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FORTIER, PHOTOGRAPHE

DE CONAKRY À TOMBOUCTOU. IMAGES DE L'AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST EN 1906

DANIELA MARIA MOREAU

PREFACES BY ODILE GOERG AND PAULO F. DE MORAES FARIAS

Edmond Fortier was born in 1862 in Poutay in the Vosges region of France, an area that later became German territory. As a result, he moved to Paris in 1883 and became a naturalized Frenchman, before settling in Dakar at the end of the century. Here he established himself as a photographer, dying in the city in 1928. Active in West Africa from the early twentieth century, Fortier left a collection of over three thousand five hundred pictures in the form of postcards, a fashionable genre at the time. Although his postcards were sent far and wide throughout the world, the originals have not yet been found. This book is the first important monograph devoted to him and his work. Daniela Moreau has focused on a particular moment in Fortier's life: the journey he made from the capital of French Guinea to Timbuktu, the gateway to the desert, in present-day Mali. This was a journey of over five thousand kilometres, following trails far from the standard routes, taking in the Bandiagara cliffs and the Dogon area. Edmond Fortier was the first to photograph certain ceremonies and dances in the Dogon and Bamako regions, recording the appearance and behaviour of the chiwara wearers of antelope masks and the various kinds of musical instruments used. He also revealed the dilapidated condition of Timbuktu's Sankore, Djinguereber, and Sidi Yahya mosques before they were rebuilt. He never pretended to be an ethnographer, enthusiastic though he was about his subject, but simply went about his work relying on the keenness of his eye as a talented photographer.

This book includes at least half of the five hundred postcards in the "general Fortier collection" that illustrate his journey. Drawing on her considerable knowledge and painstaking research, the author has matched the archive photographs with bibliographic references to provide a rounded commentary on the events depicted, the unconventional figure behind the shots, and the historical and technical context in which they are couched.

Daniela Moreau is a historian. Since 1995 she has made numerous journeys to Africa for research purposes, mainly exploring in the Sahel and West Africa. She lives and works in São Paulo, Brazil, where she founded Casa das Africas, an NGO she ran for ten years. She is at present director of the Acervo Africa project, which puts over 1,500 items of contemporary African material culture at the disposal of researchers. She has been involved in piecing together and studying the photographic oeuvre of Edmond Fortier (Poutay, 1862 – Dakar, 1928) since 2003. *Fortier, photographe. De Conakry à Tombouctou* is the first of her books to be translated into French.

Odile Goerg teaches History of Contemporary Africa at the Université Paris-Diderot and is a member of CESSMA (Centre d'études en sciences sociales sur les mondes africains, américains et asiatiques).

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