This mediation of a pre-pandemic era takes you by the hand and guides you back to the adventure of a lifetime.

"*Seasons of Sisterhood* reads like a spiritual adventure into the sacred courts through the myriad corridors and tunnels of our mysterious origins and who we are. This book takes you through an emotional roller coaster journey into self-discovery, at the end of which you are "whammied" by a realization! "This is my story, which I certainly did not write." Here, in *Seasons of Sisterhood*, dreams do indeed become reality! My identical garden replicated but with different names for what I know."

—Rev Pamela Martin, Pastoral Counsellor & retired educator.



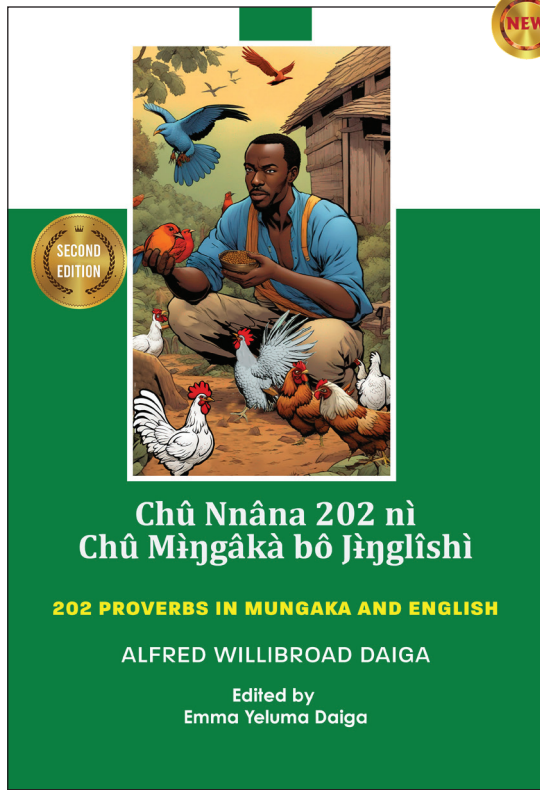
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From the Highlands of Nkar to the World

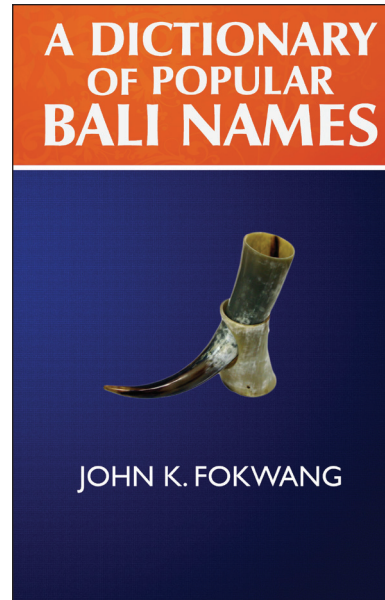
A Memoir

Martin Jumbam

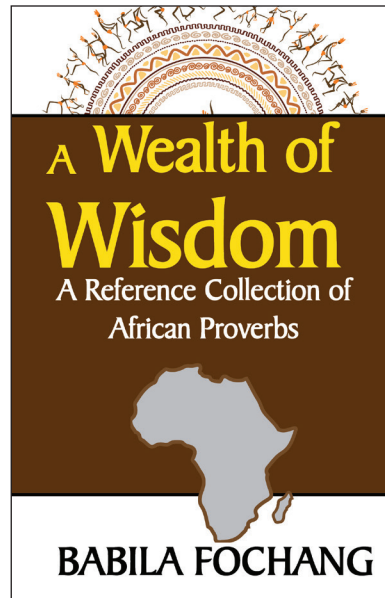
In his memoir, *From the Highlands of Nkar to the World*, Martin Jumbam sets out on an adventure which leads him from the cosy domesticity of life in his village of Nkar, under the patronage of his parents, fervently-strict Catholic Christians, to what is practically a terra incognita, the unknown, the unfamiliar world that first opens up to him when he follows his elder brother, a Catholic teacher, to Nkambe, far from his native Nkar village. This becomes the first of an adventure that will eventually see him drift further and further away from his native village out into the beckoning wide world, a journey of nearly half a century, during which he frequents university amphitheatres in Cameroon, Europe, the United States of America and Canada. Deciding not to settle in any of these countries, thus rejecting the glamour of life abroad, he finally returns to his native Cameroon, an already married man and father of a family.



