

foreign exchange earnings of the producer price taxes, fertiliser subsidy and exchange rate policies on maize imports and tobacco exports was an average of \$70 million per annum of 8% of merchandise exports.

Excluding inefficiency costs, the budgetary effects of price policy were estimated to be some K74 million per annum from 1970-84 (almost 10% of the government budget). These subsidy situations often constitute a large proportion of the budgetary allocation for 'agriculture'. Despite repeated determination to channel resources to agriculture and to diversify exports away from copper, only 6% of the budget is actually allocated to agriculture. Jansen points out that another problem is that whilst capital appropriations may have increased the recurrent budget has declined with per capita allocations decreasing significantly. She estimates that there has been a net transfer of resources out of agriculture of some 7% of GNP per annum. The study shows a deterioration in both rural and urban incomes despite the food subsidies for urban households. The average rural household avoided the negative impact of government pricing policy by reverting to subsistence production.

The study includes a comprehensive history of agricultural pricing policy and a normative assessment of the impact of administrative controls. As a study contributing to the literature on Zambian agriculture, this publication is essential reading. As a text to assist other countries utilising similar methodologies it would have to be used in conjunction with a policy analysis text (eg Monke and Pearson, 1989; or Timmer, Falcon and Pearson, 1983). It provides students and analysts with an excellent example of how to make the best use of available data to provide rough approximations where precise estimates are not feasible. As with all quantitative studies throughout the world, but especially in developing countries, the results are only as strong as the underlying assumptions. Jansen has a good knowledge and understanding of the basic relationships in the Zambian economy and has provided a useful analysis.

Reviewed by Kay Muir Leresche, Mutare, Zimbabwe

#### References

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**Prisoners of Ritual An Odyssey into Female Genital Circumcision in Africa**, Hanny Lightfoot-Klein, Harrington Park Press, New York, 1989 (306pp, US\$14.95)

The very title of this publication indicates the author's view of its subject, female circumcision, and it would indeed be difficult for anyone outside the cultures where it is practised to hold a supportive view of this custom. Nonetheless, Lightfoot-Klein manages to give a balanced, objective, sensitive and perceptive portrayal of this highly emotive issue.

The main focus of the book is on the Sudan, although there is a little coverage of East African nations (notably Kenya), a brief history and geographical overview, and a short discussion of both female and male circumcision in the West. Nevertheless to subtitle the book an odyssey 'in Africa', when the reality is an indepth study of the Sudan alone, is slightly misleading. Literature on other countries in Africa is reviewed, and an extensive bibliography included, but of the twenty eight to thirty countries mapped out as practising circumcision of one sort or another, only Sudan has in depth and first hand coverage.

In writing about the Sudan the author varies her approach from informal diarising and recounting of conversations and events, to extensive personal experiences of women and some men recounted in direct speech, and formal analysis of the issue of circumcision. The author travelled widely in the country, and spent considerable time in hospitals in the obstetric and gynaecological departments, both witnessing the traumas there and talking with medical staff and women patients and mothers. A large number of brief case studies are included as appendices and within the main chapters, indicating a wide range of views and personal experience. The author also discussed with local psychiatrists the psychological impact of circumcision on young girls and women in later life.

The second, shorter, part of the book contains photographs of women and a series of vignettes of the author's experience of Sudanese culture in general as she travelled through the country, thus providing a wider context for the earlier discussion.

Regarding the practice of female circumcision itself, the book is a mine of information. It describes the various degrees of genital mutilation that may be performed, concentrating on the severest form which is also the most widely practiced in Sudan. This is pharaonic circumcision, involving excision of the entire genital area, clitoris, labia minora and majora, and scraping the flesh away down to the bone before suturing until only a tiny pinhole opening is left. The mutilation is so extensive that even urination becomes difficult, normally taking ten to fifteen minutes as each drop of liquid is forced out. For some women urination is reported to take half an hour or more, and for some unfortunate girls after circumcision it becomes impossible, and they have to be cut open again in order to pass water.

Menstruation becomes equally difficult and extremely painful, as blood clots build up behind the circumcision scar. The next ordeal for women is the forcing open of the scar tissue after marriage, a process achieved by repeated penile assault or by resort to a knife if the former fails. The open, bleeding wound created by penis or knife is used for sexual intercourse repeatedly in order to keep it open until it can heal with fresh scar tissue. Childbirth, as could be anticipated, is fraught, and involves massive cutting to enable the baby to emerge. The final assault is the resuturing of the women after childbirth to pinhole size again, so that the agonising process of repenetration can begin again. This latter refinement is reported to be fairly new.

Inevitably, a number of young girls, who are usually circumcised between the ages of five and nine, do not survive the ordeal. They may bleed to death, or die of sepsis or urinary complications. Such a death is accepted as 'the will of Allah', and the cause concealed because pharaonic circumcision, despite its very wide practice, is in fact illegal.

