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Ndebele Proverbs and Other Sayings By J. N. Pelling. Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1977, 133pp., Z\$1.00.

As I am not an author myself, every time that I am asked to review a book, or to comment on some other people's works, I am reminded of the words from Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*: 'He who can, does. He who cannot teaches'. It is with this caution in mind that I proceed to write a review on the Revd James Pelling's book *Ndebele Proverbs and Other Sayings*.

Any work on proverbs or popular sayings can never be original, in content at least. As R. Ridout and C. Witting (*English Proverbs Explained* (London, Heinemann, 1967), p.3) put it: 'To become a proverb, a saying has to be taken up and assimilated by the common people. In the process, its origin is forgotten. Once it has become proverbial, the saying is used as part of popular wisdom.' A book on proverbs is essentially a compilation or collation in one form or another. Proverbs in almost any language have their source in the collective wisdom of the people. In Ndebele, we now have two published works — that of Pelling, and an earlier book compiled by A. Nyamambi and P. Mpofu, *Izaga* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1975). Messrs Nyamambi and Mpofu's book is written entirely in Ndebele, and contains more proverbs and sayings than Pelling's collection. It is not unusual to have two or more books — even several books — covering the same topic. The question arises as to why an author would choose to write on a topic on which there is something already published, unless he has some point which he thinks the earlier writer overlooked, and he would like to bring this out.

Both *Izaga* and *Ndebele Proverbs* are described as being suitable for use by mature readers, especially those above the primary school level, and up to university level. The basic material which they contain is identical, save that the one published earlier, *Izaga*, contains more proverbs than *Ndebele Proverbs*.

There are, however, some differences between the two books. One difference is to be found in the arrangement of the proverbs in the two books. The proverbs in *Izaga* are arranged alphabetically, starting from A to Z. In Pelling's book, on the other hand, the proverbs are classified 'according to their meaning, the function they perform' (Pelling, p.5). To some extent, this is similar to the classification used by C. L. Sibusiso Nyembezi in *Zulu Proverbs* (Johannesburg, Witwatersrand Univ. Press, 1963) to whom acknowledgement is made by Pelling in his introductory remarks. M. A. Hamutyei and A. B. Plangger in *Tsumo-Shumo* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1974) also adopt a similar type of classification. There are merits in this type of classification, *vis-a-vis* the alphabetical arrangement. One could say that this was an improvement on *Izaga*. Cross-reference is more easily handled under this type of classification. Also, the non-Ndebele speaker, looking for an appropriate proverb in a given situation, can refer to such lead headings as 'Good advice'; 'Gratitude'; 'Exhortation', etc.

Perhaps Pelling's real contribution to the subject lies in the fact that his book explains the proverbs in English, while *Izaga* is in Ndebele throughout. This makes the book useful to the non-Ndebele speaking public. The book could even have been much more valuable if it had been a straightforward translation of *Izaga*, with its improved arrangement, so that it could have contained as many proverbs as are found in Nyamambi and Mpofu's book. This way, those who are non-speakers of Ndebele could have had access to a bigger collection of Ndebele proverbs. And in several places, Nyamambi and Mpofu's explanations are better handled, and hence give a clearer meaning, than Pelling's.

Pelling's explanation tries to follow, to some extent, the pattern in Nyembezi's book. This consists of stating the proverb in the vernacular,

followed by a literal translation in English, and then some background information on the proverb where possible, and, lastly, the meaning of the proverb.

It is a pity that Pelling does not go as far as Nyembezi or Hamutyinei and Plangger do, to give the 'application' of the proverb, i.e. where and when it should be used, in what sort of situation. In some way, the use of a proverb can be inferred from its meaning. But for second-language users, for whom I presume Pelling's book was primarily written, the application part is, in my view, very necessary. Both Nyembezi and Hamutyinei and Plangger explicitly incorporate this feature of 'application' in their works. In Nyamambi and Mpofu it is somewhat embodied in their explanation of the proverbs, in a clearer form than in Pelling's book.

