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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Peasants, Traders and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939** By *E. Schmidt*. Harare, Baobab; Portsmouth NH, Heinemann; London, Currey, *Social History of Africa*, 1992, xiii, 289 pp., ISBN 0-435-08066-0 (pbk), Z\$90,00.

Elizabeth Schmidt's book is one of the first of a new wave of works by historians, as opposed to anthropologists and sociologists, that seek to correct the imbalance in Zimbabwean historical writing by focusing on African women. As Schmidt points out, while over forty years the histories of Zimbabwe have progressively shifted in emphasis from White Rhodesians to Africans and from African élites to African workers and peasants, they have lagged behind histories from elsewhere in Africa in failing to recognize the 'centrality' of women in history. Centrality can be a treacherous concept because it has a connotation of 'unique importance' when in fact many facets of history are equally important. Schmidt has undertaken the tricky task of highlighting one seriously neglected issue without divorcing it from its context, and on the whole she has been most successful in this endeavour. Historians pioneering new and entirely different emphases in the future, whatever they may be, will stand very much in her debt.

As is well known, researching the history of women in Africa is not easy. Indeed, evidence about women is not easy to find in most of the 500 years of recorded Zimbabwean history — which is no reason why it should not be sought. Schmidt's starting date of 1870 corresponds roughly with the period for which reliable evidence begins to become available. At this point, however, the researcher has a problem: as the bulk of evidence in documents increases from inadequacy in 1870 towards the relatively satisfactory quantity of the colonial period, it becomes more difficult to handle. Whereas the researcher using the documents of the 1870s and 1880s is tempted to use all available material for the whole country, this is practically impossible for the 1930s: a history of men in the 1930s would be unwieldy, but a complete history of women in the 1930s would be nearly as difficult to write. There are two time-honoured ways of dealing with the problem. One is the choice of a special area, using oral traditions and oral histories. The other is the selection of specific themes covered by the documents in the modern period. Schmidt combines these approaches. To begin with, she takes the Goromonzi District, a virtually ideal choice, and carries out an intensive documentary and oral history study of women in 'traditional' society (chapter 1) and women as agriculturalists facing the colonial state (chapters 2 and 3). She then develops the themes of women as the targets of male social control (chapter 4), women in the orbit of the mission (chapter 5) and women as domestic servants (chapter 6), to name the main topics. Chapter 5 does pay attention to the women of Goromonzi, but most of the second half of the book ranges very widely indeed. Here, Schmidt draws upon previously published articles, and to some extent her book begins to resemble a collection of papers rather than a single argument. What she has to say in the last three chapters is often fascinating, but it might well have been summarized,

leaving even more room for the women of Goromonzi and their history as a case study of Zimbabwean women.

Schmidt's case study of Goromonzi is very thoroughly researched indeed, and it advances the neglected history of women considerably, demolishing several myths that place women in rigid categories. However, it has some defects. One is that it borrows too often from works on other areas. Schmidt often uses Bazeley's article on Manyika headwomen<sup>1</sup> while neglecting such cases in Goromonzi as the Koswa female 'chief', Nemasanga of Seke, and Mwende of Samuriwo that are much more relevant. Another defect is that, whereas Schmidt makes much use of court cases and oral histories she rarely, if ever, combines the two to get at the history behind the cases. Indeed Schmidt does not give full weight to the fact that, like it or not, Goromonzi's women were 'central' to four or five major patrilineal groups. For example, it was the murder of the women Recha and Wandimirwa by Madzivanyika of the Chinamhora lineage that sparked the civil war in Chishawasha mentioned by Seed and Chidziwa in their *NADA* articles.<sup>2</sup> Schmidt uses the anthropology of Peter Fry to inform her historical work, but misses some opportunities to use history to modify anthropological theory.