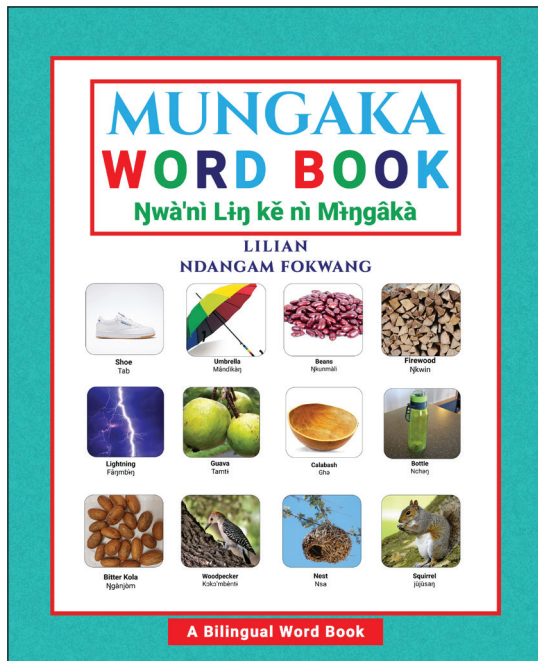
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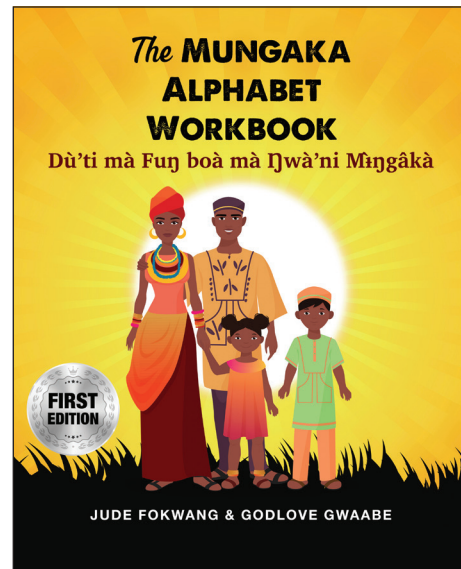
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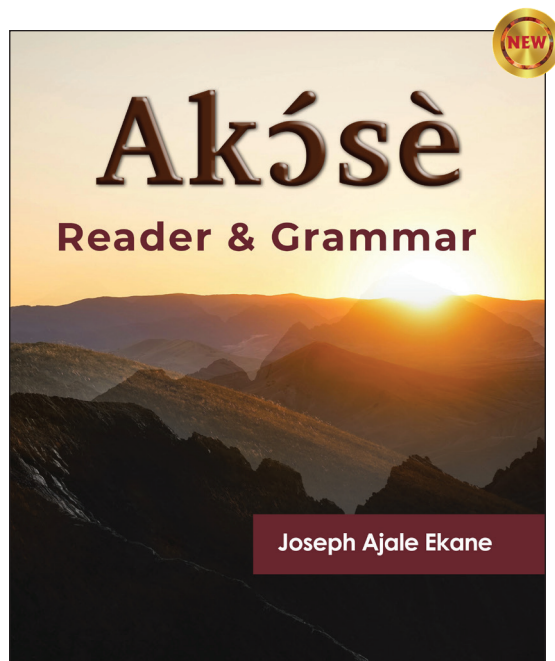
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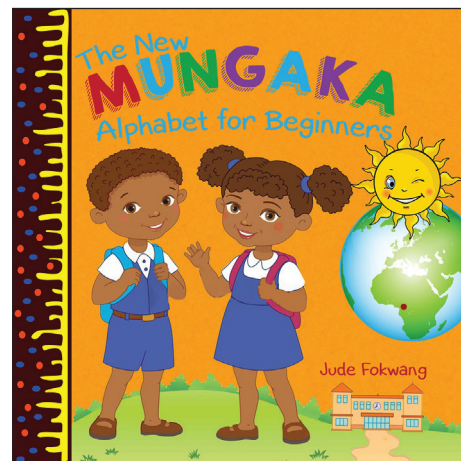
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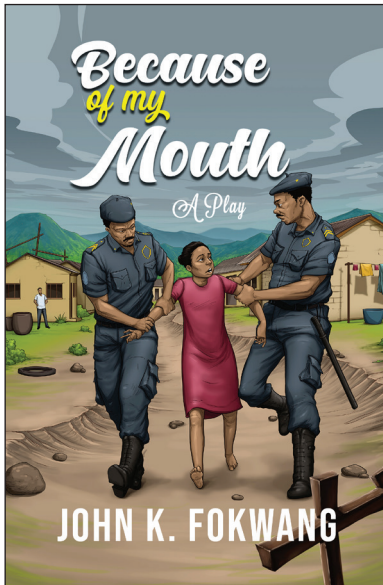
