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BOOK REVIEWS

The State and the Working People of Tanzania, Issa G Shivji (ed), CODESRIA, Dakar, Senegal, 1986 (194pp, price not stated).

Tanzania seems to be less in the limelight of late as a model in development debates, whether as a model of the ideal African socialist, self-sufficient, one-Party participatory democracy, or, on the other hand, as a terrible object lesson on the damage bureaucratic doctrinaire socialism can do to an otherwise healthy economy. This collection of essays should give proponents of each of these views reason to rethink their positions.

The contributions cover many aspects of Tanzanian life over the years since Independence: Parliament and the electoral process; the State and the Party; labour legislation; the State and the peasantry; agricultural marketing; and the State and student struggles. Each contributor argues to the same position, best summed up by taking the more negative of the two images above and answering: 'bureaucratic, yes; socialist, no.' The overall picture is one of growing Party and State bureaucracies extending their power into every level of national life, and into the remotest parts of the country. In this process they are alienating the majority even as they restrict the people’s power to organise their own lives, their control over the fruits of their labour, and even their freedom to discuss political issues.

The case is, on the whole, cogently argued. Some of the facts presented are so readily available elsewhere, and speak so directly, that it is amazing that previous commentators, whether supporters of what they believed to be happening in Tanzania or not, did not advert to them. For example, there has never been an election which chose all the members of parliament by ‘one person, one vote’: the pre-independence parliament was chosen on a franchise which was qualified on grounds of property, race and education, while subsequent parliaments have contained a high proportion of indirectly elected or appointed MPs, who were, in fact, in the majority from 1970 to 1985. This devalued parliament was declared in 1962 to be subordinate to the Party, a position which was written into the 1965, and subsequent amendments, Constitution, and is included in the new 1977 Constitution. Whatever view one might hold on the classical Leninist ‘leading role of the Party’ ideal, it is clear enough, as Shivji argues in his introductory chapter, that wherever a vanguard Party containing hardly any socialists is going to lead its country, it will not be along the road to socialism.

The introduction of a strong executive presidency shows, it is argued, that the leadership of independent Tanganyika, and later of Tanzania, preferred the style of government they had grown up under, with the President taking the place of the colonial governor, and parliament taking the place of his biddable and largely appointed legislative council. The main difference is that in an independent country the bureaucracy is larger, and thus not so easily controlled by the new president as it was by the colonial governor. It must be very difficult for the philosopher kings of modern Africa to resist the temptation to become king, even if that is against their
philosophy; but now they run more risk of being little more than figureheads.

The history of workers' and students' movements is traced through legislation and salient events. This history is one that moves from something fairly free, maybe becoming more radical and eventually facing banning to, in the end, the establishment of a tame and docile national organisation, easily manipulated by the government administrative machine. This process is outlined, sometimes by participants in the key events, and backed with convincing arguments.

An area in which conclusive proof is, in the nature of things, more difficult to offer is that, it is argued, in which growing bureaucratic control of producer prices, selling conditions, choice of crops to plant, supply of inputs and even how the crop is cultivated, is a direct cause of the decline in Tanzania's agricultural production. Figures are massed in support of the argument, which is plausible enough, and they undoubtly show a more or less steady decline from 1966 to 1981 in agricultural production per head of population for both food and cash crops. Growing bureaucratic control, first by eliminating the middlemen in favour of co-operative unions, then by dismantling the co-operative movement, and now by a return to State-controlled co-operatives, has accompanied the decline in production. The tables showing the simultaneous decline in the price paid to the peasant producer and the total marketed amount of cotton and cashew nuts would be more cogent evidence if they were extended beyond the 5–6 year periods (different periods for each crop) given by Mapolu. It might then be easier to identify particular changes in amounts grown and marketed with particular changes in producer prices or with the introduction of further government control over the whole process of peasant production.

In addition to arguing their cases effectively as regards developments in Tanzania over the past 30 years, the authors have given us an analysis of a case that is not too different from most countries in this part of Africa. The book, therefore, needs to be widely read.

This reviewer prefers to avoid nitpicking about typographical errors, but it needs to be pointed out that one of the lines enumerating 'total non-agricultural use' in table III, ch 5, should be 'total agricultural use'; on page 164, paragraph 2, 14th line would make more sense in the overall context if the word 'liberal' were changed to 'illiberal'; and the second sentence of the second paragraph on page 89 makes no sense; presumably a line is missing.

Reviewed by Brian MacGarry, Silviera House, Harare.


Hazarding a philosophical synopsis of independent Africa's transition to sovereign nationhood, one journalist once stated, "While it may have taken 100 years to put colonialism on a sound footing in Africa, it will probably take twice that time to eradicate its effects on the continent". Indeed, most independent African governments soon discover, to their frustration, that the profound processes and mechanisms used to entrench colonialism are not so easily dismantled or replaced by those purporting to promote the lofty ideals of freedom and independence that characterise nationalist campaigns for popular support.
This collection of articles, by some of Africa’s eminent scholars, highlights the many policy imponderables that African politicians, government bureaucrats and technocrats find themselves confronted with as they try to redress the economic imbalances of their colonial past. Significantly, in all the 17 countries covered under this study, a common feature is the universal acceptance of the fact that agriculture and food production are critical to their economic survival. In addition agriculture and food production are important in their attempts to divest themselves of the more fundamental elements of post-independence neo-colonialism, or, more positively, towards attaining what is now popularly known as ‘economic independence’.

Four distinct scenarios emerge from these studies:
First, that Africa’s food crisis is deepening and not reducing, so that agriculture and food production must, of necessity, take top priority in the development strategies of these countries;
Second, that African governments need to adopt pragmatic and realistic policies that will address this critical area of their economic activities;
Third, that government officials and other state functionaries find themselves strait-jacketed by political, social and other extraneous considerations in the process of policy formulation. This often leads to ill-conceived or inappropriate policies being adopted in their efforts to tackle the issue of agriculture and food production;
Last, that colonial economic superstructures inherited at independence have proved more resistant to change than was apparently expected, forcing most governments to maintain the status quo.

In examining these complex issues, the authors have isolated the particular circumstances of each country, taking into account different ecological conditions, types of colonialism or subsequent decolonisation, social and cultural aspects, the nature of the states, and the strategies and economic policies that they have pursued at any given time. As Mkandawire points out in his introduction, it becomes clear from these studies that the state is, in varying degrees, involved in a wide range of roles in the economic activities of these countries. Almost without exception, governments evolve policies that they consider appropriate for their particular economic circumstances and then create or facilitate the creation of administration structures and institutions for the implementation of such policies.

In these articles, the authors examine the various forces interacting within a given state which influence or cause the failure of policies and programmes for agriculture and food production. Individual case studies highlight the widely divergent perceptions that Africans have of the continent’s agrarian crisis and the difficult choices that policy makers face in their approaches to the problem. Notably, it becomes clear from these studies that the so-called success stories in African agriculture are those countries that have maintained the status quo. These are countries that have retained the capitalist mode of production, which consigns indigenous peasants to the peripheral role of suppliers of labour, while the neo-colonial state or its agents retain the means of production.

A random choice of Malawi typifies this category of states. In his paper entitled “Agricultural and Food Policy in Malawi” Guy Mhone outlines reasons for Malawi’s much acclaimed success, drawing stark comparison between the roles of the marginalised peasant sector and the ‘Achikumbe’ estate type of farming which is
heavily subsidised by the government. Swaziland and Mauritius are other examples of countries which have maintained agricultural production systems inherited from their colonial past. In these and many other African countries, the pre-independence rhetoric about improving the living standards of the masses has not been matched with concrete actions to meet these goals.

On the other hand, Zambia typifies the confusion which assailed many newly independent countries in their efforts to bring about an equitable development pattern in rural areas, particularly with regard to agriculture and food production. The study shows that in many instances, political considerations tended to influence policy formulation to an unrealistic extent. In the case of Mali, Kary Dembele points out the discrepancies in policy rhetoric and implementation in that country's First Five Year National Development Plan. The study on Burkina Faso shows that the country's agricultural development programme failed due to ambiguous policies that were not supported by a coherent implementation strategy.