A third criticism that could be made is that, while Schmidt rightly criticizes earlier works as being ungendered, like them hers is not entirely numerate — and numeracy is also central to history. For example, in 1904 there were 4 602 married women counted in the district, at least 65 of whom were reported as having fled from their husbands between 1899 and 1905, while as many as 95 unmarried females out of approximately 300 (not 2 491) refused to marry their assigned husbands. In addition, there were an average of about 60 marital disputes a year at this time (p. 22). Between 1931 and 1939 the annual average of divorce petitions was just over 14 (p. 116). Whether this means that Shona marriages were becoming happier or more stable, or that a pre-colonial 'backlog' was being dealt with between 1899 and 1905, or that from 1931 to 1939 the colonial authorities and Shona patriarchy were suppressing the evidence of marital unhappiness is not at all clear. However, we are increasingly dependent on figures in historical analysis, and even the dubious figures of the colonial period can, when handled carefully, tell us much more about human society than individual examples.

Nevertheless, although Schmidt's book is primarily based on examples, it has raised plenty of issues that historians ought to look at in the future. One is the history of the household in Zimbabwe. As Schmidt puts it:

The structures of women's subordination in both the domestic and social spheres are negotiated, disputed and transformed over time. Hence, the household is a terrain of struggle, manifest in disputes over the allocation of labor, control over female reproduction, the distribution of resources, etc., the outcome of which

<sup>1</sup> W. S. Bazeley, 'Manica headwomen', *NADA* (1940), 3-5.

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Seed, 'A glimpse of native history', *NADA* (1936-7), 5-16; J. Chidziwa, 'History of the Vashawasha', *NADA* (1964), 16-33.

helps to shape the broader society, as the household in turn is shaped by those broader social forces (p. 1).

This view of the Shona household as a kind of Passchendaele Wood is a feature of Schmidt's book, though her views are not in fact so simplistic. Her women of Goromonzi toil away at agriculture, gold-washing, trading crafts and a host of other tasks. They are variously oppressed by their fathers, husbands, officials and missionaries, and occasionally bully each other. There is no doubt that all this is true. Whether it is the whole story is another matter.

*University of Zimbabwe*

D. BEACH

**A Guide to Zimbabwean Administrative Law** By G. Feltoe. Harare, Legal Resources Foundation, 1991, vi, 62 pp., ISBN 0-908312-04-0, Z\$15,00.

**A Guide to Sentencing in Zimbabwe** By G. Feltoe. Harare, Legal Resources Foundation, 1991, xvi, 215 pp., ISBN 0-908312-03-2, Z\$26,00.

**A Guide to Zimbabwean Criminal Law** By G. Feltoe. Harare, Legal Resources Foundation, 1991, viii, 142 pp., ISBN 0-908312-00-8, Z\$15,00.

**A Guide to the Zimbabwean Law of Delict** By G. Feltoe. Harare, Legal Resources Foundation, 1990, xii, 126 pp., ISBN 0-908312-02-4, Z\$15,00.

It is essential to understand from the outset the purpose of these guides. They are not intended to be exhaustive accounts of Zimbabwean law, but rather they are designed to provide an introduction to certain specific aspects of the law. Equally important is their role as source books from which Zimbabwean cases may be referred to quickly and easily. This is obviously useful for legal practitioners and students seeking local precedents.

In his introduction to *A Guide to Zimbabwean Administrative Law*, Feltoe tells us that this branch of the law is concerned with 'the administration of the state, that is, the detailed and practical implementation of the policies of Central Government aimed at the running of the state' (p. vi). Appropriately enough, Feltoe begins with an account of what delegated or subsidiary legislation is. This is important because delegated legislation is the primary instrument for regulating and supervising a whole host of activities within the state. The various different types of delegated legislation are clearly set out — as are the procedures needed for their creation. In this connection it is pleasing to note that Feltoe pays great attention to the need for controls in ensuring that subsidiary law-making bodies do not exceed or abuse their powers.

Feltoe describes in appropriate detail the nature and purpose of administrative tribunals, which he states 'are bodies other than courts of law which are given the power to resolve disputes and to decide cases' (p. 7). In the course of looking at the relationship between tribunals and

the courts, Feltoe provides the reader with practical advice about how to bring tribunal decisions on review to the High Court.

Among other topics looked at in this guide are natural justice, the position and role of the Ombudsman, the *ultra vires* doctrine and vicarious liability. Feltoe's guide is a very good introduction to the subject of administrative law.