Having extensively used Nyembezi's book for over fifteen years, I am left with the feeling that Pelling's book is a potted version, in Ndebele form, of Nyembezi's book. Anyone familiar with Nyamambi and Mpofu's *Izaga* could view Pelling's *Ndebele Proverbs* as a shorter version of these authors' work, with English explanations. But the arrangement is different in Pelling's book, and perhaps better than that of *Izaga*.

University of Zimbabwe

C. M. SILEYA

A New Testament Wordbook English by R. A. B. Ewbank, Shona by M. Mutyandasvika, Ndebele by L. Dube. Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1979, 64pp., Z\$1.00.

The purpose of the booklet is clearly set out in the preface. It is intended to assist Shona and Ndebele readers of the New Testament by providing translations of some thirty common New Testament words. Among the translated words are such well known terms as Regeneration, Faith and Covenant. Bible references are given to help the readers understand the words in context. Nevertheless, the technique of translation is not one of nature's gifts to everyone, especially when it comes to translating words from English that have themselves been translated from the Greek or Hebrew.

As I have only a smattering of Ndebele, I can only comment on the Shona.

- | | | |
|---------------|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. BIRTH | : | <i>Kuzvarwa</i> |
| New or Second | : | <i>Kutsva kana kwechipiri</i> |
| Regeneration | : | <i>Kusikwa patsva</i> |

It is only with careful explanation and in context that such terms can convey the intended meaning. To say, 'Anobva aita mwana muchechek zvakare' means that he becomes a baby again, which is not what the Scripture says.

- | | | |
|---------------|---|---|
| 2. CONSCIENCE | : | <i>Moyo wokuziva zvakanaka nezvakaipa</i> |
|---------------|---|---|

Moyo is concerned with the will and emotions and not with judgement or knowledge. For example, 'Ane moyo wakashinga' means he has a strong will; 'Moyo wangu hauzvive' means I dislike it.

- | | | |
|-------------|---|-----------------|
| 3. MEDIATOR | : | <i>Mupupuri</i> |
|-------------|---|-----------------|

This word is a derivative noun from the verb *pupura* (to witness) and means a witness to the truth of someone's statement. The *mupupuri* need not be witnessing in one's favour or be mediating at all.

4. AGE : *Zero renguva*

Translation must make sense and represent the customary usage of the natural language; *zero renguva* is too literal and meaningless.

5. FAITH : *Rutendo*

The noun is from the verb *kutenda* (to thank); and *rutendo* means gratitude and not faith.

6. COMMUNION : *Chidyo*

The noun *chidyo* is from the verb *kudya* (to eat). *Chidyo*, unqualified, means anything that is edible; and that is not the idea of communion.

7. FULLNESS : *Kuzara kwaMwari*

This does not make sense and does not represent the customary usage of the language.

8. LOVE : *Mwari vanhu vatatu vakabatanidzwa pamwe chete norudo*

Vanhu vatatu means three human beings and so the sentence means, 'God is three persons bound together by love.' This is not what the Trinity means. Even the Shona do not regard *Mwari* as *munhu*.

I have just picked on a few of the thirty words translated by Mutyandasvika, and there are others that do not meet the criteria of a good translation. According to Nida, there are three basic requirements that a translator needs to satisfy in order to obtain the closest equivalent in translation: The translation must represent the customary usage of the natural language; it must make sense; and it must conform to the meaning of the original. Nevertheless this is a highly commendable attempt which should receive encouragement from Bible readers.

University of Zimbabwe

J. C. KUMBIRAI

Museum Memoir No. 9: Check List and Atlas of the Mammals of Zimbabwe Rhodesia By Reay H. N. Smithers and V. J. Wilson. Salisbury, National Museums and Monuments, 1979, 193pp., Z\$12.00.