From these articles, it becomes evident that colonial attitudes and strategies which accorded priority to the production of so-called industrial crops, such as cotton, tobacco, etc., at the expense of food crops (e.g., maize, sorghum) still remain widely prevalent in a majority of African states. The large scale commercial producer still enjoys preferential treatment in government support, while his peasant counterpart continues to eke out a precarious existence from the arid regions of his motherland. Indeed, while the manipulation of commodity prices and marketing structures are perceived by some African governments to be major incentives for commercial agricultural production, other elements such as credit facilities, input subsidies and infrastructural developments are seen as playing an increasingly important role by others.

Also worth noting is the fact that although the papers allude to an almost pervasive obsession by African countries to produce for export, at the expense of domestic food crops, it is not clear whether this is merely a colonial legacy or whether perpetuation of this practice is deliberate to an extent where it can be linked with the orchestrated ineptitude of emergent African states.

This is an extremely useful book for politicians, government officials and those whose responsibilities include the implementation of government policy in their countries.

Reviewed by Desmond Kumbuka, Agricultural and Rural Development Authority, Harare.


This is an undergraduate's text on the economic analysis of peasant household agricultural production, although it could also be used as a graduate text in rural development and relevant social sciences. It would also be useful to natural scientists interested in developing commodities and technologies appropriate to the small farm sector. It gives a good basic understanding of the economic principles which govern decision-making in peasant households. There is, however, one serious flaw in the interpretation of comparative advantage which spoils an otherwise excellent book.
The book is divided into four parts, with the first giving the foundations of an economic definition of peasant farmers. This essentially establishes them as farm households with access to land using family labour characterised by partial engagement in imperfect markets. The first part also lays the foundations of the economic principles to be applied throughout the book, including a chapter on basic neo-classical economics of farm production and one giving a simple introduction to the Marxist approach to peasant political economy. The second part of the book considers microeconomic theories of peasant household behaviour: the efficient (profit-maximising) peasant; the risk-averse; the drudgery averse (Chayanov); farm household; and sharecropping. Part III is a detailed chapter on the role of women in the peasant household with respect to their economic activities. It examines the limitations of the single family utility function (which rules out the importance of interpersonal relationships within the home) as the basis for understanding allocative decisions. The final section, which does not follow directly on from the rest of the book, considers the impact of farm size and technical change on peasant agriculture and development. Having included some agricultural development, it would have been useful to have incorporated a chapter on the importance of increased and secure market access with fewer imperfections to encourage specialisation and surplus production.

The book which would be useful to practitioners, policy-makers and the students it is designed to serve, is clearly laid out. The principles and concepts of different approaches to understanding and predicting peasant production are simply described, and each chapter gives policy implications and is well summarised with a useful and current list of further readings. It is well-written and uses practical examples from empirical studies to illustrate the theoretical principles. The text fills a major gap in the current textbooks available and will probably become a standard text. Although there are inevitably some minor differences in interpretation, this is a book to be strongly recommended — except that the interpretation of the principle of comparative advantage is incomplete.

This does not have serious consequences for the interpretations given in the rest of the book, but it is this misunderstanding of the meaning of comparative advantage which has led to irrational pricing policies and misdirected research priorities in a number of countries including Zimbabwe. Ellis states that comparative advantage refers to the physical resources best suited to the production of different crops or livestock which exist in different locations, and goes on in the summary to state that “alternative farm activities should take place in those locations where the climate, soils, terrain, labour availability etc favour their lowest cost production compared to other locations” (p42). It says nothing about price or demand. The definition of comparative advantage which has led agriculturalists to recommend low prices for commodities such as maize in dry regions and/or to refuse to engage in research on maize production in dry regions. This interpretation forgets that if people in those areas have a demand for maize then it does not make sense to pay farmers in the area less than it costs to bring the maize in to the area. Furthermore technologies which increase the ability to produce preferred (higher-priced) commodities in resource-poor zones should not be ignored in favour of technologies for resource-rich zones. Equally, there is no point in paying farmers in dry areas higher prices for 'suitable' commodities such as millets if there is no demand for those commodities.
Comparative advantage is an economic term which is used to determine which commodity or commodities a country, region or individual farm should specialise in. The concept includes the impact of conditions which affect both supply and demand and is based on the premise that the efficient allocation of resources is determined where the prices are the same throughout the largest possible market area, the differences reflecting only transport costs. Thus the price to both the producers and consumers will be higher in deficit areas than the price for producers and consumers in surplus areas but the price ratios between commodities will be the same. According to the theory of comparative advantage it will pay to specialise in and exchange that commodity in which there is the least relative disadvantage up to the point where price differentials reflect only transport costs. The theory proves that it will pay both the well and poorly endowed area to specialise and exchange, even where the one has an absolute advantage in all commodities, provided that there is a difference in the relative prices.

Although it is not of major significance to this text, the omission is a serious one and the publishers should be requested to send out a correction to pages 36, 37 and 42. The book is nonetheless a very useful text and the author is to be congratulated for his original approach and simple explanations. I would still recommend it as a most useful text for agricultural economists, anthropologists, geographers, rural planners, crop and animal scientists working with small farmers, and all those associated with development generally, including environmentalists and extension agents.

Reviewed by Kay Muir-Leresche, University of Zimbabwe.


This is a very sophisticated, and maybe even compelling, apologia for market forces (alias capitalism) applied to very inappropriate contexts, from Christian Ethiopia to ‘the transformation of poverty in Southern Africa’. From the monasteries of Ethiopia in the thirteenth century to resettlement sites in colonial South Africa, the author has marshalled an impressive array of so-called empirical data from a diverse range of primary and secondary sources.

The methodological section, ie Chapter 1, which grapples with some of the nettles besetting ‘comparative history’, does not manage to convince the reader that social science categories that have been applied to the history of the poor in Europe in the middle ages can be mechanically transferred to the African continent in the 20th century. At another level the book is an attempt to offer a sentimental but historicised justification of ‘aid’ and other Band-Aid solutions to the pressing problems of poverty.

There is also a remarkable failure to blend social and economic historiography into the very graphic descriptions of poor Africans cited in the book — from “palsied, leprous and scrofulous” beggars in Ethiopia in 1520 to recollections by a widow in the Ciskei bantustan, that her husband had been “a good, brave man . . . he never gave in . . . (But) Here in Elukhanyweni he just gave in and stayed in bed the whole time and then he died. . . . I can understand why my husband died. He died of shame and sorrow”.

A prominent thesis that runs throughout the book is that the growth of the ‘town’
or city has somehow alleviated poverty. There is no attempt to examine the patterns of economic organisation introduced by European colonialism, and the levels of economic performance in the traditional societies of Africa, Christian or otherwise, before they were enmeshed in the international economy created by, first, merchant and later industrial capitalism, and now, the invisible hands of finance capital.

The strenuous efforts in this book to distinguish between 'structural' and 'conjunctural' poverty amount to empty scholastic phrasemongering. This is directed at mystifying the real, as opposed to the relative, basic causes for mass poverty in colonial and post-colonial Africa. 'Structural poverty' is supposed to be the long term poverty of individuals due to their personal or social circumstances, and conjunctural poverty is supposed to be temporary poverty which ordinarily self-sufficient people may be thrown into by crisis.