Having spent some time working as a prosecutor I recognize Feltoe's *A Guide to Sentencing in Zimbabwe* as a most welcome and long-overdue publication. For several years the question of sentencing has been one of the most difficult issues facing the judiciary. Sentencing persons convicted of crimes is, as Feltoe remarks in the preface to this work, 'a most onerous and difficult task' (p. v). This problem has been most apparent in the magistrates' courts, and new, inexperienced magistrates in particular will welcome the direction and advice offered by the guide.

*A Guide to Sentencing in Zimbabwe* is well-structured. In the first chapter, 'General aspects of sentencing', Feltoe outlines some of the underlying principles of sentencing, pointing out that 'although it is . . . not obligatory . . . it is highly desirable that the court articulate the reasons for the sentence' (p. 8). Feltoe also stresses the fact that 'when it comes to the application of the criminal law everyone should be treated equally. This also applies in respect of the imposition of penalties' (p. 8). The sentencing jurisdiction of the various courts is described and details of specific sentences are provided. This includes a very wide range of topics: from the sentencing of juveniles to the question of when solitary confinement ought to be imposed. Other chapters deal with issues such as mitigating and aggravating factors, specific crimes, special categories of offenders and specific sentences. Without a doubt this is an invaluable reference book for those on the bench and indeed for all legal practitioners.

Feltoe's *A Guide to Zimbabwean Criminal Law* has already established itself as one of the most important locally produced legal textbooks. In the preface Feltoe states that 'it is intended simply to provide a useful source of reference for practitioners . . . it will also serve as an introduction to the subject for students' (p. vii). The guide succeeds admirably in both attempts. The structure of the Zimbabwean criminal law system is explained, as are general principles such as the mental and physical aspects of crime. Perhaps the guide's greatest strength lies in its lucid account of the range of defences open to accused persons. These defences are neatly divided into two main subsections: 'defences affecting mental element' and 'defences affecting unlawfulness element'. Specific crimes are considered in detail and their essential elements are set out in way that facilitates easy reference. This is good news for inexperienced prosecutors involved in perusing dockets for the purpose of set down. Feltoe's guide will enable them to determine more easily if they have a *prima facie* case before them or not.

The final publication I would like to mention is Feltoe's *A Guide to the Zimbabwean Law of Delict*. Our law of delict, though heavily influenced by South African and English case law, has remained distinctive in certain respects, for example, with regard to defamation cases. Feltoe points out that 'substantial differences exist between South African and Zimbabwean

Law arising out of differing approaches to the concept of *animus injuriandi*' (p. 32). It is, therefore, important 'that all the leading Zimbabwean cases on this subject [delict] should be readily accessible' (p. vii). The guide succeeds in drawing these cases together, a fact that will make this publication of particular interest to legal practitioners specializing in civil litigation. As he has done in the other guides, Feltoe breaks the subject matter down into its component parts, and this is obviously of assistance to a reader who is looking for information on a specific topic within the subject.

*University of Zimbabwe*

G. LININGTON

**Industrialization and Investment Incentives in Southern Africa** Edited by A. W. Whiteside. Pietermaritzburg, Univ. of Natal Press; London, Currey, 1989, 244 pp., ISBN 0-852557-18-5, no price indicated.

**SADCC Beyond Transportation: The Challenge of Industrial Co-operation** By T. Østergaard. Uppsala, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Centre for Development Research Publications 8, 1989, 136 pp., ISBN-91-7106-294-7, US\$51.55.

To date few studies have managed to present an overview of the related aspects of investment and industrial development in Southern Africa in an articulate manner. The two works under review, *Industrialization and Investment Incentives in Southern Africa* and *SADCC Beyond Transportation* are pioneers in this field of research. They also exhort governments and investors to go beyond traditional concerns such as transport and communications or agriculture and mining and to undertake initiatives in industrial co-operation and development.

*Industrialization and Investment Incentives in Southern Africa* gives a brilliant explanation of the historical dynamics of the region. Chapter One by B. Bench describes the countries of Southern Africa in terms of industrial core-areas (such as South Africa) and peripheries of industrial core-areas (such as Lesotho). After a satisfactory historical survey of regional organizations in the sub-region in Chapter Two by D. Mbilima each chapter provides a case study of industrial progress in one of the countries of Southern Africa (Angola and Namibia excepted) and exposes the major constraints to stronger industrial development in that country. In most chapters the statistical data are well presented in diagrammatic form.