This book is more than a mere checklist, if by that term one understands merely a recital of names, dates and geographical locations relating to records of the mammalian fauna of Zimbabwe. It includes for each species named a map and explanatory text of its distribution as well as descriptions of habitats and habits, foodstuffs taken and breeding patterns.

The presentation, including the chosen typefaces, is pleasing and clear with taxonomic headings well differentiated by the size and boldness of the type. The maps of distribution, however, are so reduced for printing that a magnifying glass becomes almost essential for the reading of place-names. Illustrations are limited to a few skulls and osteological details of systematic value. Indexing of both the common and scientific names of the species is provided, with the additional advantage that both generic and specific names are indexed separately.

The authors cannot be faulted on their selection of species to include, having taken every precaution to exclude unreliable observations. They have also, thoughtfully, appended a short list of animals which might be expected to occur here, on the grounds of their known proximity, although not yet reliably recorded within the borders of Zimbabwe.

It is difficult to recommend this book to any particular reader. As a checklist alone it has value to the specialist who would, however, have access to scientific literature for ecological and other information. The more general information included about each species would be of value to the amateur naturalist and conservationist, but the format does not render this a convenient book for the identification of animals in the field, on several grounds. The book (19 × 25cm) is not of a handy size for the pocket of a bushwalker; nor does it carry illustrations of the animals. The keys which are included for identification of species are fragmented throughout, so that, for example, one cannot identify his mouse unless he can already identify it to Family at sight and so find the entry to the keys on page 155.

If the book was aimed at the wider readership, as one would hope of a work from this particular publisher, it would have been much improved by the addition of an identifying key system integrated in one place — preferably at the beginning.

Descriptions are often vague, although this is a common fault and especially so when colour is the subject. What, for example, is a 'buffy tinged ochraceous colour'?

Otherwise, without in any way detracting from the overall great value of this work, a critical reader might be irritated by the writing style which is inconsistent, and by the use of clumsy phraseology which seems to indicate a lack of care in preparation or in editing. This reviewer has a personal dislike of phrases such as 'up to about 60 or more' which could be reworded more precisely.

University of Zimbabwe

A. S. ROEBUCK

Darkness and Dawn in Zimbabwe By *H. P. Elliott*. London, Grosvenor Books, 1978, 49pp., £0.65.

Fear and Fun — Rhodesian Recollections By *Kachengere (R. H. Lees)*. [Plymouth?], privately, 1978, 184pp., no price indicated.

Both of these books are of true stories but very different in character.

The first is about people working for peace and understanding in a country divided by political strife and an escalating war in 1978. The purpose is to show that God has inspired a plan for the solution of political problems. While the sentiments are unexceptional the stories do not ring true; their message is simplistic and seems to derive from Moral Rearmament.

The second is a collection of reminiscences about the author's youth near Bulawayo and then on the Copperbelt and in Lusaka. The stories are slight but told in an interesting and unpretentious manner; their main focus is hunting and natural history but there are also useful sidelights on the social history of European society in the difficult years of the inter-war period.

R.S.R.

The Food Problem By V. Tickner. Gwelo, Mambo Press, From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe 8, 1979, 76pp., Z\$0.85.

The author of this booklet is to be congratulated for producing a competent overview of the food industry in Zimbabwe. In doing so he has made good use of the limited data at his disposal. However, the book is marred by one or two irritating errors and by the occasional presentation of incorrect information which could have quite easily been overcome by checking directly with local organizations and individuals. A good example of this is the reference to Progress Trading Association and its involvement with the Whitsun Foundation. Tickner makes the point that the Association is attempting to attack the problem of distribution in rural areas and then gives the impression that the project is not receiving any support. In fact the Whitsun Foundation has made a substantial investment in the Association, which in 1980 will enjoy a turnover of over Z\$6 million. The Association has not made the progress originally envisaged because of the war but it is poised for rapid expansion now that the country is returning to normal.

