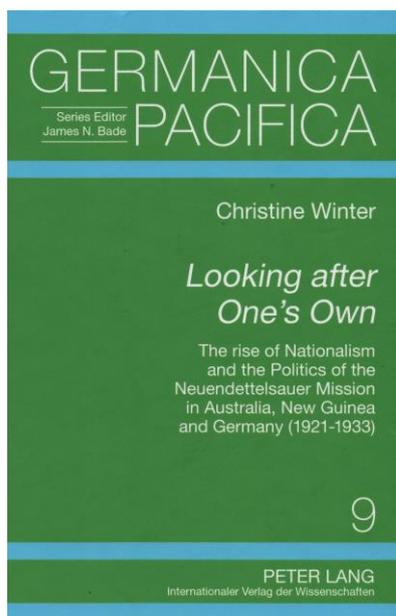


Christine Winter, ed., *Looking after One's Own: The Rise of Nationalism and the Politics of the Neuendettelsauer Mission in Australia, New Guinea and Germany (1921-1933)*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012. xii + 238 pp. ISBN 978-3-631-60320-8. € 43.70. **Reviewed by Oliver Haag,** University of Edinburgh.



This book is a political history of the Lutheran Neuendettelsau mission in the period between the loss of Germany's colony in New Guinea and the onset of National Socialist reign. The time frame is well chosen and reflects the scope of investigation: why did the Neuendettelsau Mission abandon the initial politics of cross-ecumenical co-operation in favour of an increasingly isolationist policy? The entanglements between 'Nazification' of the Bavarian branch of the Neuendettelsauer Lutherans, the embracement of National Socialism by individual mission

employees, as well as the pragmatic re-positing of the New Guinean mission impacted on the mission's fatal move towards National Socialism. In stark contrast to the Lutheran doctrine of the 'two kingdoms' that promulgated a separation between church and state affairs, mission societies, the author shows, did not stand beyond national politics but were intricately enmeshed in the formation of nationalism. This nationalism was also reflected in financial, particularly donor politics which became increasingly nationalised.

The book is divided into four chronological parts, starting with the reorganisation of the 'orphaned' German missions after the loss of the colonies and is followed by the efforts of aligning with National Socialism, the separation of working fields between American- and German-controlled missions and finally the Neuendettelsau control of the New Guinean mission field under National Socialism. The

latter development, the author unearths, went unnoticed by the Australian government. Winter's study shows that the formation of nationalism was not necessarily straightforward and a mere matter of personal identities but also a matter of calculated power politics by specific social groups. Part of this formation was also a process of 'diplomatic' negotiations with Australian Lutherans and authorities which, in the process of increased national divides, became severed. This severance of transnational ties ultimately rendered Neuendettelsau less immune from Nazi political infiltration. The embracement of Nazism appeared as a logical consequence of the dilemma which nationalism had brought about: 'forced' to compromise with Nazi reign in order to prevent complete Nazi control (*Gleichschaltung*). The initially transnational networking between Australian, German, and American Lutherans was doomed to fail under increased nationalism, not merely by impact from Germany and Australia, but also by utilitarian motivation: "The transnational collaboration of Lutherans had turned out to be an interim solution, a compromise, which had been bearable only as long as the better option – sole control of the mission by German Lutherans – was unachievable". (145)

Looking after One's Own is a thrilling read which shows that nationalism permeated the seemingly transnational spheres of missionary activity, especially so under National Socialism. The book rests on original archival research but also offers a rich theoretical outline of nationalism and missionary activity. The author refrains from moralising accounts and also reflects on her family's involvement in this history. Rudolf Ruf, director of Neuendettelsau between 1921 and 1928, was the author's great-grandfather, a situation which rendered her research easier and more complex at the same time (5). The author could have engaged more fully with this biographical complexity, elaborating on how exactly her great-grandfather's past impacted on the research and writing processes. Christine Winter presents a cogent analysis for Australian and German historians alike.