

# Contents

**Acknowledgements** VII

**List of Figures** X

**Glossary** XI

**Introduction** 1

Research Site: Baatombu Peasants 8

Fieldwork and Methods 20

**1 Theoretical Perspectives on Child Fostering** 34

A Structural-functionalist Perspective 35

A Structuralist Perspective 43

The Turn to the Actors 47

Transfers of Imagined Belonging 51

**2 Parenthood in Rural Borgu** 56

Birth Parenting 59

Fostering a Child 96

Reasons for Fostering children 117

Fostering, Gender and Marriage 129

Conflicts 134

Arguments against Child Fostering 147

**3 Child Fostering in the Twentieth Century** 150

Precolonial Times 150

Colonial Changes 157

The Post-colonial Period 171

Between Town and Village: A Conflict 176

Fostering in Urban Areas: Cotonou and Parakou 178

Fostering in the Rural Areas: Tebo, Kika and Yarɔ 206

On the Threshold of the 21st Century: Two Conflicts 228

Conclusion 240

**Appendix** 245

Interviews Cited 245

Sources 248

**References** 249

**Index of persons** 262

**Index** 265