The assertion is also made that the majority of the population is either undernourished or suffering from malnutrition. This assumption is not supported by hard evidence and his case would have been more balanced had he made reference to the fact that the food supply in Zimbabwe, in terms of calories per capita per day is the highest in the Southern African region. Estimates of food consumption also support the contrary view that, although the situation is highly skewed, the average level of food availability is well in excess of 2,400 calories per capita per day as an assessment of a reasonable supply of the energy requirements for human sustenance. The booklet pays little attention to comparative prices and, had it done so, it would have been clear that food prices in Zimbabwe are, by and large, well below those prevailing in the other States within the region and that these prices are effective prices since most food products are in free supply.

The persistent reference to an ascribed attitude of White farmers, who are assumed to oppose efforts at development of communal agriculture, does not conform with the facts. White farmers have a good understanding of the need to develop all parts of agriculture and in fact have demonstrated consistently in recent years a positive attitude towards this problem. In particular, the quotation on page 60 is not given a source and I would doubt very much if it can be substantiated by any official statement from local institutions.

Perhaps most serious is a general criticism that the booklet is too superficial. The guidelines suggested in the last chapter are of little value to the incoming Government and do not allow for the best use of the existing administrative infrastructure. Critical issues such as pricing policies and the management of food aid are almost completely ignored, and the author has, in this respect, lost an opportunity to make a substantial contribution to the debate on these subjects. As many other developing countries have come to appreciate, the creation and maintenance of an efficient and effective food-supply system is not a simple or an easy exercise. Many of the policy choices are difficult for a popularly elected Government to make. However, those who have responsibility for giving guidance in this respect should not avoid the hard questions but rather attempt to bring clarity and sound counsel to the issues involved.

A number of valuable points are made, these include: the need to pay greater attention to manpower training at all levels within the food supply system; the adoption of an integrated approach to rural development; and the urgent need to improve rural-distribution infrastructure. His call for a new

population census is also timely and will be widely endorsed in all sections of the community in Zimbabwe.

Agricultural Marketing Authority, Salisbury

E. G. CROSS

The Woman's Guide to Law through Life *By The Women in Development Research Unit*. Salisbury, University of Rhodesia, Centre for Inter-racial Studies, 1979, 43pp., Z\$0.50.

African Women in Urban Employment *By Joan May*. Gwelo, Mambo Press, Occasional Paper, Socio-Economic Series 12, 83pp., Z\$2.00.

The first booklet under review attempts to outline the law as it affects African women in matters concerning marriage, birth, children, death and widowhood. The title does not give an idea of the target population of the handbook, and the fact that it focuses on African law excludes non-African women who could also benefit from a simplified handbook (witness the success in Britain of Anna Coote and Tessa Gill's *Women's Rights: A Practical Guide* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1974)).

The handbook will be of limited use to a large number of African women who are not literate in English but who could benefit more from a vernacular version of the handbook. Some points are given briefly without an accompanying explanation, e.g. why it is necessary to have a 'genuine go-between' if the guardian of a woman who is getting married is a Purchase Area farmer.

However, the handbook is useful, simply because it raises points for discussion on procedure, thus stimulating more interest and inquiry by women into the whole arena of customary law and its effects on African women's status. It is also useful to community workers who deal with women in clubs and so forth, and can help bring attention to legal issues that women are not aware of.

The second booklet highlights the cultural, economic and social disadvantages imposed on women in urban employment. It makes useful suggestions for improving the lot of women, e.g. the establishment of women's bureaux. This is a useful suggestion in view of the shortage of information that can be used to guide action in the field of women's welfare and emancipation. However, the author falls short of her stated intention of identifying motivational factors which would draw women into agriculture where, she says, there is a chronic labour shortage. Also she does not suggest how women can realize their potential in a rural, agricultural setting where agricultural and economic activity is male-dominated and male-oriented. Despite this, the paper highlights the wastage of female resources and presents a challenge to agricultural and rural policy-makers and their counterparts in urban commerce and industry.

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