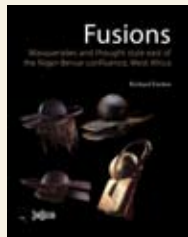


Fusions Masquerades and thought style east of the Niger-Benue confluence, West Africa

Richard Fardon



Fusions takes the masks of West Africa's Upper Benue River region out of the museums and private collections, where many accumulated in the twentieth century, and restores their cultural and social contexts. The book argues that Benue masquerades deserve appreciation as the materialized forms taken by the thought styles of their original creators and users. Masquerades are 'theranthropic': they fuse characteristics of animals with those of living and dead human

beings to create entities to perform the powers and dangers inherent in people's lives.

The subtle variety of the ways that different masquerades, and other performances, achieve this, reveals facets of an understanding of the human condition: of relations between the genders, the living and the dead, animals and people, kings and commoners By demonstrating the similarities in both their conceptions and uses, *Fusions* will change the way readers look at, and understand, the masquerades of the entire Benue River.

Richard Fardon began research in Cameroon and Nigeria in the mid-1970s. Since 1988, he has taught anthropological theory and the ethnography of West Africa at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). Author or editor of numerous books on anthropology generally and West Africa in particular: his most recent publications include a companion volume to this, *Column to Volume: formal innovation in Chamba statuary* (with Christine Stelzig, Saffron Afriscopes Series, 2005), and *Lela in Bali: history through ceremony in Cameroon* (Berghahn/Cameroon Studies, 2006). He was Chairman of the University of London's Centre of African Studies for eight years, and he has been editor of AFRICA, the Journal of the International African Institute, since 2001. Together with Graham Furniss and Francis Nyamnjoh, he is series editor of Saffron Afriscopes Series

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