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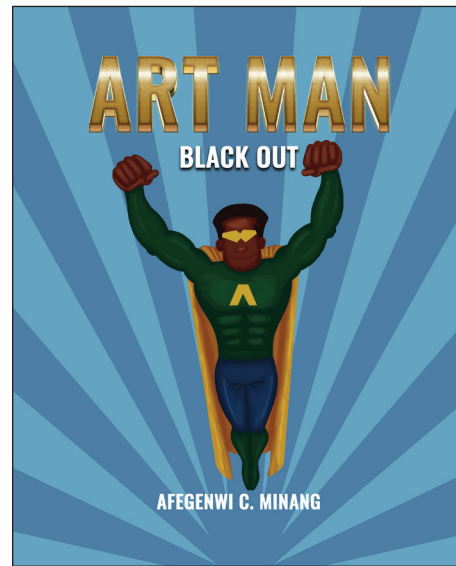
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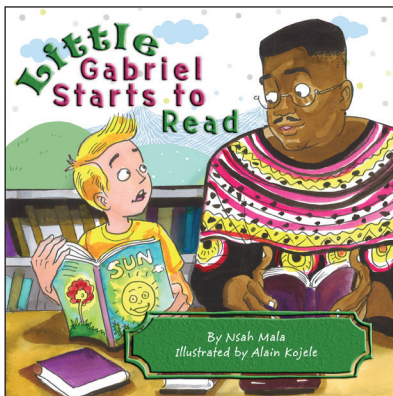
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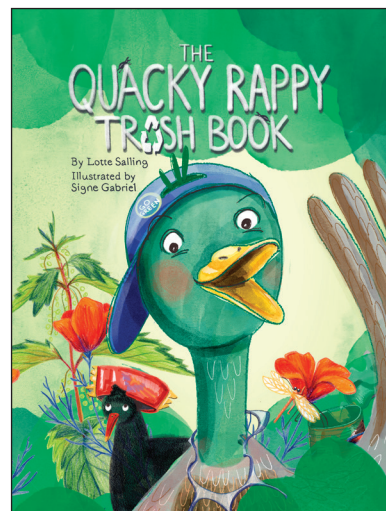
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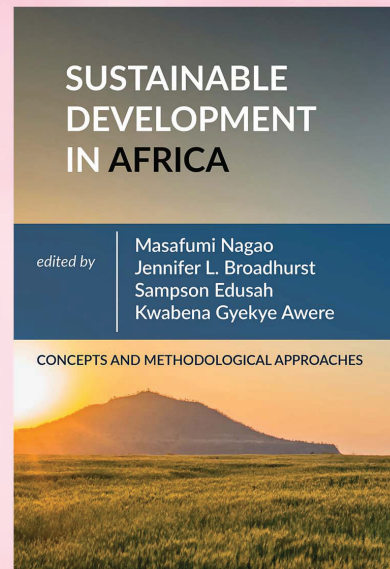