Though the author has no knowledge of Ethiopian languages, the chapter on Christian Ethiopia informs “the broad character of the poor and their means of survival over some 700 years as a basis for comparison and change in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole”. That Ethiopia is unique in never having been colonised is conveniently brushed aside. The impact of market forces on family cohesion and segmentation is not considered. The following ethnic bound explanation for mass poverty and insecurity, which is supposed to apply mutatis mutandis for the 19th century and 20th century, is only one example of the faulty analytical reasoning in the book (p15):

“Insecurity helps to explain why the very poor were numerous in Ethiopia, but it does not explain why they were more visible than in other African societies which also suffered insecurity. For this there were perhaps two reasons. One lay in the family structure of the dominant Amhara people. They were a bilateral people who reckoned descent and inheritance from both father and mother. Instead of being bound into a corporate descent group, each individual therefore had a range of social identities and rights from which he could choose the most advantageous. Bilateral societies are characteristically individualistic and mobile, both socially and geographically.”

We are at loss to see how the bilateral family could have led to insecurity.

The author could have done a better job had he not restricted himself to 'official documents' and secondary academic ephemera on poverty, and integrated some literary sources for the experience of poverty. As the book stands it lacks an overall synthesis of the problem. A good starting point might have been the consideration of the antonym of poverty — development. That would have provided a better basis for a comparative perspective between Europe and Africa. Raymond Williams (1975:340-341) has noted, concerning the entire concept of 'aid', which is supposed to lead to development that

"it is ideologically overlaid by the abstract idea of 'development': a poor country is 'on its way' to being a rich one, just as in industrial Britain, in the nineteenth century, a poor man could be seen as someone who given the right ideas and effort was 'on his way' to being a rich man, but was for the time being at a lower stage of this development".

Reviewed by T D Mashanda-Shopo, Division of History and Politics, Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies (ZIDS), Harare.

This may become the standard work on the Horn of Africa. It demonstrates painstaking scholarship and mature thought. John Markakis surveys the nations and classes of Ethiopia, the Sudan, Somalia and surrounding areas. He shows how colonialism radically tipped the rural-urban balance in favour of the towns. Imperial rule gave way to nationalist control of the state; radical soldiers took over from the nationalists; the soldiers turned to socialism; rural and other dissident nationalists rebelled unsuccessfully. War and famine were the result of national and class struggle in unforgiving terrain.

Chapter one surveys the material base and the institutions humans built upon it. The natural endowment was parsimonious. "Conflict was the inevitable comcomitant of scarcity and mobility, with land and water as its primary objects" (p24). Chapter two treats the brief but shattering colonial period. Agriculture was transformed, and the towns became supreme over the countryside. Pastoralism was economically, socially and politically marginalised. Subsistence cultivation was irreversibly debased. Nevertheless, there was some indigenous rural support for the resulting post-colonial state.

Chapter three argues that anticolonial nationalism was not a mass crusade. It mobilised the group's spawned by the new economy and state. Colonial denial of access to the state was the mainspring of nationalism. The victorious nationalists therefore preserved the colonial economic and state structures once they had achieved access. Chapter four treats in fine detail the attacks on the state in post-colonial times. Uneven development exacerbated material and social disparities. Disadvantaged groups fought for access; the nationalist rulers fell back on the armies; eventually the military took control.

The fifth chapter is the longest, and chronicles the Eritrean revolution. Temporal considerations lay beneath religious mobilisation. Some Muslims, lacking access under the ancien regime, opposed Ethiopian rule of Eritrea. Other Muslim notables hoped to regain lost fortunes, and supported Ethiopian rule. Initial Christian support in Eritrea for Ethiopian rule dwindled when federation gave way to a provincial system with control held in Addis Ababa. Christian support for Eritrean nationalism grew; but that nationalism was riven by fractional splits. Each fraction wanted preferential access to the nascent Eritrean state. Some fractions sought Arab support; others did not. Eritrean identity became primarily a site of struggle between fractions.

By contrast, as chapter six explains, dissidence in the southern Sudan seemed less nationalist. The goal seemed merely regional recognition. Nevertheless, Markakis argues, the dissidents wanted control of the state in the southern Sudan, and were thus the same as any other nationalist movement in the Horn. Again, the dissident movement was highly fractionalised.

Somalia at independence lacked three regions which it coveted: the Ogaden, the northern Kenyan frontier, and Djibouti. Uprisings in these regions sought Somali
support, but the Somali state was ill-prepared to help. In chapter seven Markakis describes three futile rebellions, one in the Ogaden in 1963, one in the northern Kenyan frontier from 1964 to 1967, and one in Bale and Sidamo in Ethiopia from 1963 to 1968. Pastoralists and subsistence farmers could not resist the modern state, but the conditions that led them to rebel did not disappear.

Chapter eight depicts the seizing of power by radical military regimes in the Sudan (May 1969) and Somalia (October 1969); it leads on to the rash war with Ethiopia. By 1980 in Somalia, "the promise of the October Revolution had turned into a nightmare" (p234).

In Markakis’s view, a "striking aspect of radical military rule is the espousal of socialism, an ideology the soldiers try to blend with nationalism in order to shore up the foundations of the new state" (ibid). Markakis believes socialism in professional soldiers is the outcome of "idealism, naivety and opportunism" (p235). After a century of capitalist imperialism the only credible alternative is socialism, and the soldiers are 'seduced' by the promise of socialist transformation. Socialism rallies the discontented and gives sole legitimacy to the state as the champion of the masses. The labour movement comes into conflict with the soldiers, who strive for productivity in the state sector. The labour movement promptly loses autonomy, "allegedly because in a socialist society there is no need for autonomous organisations to defend class or corporate interests” (ibid).

The radical soldiers claim that ethnic and regional splits have no basis once class contradictions are resolved. When such splits persist, wars of suppression result. The soldiers end up in a struggle for survival like that of their predecessors, and are capable of complete political somersaults. These, and the changing of foreign patrons, mark, not autonomy, but the nadir of the state’s fortunes, according to Markakis.

Haile Selassie’s fall in 1974, chapter nine tells us, was rather different. The Dergue’s “members shared a mutinous disposition and the desire to hobble the ruling clique of aristocrats and imperial retainers, but had no idea of how to replace them” (p237). They proclaimed a specifically Ethiopian socialism, which “was hardly Marxism-Leninism, but was a start”. The economy was nationalised, displacing foreign managers by the Ethiopian intelligentsia; and land ownership was radically reformed without compensation. This creative phase of the revolution, in Markakis’s opinion, served the social classes which stood to gain from it. However, opposition from the left pulled the regime in a more radical direction still. The Dergue purged the opposition and instituted two internal purges of its own. Colonel Mengistu took power and conducted an official campaign of ‘Red Terror’ (p243). At this Somalia invaded the Ogaden; the United States cut off assistance; and the Soviet Union promptly helped the Ethiopians. War disadvantaged the opposition. The people supported the state in expelling the Somali invaders.

The Ethiopian government then turned to the problem of dissidence in Eritrea, and after sustained conflict managed to splinter the Eritrean movement into rival factions. The Ethiopian state had then also to contend with young radicals in Tigrai and Oromo. Nevertheless, the Ethiopian government entrenched its rule, and sustained a vast military effort, despite the famine of the nineteen-eighties.

In 1974 Haile Selasse had been criticised because “drought is natural, famine is man-made”. In 1984 “the Dergue blamed the famine entirely on the drought”
The tenth anniversary of the revolution was celebrated. “Foreign guests flocked to Addis Ababa to be feted in grand style, and to applaud the self-praising rhetoric of the country’s rulers who barely mentioned the famine. This, while the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse rode through the countryside” (p269).

Both the opponents and the supporters of the Ethiopian state embraced socialism, Markakis tells us, but socialism “defends the state by denying legitimacy to those who seek its reform” (p270). Moreover, because of its thoroughgoing land reform, the Ethiopian state was able “to raise peasant armies and fight multiple wars for a decade” (p270).

Markakis’s concluding chapter is a powerful synthesis. States in Africa have created nations, rather than vice-versa. State- and dissident-nationalisms have the common factor of exclusion from (or access to) power and its perquisites (p273). When they clash, the one has the power and the other does not. The roots of power in the post-colonial state lie in the towns, not the countryside. The state is “an institution for which the traditional pastoralist mode of production has no need. In the Horn, pastoralists were fighting primarily against the existing states, rather than for the states of the future envisaged by the dissident nationalists” (p275).