One's gut reaction, coming from a different culture, cannot be anything but utter disgust and outrage that literally millions of young girls are routinely subjected to such a procedure, usually with no anesthetic whatsoever (except the reputed numbing effects of acacia thorns used as sutures), and that women's lives consequently become a perpetual round of agonising pain surrounding menstruation, sex and childbirth. Yet outrage is not enough. One must try to understand the cultural values and expectations that lead so many men and women to support the practice. Lighfoot-Klein helps us to do this, whilst at no time endorsing it. On the contrary, her aim in writing the book is clearly to assist movements against female circumcision by alerting them to the sensitivity with which the subject must be faced. Western and even African outrage from outside the region may entrench the practice rather than facilitating change.

The descriptions women give of their memories of circumcision itself and of sex are so varied it is difficult to believe they are describing the same situation. Two examples will illustrate this. One woman, who has lived in the USA and has an extreme pharaonic circumcision, reports, "I came from a bad village in the west, where they scrape off everything. There is not even skin left to sew up and they tie your legs together for forty days, until a scar forms. There is nothing left with which to feel. When your husband comes to you, it is the same as if he came with a stick to a piece of leather". Yet another woman says that the pharaonic is a good thing, and once the pain of penetration or re-penetration is over, sex for her is highly enjoyable and orgasmic. She, and many others, rationalise the pain as the way to give the man most pleasure, although several men interviewed spoke of guilt and physical pain themselves because of the process of penetration.

The value attached to the pharaonic is that it is thought to prevent girls from becoming sexually wild, it keeps them pure and virginal for their husbands, and it removes what are seen as ugly, dirty, odorous and evil parts of the anatomy. It is widely and erroneously believed that Islam demands pharaonic circumcision, so failure to perform it would be sacrilege. Not to circumcise a girl would go against very deep-seated customs, and leave the uncircumcised girl totally ostracised. The point is also made that if every woman is circumcised, there is no possible comparison with non-circumcised women, so the extent to which subsequent infections and pain in sex and parturition are direct consequences of the pharaonic is not clearly understood. Women know their lot in life, and accept it with very few exceptions. Some men rationalise it by saying women have a very high pain threshold. Both sexes support the custom, and the midwives who carry out circumcision are highly revered.

Highly educated Sudanese are depicted as showing ambivalence towards the practice, particularly when they have been exposed to other, non-circumcising cultures. A few report that they totally reject it, particularly those doctors who see the medical risks and trauma that the practice causes. Nevertheless, it is not clear to what extent they have actually spared their own daughters from being cut. Grandmothers in favour of the pharaonic have great influence, and the subject is strongly felt to be a women's issue. Some report that they only carry out a 'suma' or clitoral cutting, rather than infibulation.

For anyone concerned about women's issues, and the ways that culture and custom can dictate the most severe mutilation and assault on women, this book is valuable reading. It is also deeply disturbing. Yet in all this, the warmth of the cultures shines though, and the point is made that in a society where daily life for the vast majority is very hard, the agonies of pharaonic circumcision may seem rather irrelevant. For most people, changing the practice is just not a priority issue. For the educated few it can become more central, however, and hopefully their influence over time may increase the prestige and hence acceptability of leaving girls intact.

Reviewed by Helen Jackson, School of Social Work, Harare.

**Psychiatric Disability. Clinical, Legal and Administrative Dimensions**, Arthur T Meyerson and Theodora Fine (eds), American Psychiatric Press, Washington DC, 1987 (461pp, £30 hbk).

This is a very welcome textbook which attempts to provide a comprehensive, detailed and multi-dimensional approach to the study and understanding of psychiatric disability. The book offers extensive information and bibliographic material on the identified clinical, legal and administrative aspects of psychiatric disability. It is a rich source book which provides a wide range of comprehensive references. However, despite this broad and detailed perspective the book fails to honour its intention and the objective of being cross-cultural. The book is grossly 'disabled' by its 'pathological' and limited American bias.

The book draws from major American sources and references. It is focused on and intended for American practitioners, and specifically tries to address problems arising from or connected to the Social Security Administration Programme of the USA. The only attempt the book makes to give a cross-cultural perspective is the citing of two studies. The first study looks at the long term prognosis of schizophrenia and was undertaken in Switzerland. The second looks at the prevalence of psychiatric disability among the aged, and was undertaken by the WHO in West Germany. Even by the most narrow and restrictive definition this can not be classified as a cross-cultural perspective. Comparing American and European conditions does not give the book a broad cross-cultural base.

The book's major bias is shown in its analysis of the legal and administrative issues of psychiatric disability. These are given in precise American terms and interpretations. The American community is preoccupied with individual rights and freedom. The book goes to extremes to portray, emphasise and safeguard this 'sacred' American attitude. As such, the book is not very useful to people practising in a system which is politically, legally and administratively different from the American system. The aim of the book is to prepare American practitioners for the American environment and conditions under which they will have to practice.

The book fails to address, and is insensitive to, African and Third World countries where cultural values and beliefs in witchcraft and ancestral spirits have a causal effect, and where the traditional healer has both a therapeutic and rehabilitative function. Lack of facilities in most Third World countries make it very difficult to spend time and money on issues like individual rights and freedom.