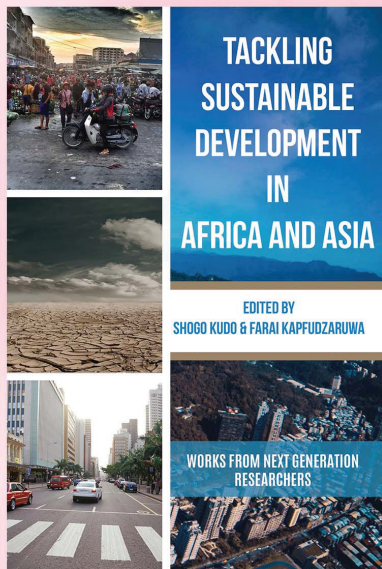
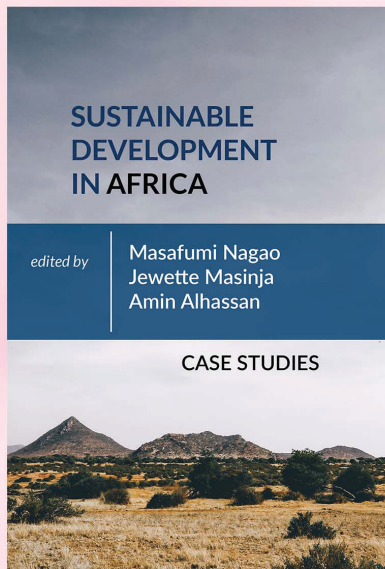
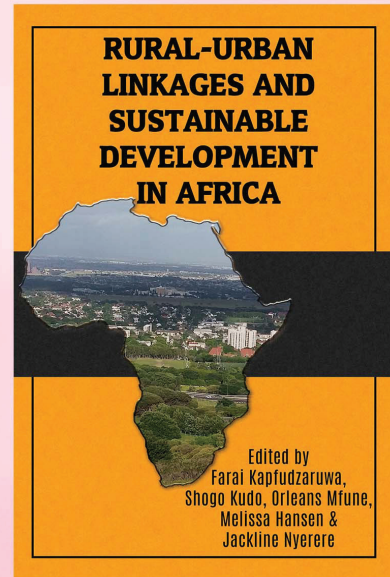
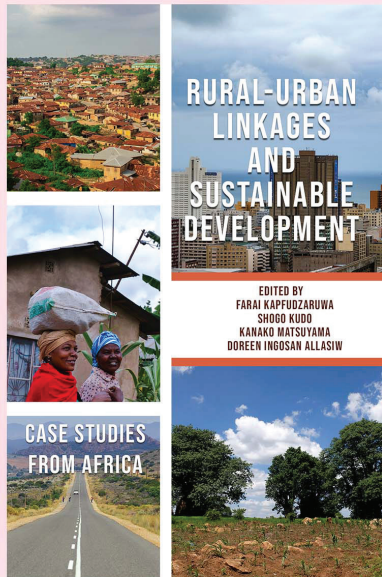
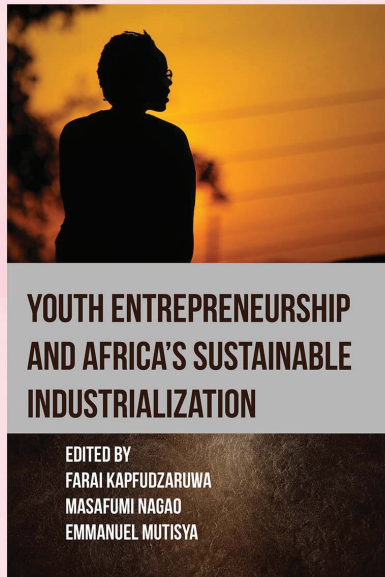
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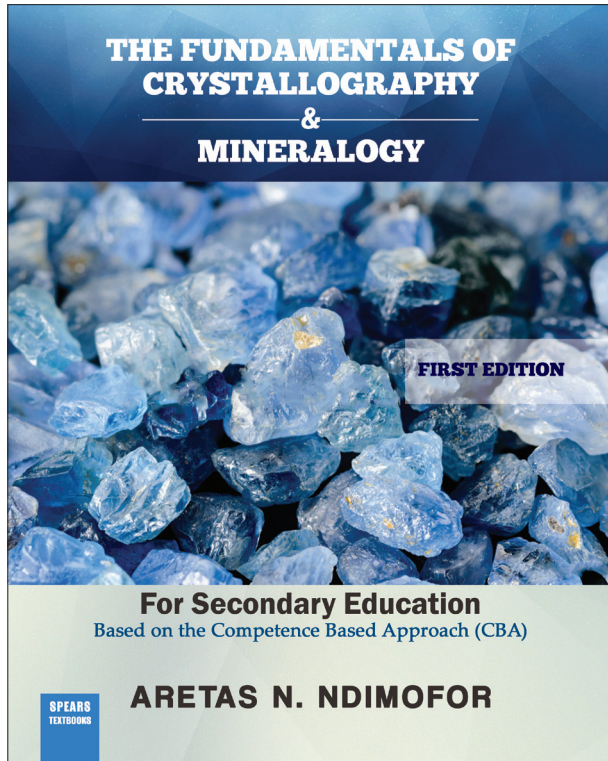


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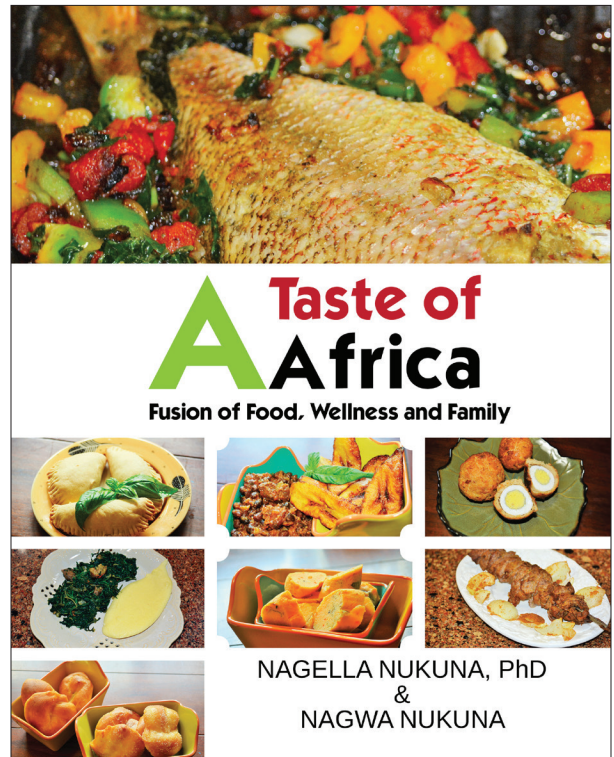