Socialism, in Markakis’s view, was used to prop up the state when nationalism proved too weak by itself. “The choice of socialism was not made arbitrarily by the few who wielded power. It was dictated by desperate need and popular expectation. Indeed, no other option was considered credible at the time: a telling verdict on the failure of conventional development strategies” (p275). In this, Markakis is patently correct: conventional economics has little to say and no support to show, in the Horn of Africa. Yet Markakis is too cynical about socialism in general and Marxism in particular, in the Horn. There was and remains a substantial popular support for socialism, which goes well beyond any supposed desperation or lack of alternatives.

Markakis understandably seeks to champion the starving peasants and pastoralists. Collapse of production in this sector has no impact elsewhere, because it has long since ceased to feed the urban people. “Awareness of famine reaches the towns only with the arrival of starving humanity from the countryside” (p275). The lack of impact on the towns “explains the indifference of the townspeople and the callousness of rulers” (ibid). The Sudan directed lorries from famine relief, to supply Kharoum with sugar for the Ramadan celebrations.

Markakis concludes that modern military and administrative resources give no recourse to the peasantry; moreover, the peasant ranks are always ethnically fragmented. On the other hand, he claims, peasants and pastoralists join dissident movements that sometimes transcend ethnic divisions (p276). This conclusion is romantic: there was and remains substantial rural support for Addis Ababa, as the peasant armies demonstrate.

Markakis begins by showing that force was the only means of securing claims to pasture and water, and was a constant factor in nomad life (p16). The root of war is the parsimony of the material base. If the towns now have an alternative base it is not surprising that they are callous and aggressive towards the starving. Amartya Sen’s law holds: there is food adjacent to every famine, but the starving do not have the economic or political power to eat it (p xv).

The problem remains: the pastoralist and peasant economic base is long since
destroyed. Their mode of production is invalid. The future has to lie both in urbanisation and in rural revival, built on very different productive forms. The Horn of Africa is in no hurry to discover these new forms. It may well be that in socialism some of the answers will be found, despite Markakis's doubts. The vast intellectual and economic powerhouse of the west will undoubtedly play a part too. The solution will still be African. Until then, Markakis's description will hold true: the "starving, homeless multitude were now counted in millions" (p xv).

Reviewed by Renfrew Christie, University of Cape Town.


This book is an appraisal of assistance programmes to Ugandan refugees who crossed into Southern Sudan in 1982. The publication of the book was very timely in view of the currency of refugee issues in Africa, and the rapid increase in the incidence of forced migration. The vast majority of refugees and displaced persons in Africa are in rural areas and had, until recently, escaped the scrutiny of researchers and academics. This book is one of those rare instances of such scrutiny.

Although many voluntary humanitarian aid agencies have rallied to help in instances of tragic involuntary mass movements of people, the assistance offered in such cases has rarely been questioned. Usually, questioning such seemingly necessary aid could be regarded as inhuman, since one would be asked whether one would rather see death due to hunger than humanitarian aid. What is being questioned in this book is definitely not the advent of aid itself, but how it is delivered and the extent to which the recipients are involved in decisions that affect their lives.

The tide of this book is most telling and makes no pretence to neutrality. The stance taken, right from the start, provokes even the 'converted' to further question the benefits of aid. The perspective adopted is clear and the frankness is humbling.

The book is divided into two parts. The introduction (27 pages) gives a clear and succinct background to the study and clearly exposes some of the assumptions that have hitherto dominated discussion on the behaviour of refugees and responses to need by aid agencies. The introduction, therefore, puts the reader in a frame of mind to absorb the remainder of the detail.

Part of the book describes the 'patterns of flight' by Ugandans, the characteristics of their settlements and the demographic features of the refugee population. Part two of the book looks at the reaction of aid agencies and the impact of the delivery systems. In this book, the author destroys the major assumptions on refugee behaviour and exposes the subtleties of human need in contrast to the intentions of aid agencies. The revelations from the study could be quite disturbing to those who believe strongly in the intentions of humanitarianism and those who have given selflessly to this cause.

The book is of practical value not only to researchers (who could find inspiration in the innovative methodology) but also to practitioners and implementers of aid agency policies. For the latter group the book may be threatening in that it questions their selflessness. The writer, however, maintains that this was not the major intention of the book. It is stressed in several parts of the book that if cutting back of
aid results from the reporting of the research findings, then the book would have failed in its endeavour to alter the modes of delivery.

The involvement of refugees themselves in gathering data, and the focus on participatory methods, is an innovation which is both new and progressive. Dr Harrell-Bond is, however, very frank about the methodological weaknesses inherent in some of the methods of research used. This awareness of limitations of research brings credibility to the major findings of her study.

The appendices contained at the end of the main text (74 pages) are as informative as the text itself, especially the inclusion of the message of ICARA II which gives added value to the book and places it in proper perspective.

Although this book contains a lot of valuable research experience and findings, its length could reduce readership among the less academically oriented relief workers, most of whom would benefit immensely from the findings of Dr Harrell-Bond's study. Some of the detail makes inspiring reading to social scientists, but may put off those that seek clear indications of ways to improve their service delivery. Parts of the book express very personalised experiences of the author and these may not appeal very much to those that do not share similar frames of reference.

The above comments are, however, not intended to discourage readership but instead to indicate how intrigued the present writer was at reading through the book. It was a rewarding experience and the book is recommended to anyone who cares about the participation of recipients of aid in decisions about the delivery of assistance.

Reviewed by Stella Tendai Makanya, School of Social Work, Harare.


This book's stated aim is to take an inter-disciplinary look at the practice and policies of conservation in Africa. By so doing it hopes to shed some light on the important social context of conservation. The book provides a solid case for the interrelatedness of conservation and human development and searches for a model that is complementary rather than competitive in approach.

Contributions from sixteen writers are split into four sections each with an introductory chapter. The chapters in Part One deal with past and present conservation ideologies in Africa; from the introduction of conservation legislation in the Cape Colony in the mid-nineteenth century to the present debates about the need for new forms of conservation policy. Part Two of the book considers conservation in the context of wildlife and game parks, and in relation to African pastoralists who make use of those same rangelands. Part Three looks at conservation priorities for rural communities, with chapters dealing with indigenous and imposed resource management systems. Finally in Part Four, conservation is considered in its present relationship to development and a plea is made for more local democratic participation in the management of the resources which are held 'in common' (soil, water, grass, trees, wildlife).

Environmental crisis and demographic collapse are scarcely new to Africa, despite the western media image of an Africa that has changed from 'Tarzan's Garden of Eden', a century ago, to the brink of a population and resource crisis today. The
common laws observed by communities in the past, were routinely subject to complex ‘rights of access’ and institutional arrangements which could, occasionally, be threatened by natural and internecine human disasters. Following the plunder of wildlife by the nineteenth century imperial adventurer, the colonial states’ established conservation policies based on statutory law. Local indigenous resources became administratively fossilised whilst vast capital investments were made in imported exotic resources. The inherent dialectic between the need to preserve and the need to utilise natural indigenous resources was rudely interrupted and forced underground into a very active informal utilisation system (‘poaching’). Formal utilisation was the preserve of the colonialists. Africa today still largely awaits the time when the ‘independent’ nation state liberates its rural folk by allowing sustainable utilisation of the resource base by the local user.

Throughout the book the importance of a historical perspective in understanding the origins and evolution of present attitudes and approaches towards conservation in Africa is given prominence and its social context is stressed. Thus the book serves to introduce natural scientists to the social context and the social scientists to the ecological context. The new breed ‘social ecologist’ recognises the sterility of separating communities from state forests, game reserves and recreational areas when it is these same people who should be preserving these areas through access to their usage. At present we witness conservationists trying to stem the tide of over-exploitation of renewable and non-renewable natural resources and on the other hand we have people directly alienated from their own natural resource base. This critical contradiction would be laughable if it were not so breathtakingly audacious and serious.