In the concluding chapter G. Maasdorp paints a rather depressing picture of the industrial situation and the investment incentives in the region — a conclusion based on demonstrated historical trends and certain identifiable obstacles and constraints confronting Southern African economies. The authors leave the reader in no doubt that much more needs to be done to attract more investment and stimulate industrial development. The present environment is not conducive to industrial entrepreneurship.

*SADCC Beyond Transportation* has much in common with *Industrialization and Investment Incentives in Southern Africa* as industrial co-operation and development are the central themes for both studies. The author of

the former book, Tom Østergaard, is right when he states that SADCC member states had reason to focus their efforts on transport and communication during most of the 1980s as South Africa's dominance and penalizing capacity *vis-à-vis* SADCC in this sector was enormous. But Østergaard soon reminds us that the 1980s are now over and that the new decade offers new challenges, requiring different strategies, and one of these strategies is investment and co-operation in the industrial sector.

While acknowledging that SADCC and indeed all Southern African states should invest and co-operate more in the industrial sector, Østergaard issues a word of caution. He provides a case study of the SADCC tractor industry, demonstrating how well-intentioned investment and industrial strategies can collapse. For industrial success, SADCC (and today's SADC) member states need to address various, inter-related obstacles: the evasive action of transnational corporations, for example, and external bank/financial controls, national restrictions and inter-state competition, and the unnecessary policy conditions of both donor agencies and multilateral institutions. Østergaard suggests ways in which policy initiatives and programme actions could be undertaken by SADCC states to reverse such constraints and to guarantee increased success in industrial co-operation and development.

There is no doubt that these two works provide an excellent beginning in the understanding of past investments and industrial action and the new challenges for SADC states and the broader Southern African region.

*University of Zimbabwe*

A. M. KAMBUDZI

**Regional Cooperation in Southern Africa: A Post-Apartheid Perspective**  
*Edited by B. Odén and H. Othman.* Uppsala, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Seminar Proceedings 22, 1989, 243 pp., ISBN 91-7106-298-X, £15.95.

A synthesis of the findings of ten researchers, this book represents a landmark in the analysis and understanding of the interaction between Southern Africa and the Nordic region. In his chapter Tor Sellstrom traces the origins of this interaction, citing the political support and humanitarian aid sent by Nordic countries to liberation movements in Southern Africa since the 1960s. Since then the Nordic countries have remained in the forefront of the condemnation of colonialism and imperialism.

The launching of SADCC in April 1980 created a solid base for enhanced economic co-operation between the two regions. Statistical evidence cited in the book proves that for most of the 1980s the Nordic states were the main donors to SADCC's transport and communication projects as well as other programmes. The chapter by Elling Njal Tjonneland reveals apartheid South Africa's strategies to hold back the tide of liberation in the region. The author shows clearly how those strategies began collapsing in the late 1980s as a result of the SADCC initiative.

An interesting aspect of the book is its historical survey, with clear statistical support, of labour migration within the region — centered on South Africa. It is also significant that C. K. Brown's chapter emphasizes

the need for co-ordinated regional information as a necessary part of regional co-operation in a Southern Africa freed of apartheid. Similarly, Ansu Datta provides a useful contribution on regional co-operation, emphasizing the need for co-ordinated action between governments, non-governmental organizations, and ordinary people in the region. The last two actors, it is argued, provide a back-up to inter-state co-operation in which governments are the key actors.

While it is true that Nordic assistance to SADCC states has been a major component of development assistance since 1980, Hans Abrahamson informs us in his chapter that such aid now needs to be reorientated. Apart from the physical development of roads, railways, ports, and so on, there is a need to channel resources to support networks such as forwarding services, insurance services, national and regional carriers and shipping services. This is indeed vital if investments made during the 1980s in the physical development of transport, communication and related facilities are to be made full use of by SADCC (now SADC) states.