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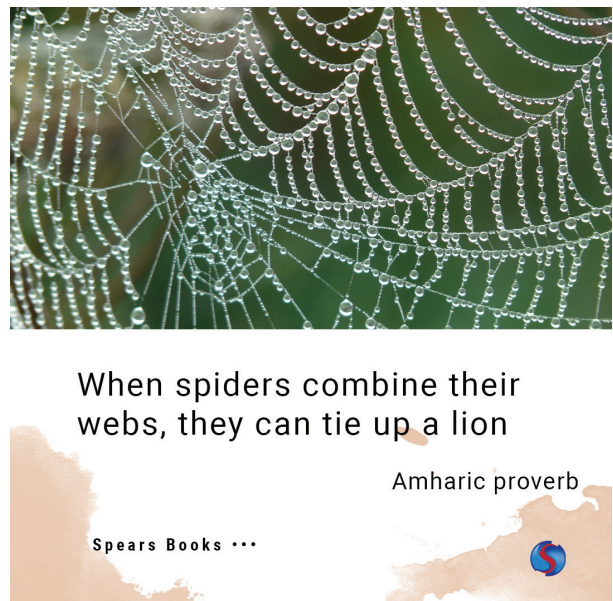
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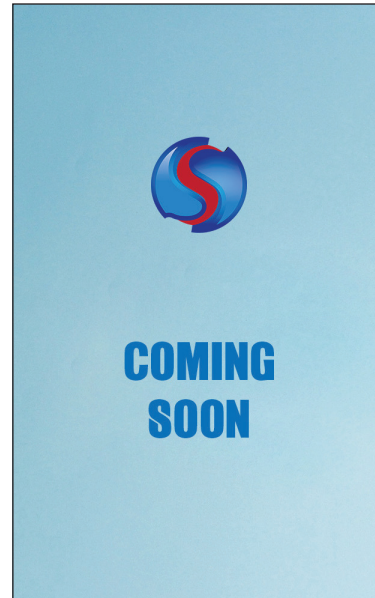
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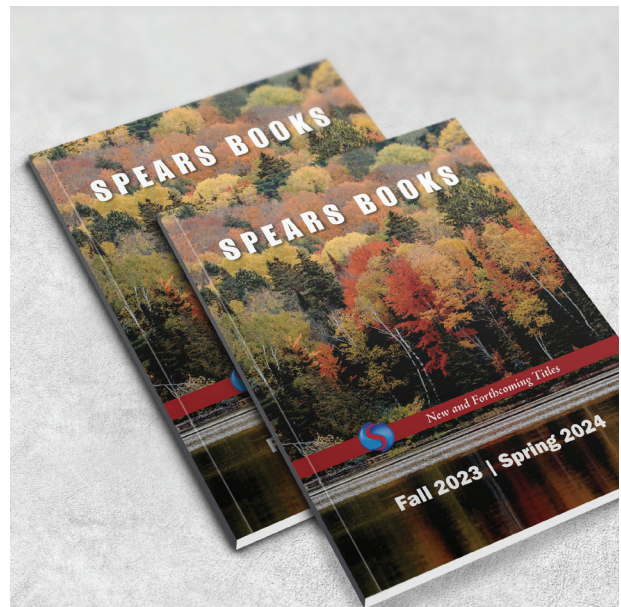
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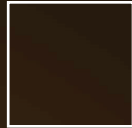
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