The chapter entitled ‘The Hunting Ethos in Central Africa’ should be compulsory reading for all those ethnocentric western conservationists who emotively regard such places as the Zambezi Valley as their special Garden of Eden; not to be despoiled by the developmental needs of local populations living in contiguous areas. Wildlife resources can clearly be seen to have subsidised colonial penetration during its initial phase before mining and agriculture could pick up. In 1876 over 40 000 pounds of ivory representing 850 elephants were traded in the Zambezi area alone. Naturally such a bumper harvest could not be sustained for long.

Out of the colonial decimation of the renewable wildlife resources grew the need for a conservation policy and also the institution of ‘the Hunt’ or ‘African Safari’. “The need for a white [Colonial] subsidy being past, the need to feed Africans not yet recognised, the link between conservation and the Hunt lay in the demarcation of the privilege and power of the new rulers of Africa” (MacKenzie:58). Hence, today we have the irony that a great part of the economic value of wildlife in Africa is drawn from the international marketing of the Hunt or photosafari by governments through safari and tourist operators. In contrast a local employee of the Mutare Mission in 1922 is quoted as saying: “Europeans took all the guns from Africans and refused to let them shoot game. But Europeans shoot game. Africans have to eat relish only with vegetables. If an African shoots an animal with a gun, the African is arrested and the gun is confiscated” (quoted by MacKenzie:57).

Richard Bell’s chapter on ‘Conservation with a Human Face’ lays out a table of the costs and benefits, direct and indirect, in relation to the wildlife resource. These costs and the benefits vary considerably between different sectors of society. The costs
related to alienated land, restrictions on resource use, damage to life and property are mainly carried by rural populations. The political and financial costs of administering conservation programmes are mainly carried by national governments. The benefits of aesthetic and recreational experiences and scientific opportunities are enjoyed mainly by foreigners and the urban elite. The benefit of national prestige and foreign currency generated are enjoyed by national governments. The benefit of most of the revenues are enjoyed by national governments and safari and tourist operators.

Those living at the interface between settlement and wildlife carry most of the costs and receive few of the benefits. Hence in Zimbabwe today we have the irony, in a district like Nyaminyami, of an undernourished community sitting on a natural resource goldmine experiencing the depredations of wildlife and precious few of the benefits; whilst the state and private entrepreneur thrive on their resources. There should be little surprise that such people look forward to possessing cattle to enhance their means of production, rather than wildlife, once the tsetse fly is eradicated.

Several examples of the alienation of rural populations from their natural resource base are given. A critical hard edge develops at the interface between state parks and common land. This edge is particularly contentious when it separates pastoralists like the Masai from valuable rangelands, especially during drought.

Zimbabwe’s legislative base for wildlife management is held up as an example for the rest of Africa as it gives landowners a high level of control and use rights to wildlife on their land. Despite this, no communal land, at this point in time, has been granted the right to manage and administer the wildlife resource in their own area. We can witness the growth of wildlife management in the commercial farm sector on ‘alienated’ private land whilst the communal sector on ‘unalienated’ land is stagnant, with revenues flowing out of the districts. It is a sad fact that some of the countries’ poorest districts are rich in renewable fauna and flora resource that are not appreciated by the local people because they have no right to utilise them.

One leaves this book with a sense of injustice at the alienation of many local communities from their local natural resource base, and also frustration at the lost potential that could be reached through integrating development with conservation. A vision of waste could be replaced with one where local communities (stretching from Okavango, through the Zambezi and Luangwa Valleys right up to the Serengeti Plains and on through Kenya up to the Simien Highlands of Ethiopia) become the ‘Careful Predators’.

Such an exalted vision requires, as the book points out, that the alienation of local people from their resources and means of production is ended, and future debate revolves around the classic traditional issues of organisation of food supply, the exact conditions of the soil in divergent regions, and productive methods necessary for sustained exploitation.

This book is good and essential reading, opening up in a positive way the issue of how people can procure a sustainable existence from their natural resource base. The question of who pays the costs and who reaps the benefits would appear to be the pertinent starting point.

Reviewed by Simon Metcalf, General Manager of the Nyaminyami Wildlife Management Trust, Zimbabwe.

This volume is the twelfth book on refugees published by the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies. It marks the end of a research project under the title of Refugees and Development in Africa, funded by the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries (SAREC), during the period 1982 to 1985. This project aimed to produce studies on the legal, economic and social aspects of the situation of refugees in Africa, and these were presented at an international seminar on the subject in Uppsala in 1985 and are the subject matter of this work. This edited book includes the work of three main authors, Peter Nobel, Mekuriar Bulcha and Gaim Kibreab, all of whom have written widely on the subject of refugees in Africa. There is also a further section on the right to development, with contributions from the editor and from Adama Dieng.

Of particular interest in this book is the fact that it introduces a discussion of the concept of people's rights, reflecting on the adoption, on the part of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, in June 1981. This Charter, often referred to as the Banjul Charter, following a meeting by Heads of State in the capital of Gambia, was later endorsed by the UN General Assembly. It emphasises people's rights to development as well as other civil and political rights. In the Charter the term 'people' is used in a loose and flexible way and is not seen as synonymous with the concept of a sovereign state. Nobel points out, in his well-discussed chapter on the subject, that this is in harmony with Africa's historical tradition, where multi-ethnic and multi-cultural 'states' are the norm. The implication is that people should not be denied their rights simply because they do not represent the entire population of a single state, and that states therefore have a responsibility for all those who find themselves within their borders. The Banjul Charter is reproduced in full in an appendix to this volume.

In further chapters Bulcha and Kibreab offer studies on selected refugee issues which relate to Ethiopia and Sudan respectively. Bulcha presents an analysis of the causes of refugee flows in Africa, which he traces, firstly, to the ending of the colonial era with its process of 'nation-building', its enormous conflicts and changes; and then, secondly, to the conflict between the super-powers for areas of influence in the Third World. However he does not only blame Africa's refugee problem on outside factors, but points out that Africa has also contributed to its creation. He is extremely critical of unnamed African leaders whom he identifies as some of the chief culprits in the creation of the refugee problem, particularly regarding the cult of 'boundary fetishism' (p 21) and an intolerance towards dissident opinion. Ethiopia is presented as an example of these causative factors, where regional conflicts related to conquest and colonisation (eg Tigray and Eritrea), political persecution, war, poverty, military conscription, forced labour and involuntary resettlement, all contributed to the creation of a vast refugee problem in the region. Bulcha, in a later chapter, studies the degree to which Ethiopian refugees have become integrated in the Sudan. His rather pessimistic conclusions indicate that there is in fact very little interaction between the refugees and local people due to a variety of factors, including language, religious differences, inter-personal and inter-group conflicts.

Kibreab offers a study of the dynamics of flight, using as a case study rural Eritrean
refugees in the Sudan. His interest lies in the refugees' stated reasons for flight, as he points out that fleeing a country is likely to be only one alternative among many available to them. His study identifies, firstly, that flight is a decreasing function of geographic distance — ie those nearer a possible country of asylum are more likely to leave; secondly, the more sedentary peasants are and the more attached they are to their villages and land, the less likely they are to break their ties and leave; thirdly, populations with relatively adequate economic, social and political opportunities are characterised by a stronger inertia which countervails mass exodus. While these conclusions may seem obvious to the reader, Kibreab's conclusions indicate that substantive and 'reinforcing' factors (p39) are probably more likely to influence the decision to flee, rather than certain dramatic or single factor events. In a further study on the ambitious settlement programme adopted by Sudan for its vast refugee population, Kibreab welcomes the initiative, but points to several serious problems inhibiting its successful realisation. These include the dire straits of Sudan's economy, the perception that refugees are transitory, and a lack of effective participation by refugees in their own development.