In his chapter Tom Østergaard clearly reveals the contradictions of Nordic/SADCC co-operation. All aid programmes are not altruistic and such aid creates and reinforces the dependence of the recipient on the donor. The Norsad fund is used as an illustration of this anomaly. The desire of donor states to influence policy in the recipient state and the interest of the latter to preserve some form of autonomy in the allocation and consumption of donor resources have caused conflicts between Nordic and SADCC states, particularly in the agricultural sector.

Finally, although the authors hesitated to make precise predictions on the nature of regional co-operation after apartheid is wholly abolished, they do offer some opinions. One is that post-apartheid South Africa will have severe internal problems as it moves away from apartheid rule which could result in internal instability in that country, a factor that might undermine future regional co-operation. But, on the other hand, the authors seem to believe that the advent of a democratic South Africa would enhance economic possibilities in Southern Africa, and indeed Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.

University of Zimbabwe

A. M. KAMBUDZI

**The Black Insider** By D. Marechera. Harare, Baobab, 1990, 128 pp., ISBN 0-949229-16-4, Z\$16,00.

*The Black Insider* (1990), together with *Cemetery of Mind* (1992), is one of Marechera's posthumously published novels (he died in 1987) and appears after the much-celebrated *House of Hunger* (1978), the often overlooked *Black Sunlight* (1980) and the controversial *Mindblast* (1984). Its publication is due to the tireless efforts and dedication of Flora Veit-Wild. *The Black Insider* is in all respects an unusual novel, one which relentlessly interrogates the nature of the novel itself, very much in the post-modernist sense.

Any reader expecting to find a conventional plot and developed characters in a recognizable social setting is in for a rude shock. In this novel

Marechera portrays the nightmarish world of a small band of artists marooned in an old and decaying Faculty of Arts building. Outside a war is raging, the causes of which have long been forgotten. Bombs explode and paratroopers descend as part of an ongoing madness brought about by the 'civilization' of the twentieth century.

Pitted against the encircling gloom is the author-narrator who is penniless and Black and exiled from his African home. He is a beleaguered artist forced by the circumstances of his colonial background and the inhospitality of his British hosts to question in a radical way those systems and habits of thought which have created a world in which homelessness and vulnerability are the norm. For the narrator, history has become a cycle of genocide and he cites the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, the Soweto massacres and the mass killing of the Jews as evidence of a periodic, collective madness indicative of twentieth-century civilization.

As is the case in all of Marechera's works, the role of the artist in *The Black Insider* is a special one. The author-narrator, together with other characters such as Liz, Cicero and Otolith, is waging a war against the so-called traditions and heritages which have fostered regimented thinking and loyalty towards systems which maim the originality and spontaneity of the individual. He laments, 'You can't even hide in yourself because your thoughts think themselves in the words you have been taught to read and write' (p. 35). To him even the language people use is part of a conspiracy to rob citizens of their originality and sanity. The narrator's vision of Africa is that it is a continent nursing bitter memories of colonialism: 'a continent of wounds which no longer knows what it is to be whole and healthy — a country disfigured by scars and broken teeth and smashed testicles' (p. 79) as a result of the introduction and proliferation of schools and churches and universities. The narrator is equally scathing about the pre-colonial past and its bitter legacies of violence.

In terms of thematic concerns, *The Black Insider* is umbilically related to Marechera's novel *Black Sunlight*. Both texts are meant to disorient our thinking and subvert conventional ways of looking at reality. In the same way as the anarchist revolutionaries of *Black Sunlight*, the insider of *The Black Insider* is in fact an outsider marginalized by forces bent on authoritarianism and the ultimate destruction of humanity. A notable difference between the two novels, however, is that *Black Sunlight* is more tightly constructed than *The Black Insider*. In the latter novel Marechera is more daring, mixing artistic genres such as dramatic sketches, documentaries, poetry, parody and creative writing to create a novel in which nothing is predictable and nothing is stable. What holds the narrative itself together, however, is the formidable intellectual and imaginative capabilities of the author-narrator himself. The reader's imagination is fired by the author-narrator's almost encyclopaedic knowledge of world literature although the ordinary reader is also discomfited by the fact that the novel is full of literary allusions. It is an ambitious novel whose iconoclasm enhances our ability to question those realities and thoughts which we often take for granted — especially in a Third World context such as ours.