Dieng, in his contribution, discusses the role of law and lawyers in development. He recommends that initiatives be undertaken for individual legal experts and human rights activists to work closely with local populations, perhaps through the assistance of NGO's. He quotes an initiative in Senegal, as an example of this solidarity, where lawyers and NGO personnel set up a legal service for the benefit of peasants. Dieng also examines the debate surrounding the 'right to development', and although endorsing the principle, sounds a warning with the following quotation: "Development, how many crimes have been committed and are being committed in thy name?" (p57).

A useful and imaginative addition to this volume are the seminar discussions, placed at the end of each chapter grouping. I found this very useful as the chapters raise many important questions, which in many cases are left unanswered by the authors. The seminar discussions allow for some reflection on the topics discussed, and provide continuity between each segment of the book. On a critical note, the book should have been more carefully proof-read before publication, as there are many spelling and typographical errors throughout.

The final section, entitled 'Views in Common', allows the three main authors to summarise key points and respond to various refugee issues, including voluntary repatriation, the pressure on the host country and problems of dependency. It is worthwhile, in my view, to reproduce the three pre-conditions which they identify as needing to be fulfilled in order to guarantee that the repatriation of refugees is voluntary, and that it succeeds in offering a 'durable solution'. These are:

A. The political conditions — a secure political settlement is required in order to end insecurity for refugees on their return home and to ensure their physical safety.

B. The legal conditions — refugees should be guaranteed freedom from arbitrary arrest or persecution through clearly defined legal decree or ordinances, which precisely define the status of refugees on their return home. An amnesty is an example of such a decree permitting free return.

C. The socio-economic conditions — assistance is required to enable refugees to have a realistic chance to resettle and earn a livelihood once more.
The authors also recommend that much more respect should be paid to the rights, safety and dignity of all Africans and that refugees should be accorded much the same treatment as nationals wherever possible. On a practical level they recommend the production of handbooks detailing basic information regarding refugee' rights and obligations, which at limited cost could add stability and confidence to their lives.

A final point that is stressed throughout the book is that, in the interests of equity in development, the local population must be involved in the development initiative, as indeed refugees themselves should. Development is seen as consisting of three essential factors: direct, practical assistance, the participation of people at every stage, and finally guarantees for their safety and dignity. In general, we are informed that a genuine respect for human, or people's, rights is essential if 'development' is to be worthwhile, either for local people or refugees. It is difficult to be at odds with such worthy sentiments.

Although a short volume (123 pp including appendices), I consider that this book is a very useful addition to the literature on the African refugee problem. Its contribution is also timely in reminding us that there is indeed an African Charter on Human and People's Rights which deserves more careful scrutiny than perhaps we have given it to date.

Reviewed by N Hall, School of Social Work, Harare.

State, Resistance and Change in South Africa, Philip Frankel, Noam Pines and Mark Swilling (eds), Croom Helm, London, 1988 (325pp, £30 hbk)

In recent years, the dialectics of popular protest and state repression in South Africa have spawned a plethora of conventional literature seeking to analyse the cause(s) and to predict possible outcomes of the apartheid quagmire. For the most part the resulting literature has remained within the confines of liberal skepticism, failing to foresee possibilities for paradigmatic political change in South Africa.

The authors of State, Resistance and Change in South Africa are liberal skeptics in that, while seemingly recognising the magnitude of the apartheid problem, they nevertheless see no meaningful political development beyond the apartheid state.

The authors postulate a dual thesis which sees South Africa in the grips of a Gramsci type of an interregnum consisting of a social stalemate where 'the old is dying and the new cannot be born'. The old is dying because the apartheid state does not have the requisite ideological and political resources required to re-establish its racial dominance without recourse to more and more coercion. On the other hand, the new cannot be born because the various organisations and movements that represent the interests of the oppressed majority do not possess the organisational capacity and political power or coercive strength to overthrow the state and bring about meaningful political change.

According to one of the authors, Mark Swilling (p 16), the capacity of black resistance organisations to oppose state policy directly affects the relationship between the reformist and repressive apparatus: the more opposition there is, the more repression is used, which in turn destabilises conditions for reform; whereas when opposition diminishes, repression becomes increasingly functional to reform, and so the resulting greater unity of purpose within the state reinforces the chance of success of reformist strategies; although the former possibility is more probable.
The authors develop their dual thesis by focusing on the asymmetrical interplay between repressive state action and popular opposition, which leaves the business community vacillating between the two extremes. In this interplay, state action is seen through the changing, and sometimes conflicting, roles of the South African Defence Forces (SDF) and the South African Police (SAP); while popular opposition is seen through the increasing political mobilisation in the black townships of the Transvaal, which has triggered a breakdown of state inspired local government; the politicisation of the black trade union movement; the ‘civil war’ between Inkatha and the United Democratic Front; and the changing strategy of the African National Congress (ANC), among many more loosely defined black forces. Within this scheme, the authors present a somewhat detailed journalistic treatment of such issues as the current history of reform strategies in South Africa, the role of business in reform, the crisis of local government; the role of the SDF in intensifying civil war; Inkatha as a wild card in contemporary black politics, the black trade union movement, the mobilisation of black townships and some historical review of the ANC.

One of the co-authors, Philip Frankel, concludes the book by examining some pathways for transition beyond apartheid. These include: state reform negotiation, closure and revolution. Because of the Gramsci type of interregnum, which the authors say characterises contemporary South Africa, all of these pathways are found wanting in terms of their immediate viability in encapsulating what the authors see as the dynamic reality of contemporary South Africa.

While this conclusion smacks of understandable liberal skepticism, State Resistance and Change in South Africa fails to grapple analytically with the consequences of the increasing ungovernability of the apartheid state. Excessive repression does not diminish opposition, rather it serves as a dynamic catalyst for ungovernability, as happened in the Shah’s Iran, Marcos’ Philippines and recently in Pinochet’s Chile. A credible work is yet to be produced on the revolutionary possibilities of ungovernability in South Africa.

Reviewed by Jonathan N Moyo, Department of Political and Administrative Studies, University of Zimbabwe, Harare.


These two books, particularly the second, in a series on appropriate business skills for Third World women, cover topics of relevance to anyone involved in small economic projects. Both books begin with notes on how to use the materials and participatory training:

The first book covers the following:
- what a feasibility study is, and its importance
- choosing a product or service to sell
- finding out if people will buy the product
- determining how the business will operate
— calculating business expenses
— estimating sales income
— deciding if the business is a good idea.

The second book introduces the idea of marketing through a game. Then it covers:
— what is effective marketing
— a problem-posing marketing story
— ideas for visiting local businesses
— creating marketing messages
— ideas for improving practice and solving problems
— ideas for expanding business
— developing marketing plans
— ideas for follow-up.

The books are lively and participatory in style, well laid out and visual. The methods and ideas are accessible to both literate and illiterate women.

However, to assist us to evaluate the usefulness of these books for Zimbabwe, and other parts of Africa, we need to look more widely at criteria for evaluating development textbooks. I would suggest the following criteria:

1. A book should be accessible to newly literate readers in terms of language level and presentation.
2. The book should be rooted in the collective experience of the people for whom, or with whom, it is designed.
3. It should be participatory in style, and generative.
4. Whatever the topic, its economic, political and cultural aspects should be dealt with, as well as its practical aspects. (This last criteria gives reader-participants a deeper understanding of the topic and a wider range of practical and analytical skills).

To what extent do the two books being reviewed meet the criteria? Unlike many local textbooks, they meet the first three criteria well. They are accessible, and rooted in the experience of women from several Asian, Latin American and African countries. They were widely tested. The style is participatory and generative, the books draw on women's experience and build their confidence to improve and extend, the ideas that are covered.

The only weakness of these books is that they fail to meet our fourth criteria, the practical training is not situated within a political, economic and cultural context. Whether this is because the books are too international to have a specific context, or whether USAID which funded the books would not accept such an approach, is unclear.

However, all of us involved in small economic projects should realise that at present a very wide range of agencies from, left to right, are promoting small enterprises. The Right see them as a necessary part of 'development as a tranquiliser', making the situation of women from low income groups a little better so that they are not provoked to challenge the deeper inequalities in the economy. Those of us who believe in development leading to transformation, think that to empower women from low income groups, training should involve economic, political and cultural information and analysis, as well as practical skills. So it is not enough to look at the practical skills needed for one enterprise, rather women need to examine national strategies to promote their economic rights as well.
Bearing in mind this one reservation, these books are recommended to Zimbabweans, and others involved in small economic projects.

Reviewed by Kathy Bond-Stewart, Harare.


This directory of resources relating to women in the Third World includes lists of organisations, books, periodicals, pamphlets and articles, and audiovisual and other resources which in one way or another relate to, serve, work for, or bring together women in the Third World. The Third World in this case includes people and countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East — but not ‘third world’ elements in the industrialised nations of the First World. This publication updates the chapter on women from an earlier publication Third World Resource Directory (Orbis:1984). It is one of a number of resource books published by Orbis Books, for Maryknoll, which have been compiled by Thomas Fenton and Mary Heffron of the Third World Resources project of the Data Centre, a public-interest information library.

Marilee Karl, ISIS International Coordinator, writes very positively about this publication in the Foreword (vii):

"Leafing through the pages of this directory gives a feeling for the breadth, depth, and dynamism of women's consciousness-raising and organisational efforts in the Third World. Here are the voices of Central American women, suffering in strife-torn situations, of women from rural villages in Asia drawn by poverty into the sex-tourism industry in the capital cities or around US military bases, of Mexican women working in US owned border industries, or Third World women explaining just what the world economic crisis means to the survival chances of millions of families like their own."

In addition to indicating how much material of value there is in this publication, Marilee Karl's comments point also to the statement of political orientation made by the editors, who indicate that the resource directories are partisan and biased in favour of a radical analysis of Third World affairs. This political orientation is reflected in the objectives of the Data Centre for its series of publications on Third World issues, as stated in the Preface (xi):

1. to strengthen the ties among organisations that oppose the injustices in foreign military and economic intervention in the Third World by helping to dismantle the institutional, issue-related, and regional barriers that now divide these groups.

2. to legitimise and give equal time to alternative points of view on Third World affairs in general and on the involvement of the United States and other major powers in the Third World in particular.

3. to promote the education/action resources of Third World-related organisations in a sustained, focused, and professional manner.

4. to put in the hands of researchers and organisers in the Third World comprehensive guides to Third World-related organisations and educational resources in other parts of the world.

5. to direct concerned citizens in First World countries to the books, periodicals, audiovisuals, and other resources they need to study in order to take informed and
effective action to correct injustices in the ways their governments and business treat Third World nations and peoples.

An enormous amount of work has obviously gone into the development of this directory. Particularly useful are the large number of annotated entries, many presented in some detail, and the format and presentation of the information. Where possible addresses, contact information, costs, and so on are also given. The indexing and contents pages in this publication, as is necessary in a resource directory, are very thorough. The information is indexed by organisations, individuals, titles, geographical areas and subjects, and the geographical spread of information is fairly impressive. As a directory this publication appears to serve its purpose very well, and is to be recommended.

However, a directory of resources such as this one can rarely be exhaustive, as is recognised by the editors in their introduction. But, even more importantly, it is also likely to reflect the most available resources. In this sense a reader could expect to find a large proportion of the resources listed actually originating from outside the Third World, from the First World, or from the more accessible and ‘fluent’ Third World countries. This of course is a reflection of the current world information order and the lack of publishing resources in the Third World. Even when Third World writers are published this tends to be through publishers in the First World. And, indeed, a large proportion of the resources in this directory, especially those on which some detailed information is given, are based in First World countries. While the production of this resource directory on Women in the Third World is laudatory, it seems a great pity that we in the Third World can't take responsibility for this kind of data collection and presentation ourselves.

In this respect I wonder if the presentation of information could be altered to focus first on the resources originating from organisations based in the Third World, and then move onto the First World support groups and publications. This emphasis would I think show up more sharply the need to deliberately seek information ‘owned’ by the Third World, highlight the relative paucity of published information of this kind, and be in keeping with the stated political bias of this series of Third World Resource books.

This directory of resources is a valuable catalogue of existing resources and publications relating to women in the Third World and should prove to be a useful resource for organisations in both the first and third worlds who are interested in issues relating to women, and to justice.

Reviewed by Brigid Willmore, Harare, Zimbabwe.


The author puts forward a theory of modes of human reproduction, in an attempt to illuminate and explain the role of gender in materialist analyses of modes of production. She points out that the relations of mating and those of filiation are important for ordering power relations in all activities in which different generations are involved. Vuorela holds that the modes of human reproduction are constituted by relations and forces of human reproduction.
Vuorela holds that productive and reproductive relationships both appropriate labour within a given social formation. Although the two types of relationships are interdependent, they may be in opposition when one undercuts the other. For example, the mode of production may use and subordinate the mode of human reproduction in marriage in a way that generates conflicts between the two modes. Msoga village in Tanzania is used to illustrate and validate the author's theory. The fact that the Kwere people in Msoga are matrilineal is interesting because it enables her to elaborate her theory. She points out that matrilineal and patrilineal systems both exist within patrilineal modes of human reproduction.

The theory is interesting and fairly well presented. Vuorela indicates that the discovery of the male role in paternity does not necessarily lead to the supercession of matrilineality by patrilineality. Her approach enables us to analyse human reproduction without accepting the contours imposed by androcentric assumptions. What could be better explained is the process by which fraternal interest groups make the mode of production into a patriarchal one. It is important to note that the strategies that are used by Kwere women have also been noted amongst women in patrilineal societies. Factually, it should be pointed out that it is the sperm that fertilise ova and not the semen. These observations do not detract from the merit of the theory presented by the author in her attempt to elaborate a materialist theory of modes of human reproduction.

Reviewed by Rudo Gaidzanwa, Dept of Sociology, University of Zimbabwe.


These two books were written at more or less the same time, during the height of Thatcherite and Reaganite economics, with their emphasis on cutting public expenditure in the social services, including education, and on the deregulation and privatisation of state run institutions, especially those engaged in production. This kind of thinking is being exported to developing countries by Thatcherite and Reaganite intellectuals and the official aid agencies of these countries. It is this philosophy which informs the World Bank Report and to some extent Keith’s report, although he takes a more balanced view and questions some of the assumptions that underlie the recommendations made by the World Bank Report.

These two books have also come out during a period of extreme economic hardship in most African countries. During this period both the World Bank and the IMF were pressurising beleagured African governments into restructuring their economies by cutting down on public expenditure and increasing the privatisation of parastatals.

Basically the two books are saying that:

(a) Education, especially university education, has become very expensive. The latter in some cases consumes as much as 20 per cent of the total Education budget, while only benefiting a small elite.

(b) The Public cost of higher education should be recovered through making the student pay an economic fee, by reducing subsidies given to students in the form of grants, and by cutting down on non-teaching staff expenditure.
(c) A credit market for education, together with selective scholarships for the poor, should be established.

(e) Money saved by removing subsidies on higher education should be channelled to the primary and secondary sectors for expansion.

(f) There is a close relationship between levels of education, especially in terms of efficiency and quality graduates. The quality of education at the secondary level affects students' ability to study at the university level. An example is given from Nigeria, where in one year 72 per cent of all those who sat for the West African Certificate failed, especially in Science and Mathematics, necessitating the introduction of pre-degree science courses.

(g) Universities in Africa have failed to deliver the goods especially in terms of producing technical professionals, and science and mathematics teachers. Furthermore the high dependency on expatriates in most African countries continues, even in those countries that have been independent for twenty years. The product of these universities does not justify their high cost.

The World Bank Report puts emphasis on the privatisation of schools in order to increase competition within the system. This is supposed to ensure higher efficiency through greater managerial accountability. The report has incredible faith in the ability of market forces, on their own, to solve the problem of the misallocation of resources among the different levels in education and that they can promote equity through channelling more funds to the primary school level. The Report claims that primary education has the highest rate of return since the largest number of students in developing countries are in this group. This last argument seems to be based on the figures from the early 1960s when it was still relatively easy for Std 6 graduates to get jobs.

Keith's book looks at primary and secondary schooling in Africa in the first two chapters, and tries to relate the output from both levels to the number of jobs available. The author concludes that for the primary school leaver in the 1980s there are virtually no job opportunities in the formal sector. In addition, the land shortage is serious in most African countries, and this closes up the only other channel open to them, ie agriculture. As a result, most primary school graduates are doomed to be petty traders or producers in the informal sector, which is already overburdened by unemployed adults and where rewards are very low.

The future is not so bright either for secondary school graduates, and even university graduates, especially those in the humanities. According to the author there are a number of weaknesses in the arguments put forward by institutions like the World Bank. He maintains that efficiency arguments are not backed by statistics. For example, it is alleged that there is a relationship between private financing and lower repetition and drop out rates and that students will behave more as investors and less as consumers in terms of subject choice, ie they will choose those subjects that have the higher rate of return (science and maths). There is also no guarantee that the monies saved from higher education will automatically be channelled to primary and secondary education. It should be remembered that the decision makers in many countries are able to send their children to elite private schools and there is, therefore, no compulsion for them to transfer large sums of money to improve primary and secondary education. Privatisation in most cases has tended to work against equity, because wealthy communities are always a minority in any country and they
resent the transfer of funds to boost schools in peasant or working class areas. It is interesting to note that in a country like Zimbabwe the most expensive and exclusive schools are in wealthy suburbs or wealthy commercial farming areas. Keith also makes an important observation with regard to making students pay an economic fee for both tuition and boarding. Many students resent paying more for university education, and governments are wary of giving large loans to students as this would inevitably commit them to giving the students employment once they graduate. He maintains that most of the public sector has very few vacancies for humanities students, but has plenty of vacancies for the technically qualified graduates. He mentions the case of Sudan and Somalia where there is a severe brain drain in terms of science graduates who are emigrating to the Gulf States where jobs are well paid.

Finally, the author makes some suggestions on how to cut costs. These suggestions include, cutting down the number of non-teaching staff in universities, getting universities engaged in viable commercial activities like consulting services, or producing goods like furniture, vegetables, poultry, and beef. They should also abolish free tickets for sabbaticals — and made more resources available for research and teaching.

Feeding and accommodation subsidies should also be reduced, though this is recognised as a political hot potato. Very few governments would survive without resorting to brute force, including closing the universities, should such a decision be taken.

What is missing from both books is a reference to the weaknesses of the African economies. Particularly their inability to develop viable industries for processing the raw materials which are in great abundance on the continent. It is only by adding value to raw materials that more jobs can be created, and so absorb the deluge of graduates from all levels of the educational system.

The North-South relationship has a lot to do with the present crisis in education, though it is true to say that even the capitalist countries of the West are also experiencing the unemployment crisis. Keith tries to relate education to the labour market, but does not relate the labour market to the nature and structure of African economies.

The two books have been produced at an opportune moment, especially for Zimbabwe which has recently established a Commission of Inquiry into the possibility of establishing a Second University Campus. Those involved in the exercise and university administration would benefit from reading the two books. Some of the problems and issues outlined apply equally to Zimbabwe. The two case studies of Nigerian and Ghananian universities contain a wealth of information which is relevant to Zimbabwean and other African universities. Strategies need to be developed to deal with the problem of maintaining present standards while also coping with increasing enrollments.

Reviewed by Taka Mudariki, Harare.

Social Structures: A Network Approach, Barry Wellman and S D Berkowitz (eds), Cambridge University Press, 1988 (513pp, £15.00)

This edited book seems to distinguish and put forward a 'new' structural approach, 'a
network approach, from a variety of structural approaches common in conventional social anthropology and sociology. It disposes of methodological individualism, at one time central to social anthropology, and the reductionism inherent in social psychological analyses. In the process, the editors and fellow contributors to the book provide the reader with an invaluable contribution in respect of a review of the literature.

The book is divided into five parts. Part I, ‘Thinking Structurally’, outlines the main tenets and concepts of this new structural network approach. It seeks to demonstrate the case for a new brand of structural analysis by giving “examples showing how classical problems in social inquiry can be rethought — and new insights developed — once the phenomena involved are seen as the systematic result of structural forces” (p7). More revealing of what lies behind the ‘new’ structural network approach, however, is the section by Barry Wellman that attempts to demonstrate how network analysis, sociometry and political economy “are coalescing into a common structural analytic approach” (p7).

The other parts on ‘Communities’, ‘Markets’, ‘Social Change’ and ‘Social Mobility’ have all one object: to re-interpret existing studies/literature using the ‘new’ structural network analysis and related concepts. These parts seek to refute, in particular, normative approaches in social anthropology and sociology. For example, in Part IV, ‘Social Change’, the editors note that there has been a long-standing debate with modernisation theorists “who contend that changes in an individual’s norms and values provide the motive force for change” (p327). They suggest, instead, that such individualistic normative explanations ignore the ways the structuralists in this book associate social change with fundamental alterations in patterns of relationships between individuals, groups and organisations. The underlying assumption of their analyses is that norms and values are by-products of structural changes, and not their source (p10).

To come to grips with this ‘structural network approach’, and hence the book itself, it is necessary that we examine closely how legitimate and useful it is to have this amalgam composed of, as the editors say, political economy, sociometry and network analysis (p7).

One thing is clear, the authors are making an attempt to bridge the gap between, and deal with the weaknesses in, the macro and micro approaches in the social sciences by capturing the best of both worlds. Holistic approaches often lack detail or are not able to effectively capture small-scale processes, while micro approaches are generally weak in grasping structural issues. Political economy, for instance, bears the merits of macro approaches — of not atomising social reality (see Frank 1967, Wallerstein 1974, 1979). On the other hand, network studies (see for example Bott) and sociometry give detailed and rich empirical data on particular cases.

This is an ambitious and yet worthwhile publication. What is most uncertain about it is whether this synthesis, however desirable, can be achieved through the authors’ conceptualisation of ‘structural network approach’, or viewing social structure as “ordered arrangements of relations that are contingent upon exchange among members of social systems” (p3). The nature or basis of these relations are not explicated. Supposedly, these are interactive relations. Thus the concept of social relations is the key operative concept which is used interchangeably with social ties. It is not clear what underpins these ties or relations which, in any social situation, of
necessity, tend to benefit some more than others. To limit oneself to social relations per se, as the authors do in this book, serves to accentuate a particular world-view, that of the market or exchange. That is, relations between groups or nations are basically seen in market terms. Such an approach risks the very weaknesses for which Frank’s brand of political economy has been criticised. That is, viewing relationships among nations in terms of exchange. Exchange relations, which are themselves unequal, are a consequence of other underlying relations — relations of production. Any approach that emphasises exchange relations clearly puts the cart before the horse.

Within the bounds of conventional (British and American) sociology and social anthropology, which have tended to emphasise normatively structured behaviour, the book offers an invaluable critique. Further, in the way the authors re-conceptualise structural analysis, the book affords a refinement of the varieties of structuralism, ranging from Durkheim to Levi-Strauss. However, when compared with conceptual advances which have been made in ‘political economy’, the structural network approach presented in the book is inadequate in as far as it operates at the level of social relations whose underlying premises are as yet unclear. Further, the emphasis lies more on the consequences for individual behaviour in the ‘network of social relations’. Little attention has been given to the underlying causes or to what gives rise to such relations. Mention is made of scarce resources or the unequal distribution of resources. In particular, the issue of power, in all its manifestations — economic, political, social, etc — has not received attention; yet it is an issue which is central to political economy. For this reason, at least, the ‘new structural network approach’ is still very much in its infancy.

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References