

countries have experienced. The section on "ghost workers" who were said to be on the payroll is fascinating and frustrating at the same as it brings out the true picture of experiences faced not only by Uganda but other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. These are some of the issues that makes the report interesting.

The findings on the research on social sectors give insight to the situation of Uganda as a Third World country and at the same time poses a lot of questions as to how many and which other countries fall within a similar situation to that of Uganda. This book is suitable for social development planners and scholars and could be included in their socioeconomic literature.

*Reviewed by Violet Matimba, Lecturer, School of Social Work, Harare, Zimbabwe*

**Empowering People Building Community, Civil Associations and Legality in Africa**, Richard Sandbrook and Mohamed Halfani (eds), Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, Toronto, 1993, 209 pp, ISBN: 0-7727-1364-2 Price: \$14,95 + GST.

This volume contains the contributions of participants to the International Conference of Civil Associations held in Arusha in August 1991. Taken as whole, it provides an overview of the aims, strategies and tactics of a range of NGOs in Anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa and the obstacles faced by them as they confront, or attempt to negotiate with, the state. With over 30 papers, the editors clearly faced problems of organisation and presentation. To a certain extent, this has been resolved by gathering papers into sections, providing an introduction (Sandbrook) and a conclusion (Halfani) and the insertion of brief editorial linking passages between the sections.

Sandbrook's introduction notes that the themes of popular participation and empowerment of people have featured centrally in a wide range of prescriptions for political reform and economic recovery in Africa and raises the problem that these terms have a wide range of meanings. However, as he makes it clear, the book reflects the focus of the Conference, namely the problems involved in engendering a wider consciousness of political, legal, social and economic rights and building sustainable, coherent and popular organisations that can defend and extend these rights against undemocratic states and the elites closely associated with them.

The first section of the book contains Julius Nyerere's opening address (Reflections on Empowering), a record of some of the discussion which followed and presentations on general themes by Halfani and Ampaw. Nyerere, whilst acknowledging the failures of the post-colonial state, interventionist policies and the practice of socialism, warns against taking a too confrontational stance against the state and of the dangers of promoting sectional factionalism which could under-

mine national unity and destroy an already fragile national state. In the relatively frank exchange of views that follows and in Halfani's and Ampaw's papers two main points are made. Firstly, that the over-extended African state has to be confronted and secondly that, without addressing social and economic inequalities, attempts to institute political democracy and legal rights are likely to prove ineffectual.

The rest of the contributions are loosely arranged under topics such as, Bringing Law to the People, Building Community and Civil Associations, Regenerating Civil Society, creating conditions for Democratic Development. Despite the range of organisations represented, and the variations in their experience, the papers mostly reflect a common theme of conflict with the state and the problems involved in creating a sustainable role for voluntary civil associations. As such, they make interesting reading and add to the documentation on the growth of civil associations in Africa during the last ten years. They also clearly indicate a process of increasing politicisation as such associations attempt both to confront the state and develop a degree of independence from northern NGOs. As Halfani, in his conclusion to the book, notes, this represents a significant move away from the welfare and leisure oriented civil associations of the colonial and immediate post-colonial periods. He also argues that it reflects an attempt to recapture the civil space hitherto dominated by the colonial and post-colonial state.

However, as Halfani recognises, nearly all of the 49 organisations represented at the Conference fell into two types. There were what he terms 'service agencies' set up by professionals (eg lawyers, academics) to expose the state, defend legal rights and empower 'the people' or weaker sections of society (eg women) by disseminating knowledge of rights. There were also organisations, again often set up by professionals, whose main aim is to enhance developmental activities within local communities. In this sense, the Conference did not represent the range of grassroots people's associations such as rotating credit associations, burial societies and artisan cooperatives which have existed in most African societies for decades and which are an important feature of civil society and a major means of ensuring community survival when government strategies or market solutions fail. Halfani argues that, without some wider form of articulation between civil associations, leading to their crystallisation into social movements, there is a danger of either ultimately unsuccessful conflict with the state or withdrawal from engagement in the political process and concentration on purely local or sectional interests.

One of the problems with the book is that it falls uneasily between a more theoretical and general discussion of the nature of contemporary African politics, particularly the vexed problem of the nature of the state and civil society, and a documentary account of the raw experience of those involved in day-to-day

struggles. Many of the participants seem to have accepted the conventional view that a central characteristic of African societies is the absence or uneven development of civil society. However, what many of the contributions portray is not so much the growth of civil society in Africa, but rather the emergence and consolidation of a new professional middle class which is playing a central role in the politicisation of parts of an existing civil society. The ability of this social group to play such a role appears to depend on a particular historical conjuncture characterised by the uneven development of the market and the severe structural changes imposed on a fragile post-colonial state. Thus, the book raises, but does not answer, fundamental questions about the class nature of political and civil society in Africa and the extent to which the civil associations represented at the conference are likely to form the basis for more broadly based social movements.

*Reviewed by Ian Clegg, Lecturer, Centre for Development Studies, University of Swansea, Wales, UK.*

**The People of the Great River: The Tonga Hoped the Water Would Follow Them**, Michael Tremmel and the River Tonga People. Artwork by Loes Roos, Publisher: Mambo Press in association with Silveira House (Price: approx Zim \$10 from Silveira House, Mambo Bookshops, and Grassroots Bookshops).

This short, accessible, and honest book should be read by people interested in the Zambezi valley's social and natural history. It tells the tale, directly, and in the words of a selected group of elderly local people, of the consequences experienced by the River Tonga People since they were translocated to make way for the rising waters of Kariba dam.

Fr. Michael Tremmel, a Catholic priest, has spent the last eight years in Binga District. He states his belief that the old missionary approach of bringing 'enlightenment' was wrong, and he sees himself as a "missioner", or someone who recognises that God has been, and is present, in the Tonga culture and tradition.

The motive for the book emanates from the author's empathy with the forced sacrifice, made by the River Tonga, for the sake of a nation they did not identify with. In the history of land re-classification of Zimbabwe, the Tonga were not alone in paying the cost for the benefit of others. Nevertheless, the book testifies to the fact that a social and economic price was paid for a 'greater commonwealth'. Those who benefited most, with hindsight, are all users of hydro-electric power from Kariba, and the wildlife and fishery based industries of the region.

The book is not a deep historical account, nor a academic book, more an authentic tribute to the local people. It recognises an event, occurring in the late 1950s, which changed the environment they had co-existed with for centuries. What brings the book to life is that the author analyses several themes – life before the flooding, displacement, life today, and future prospects – with a group of Tonga men and women who have lived through the entire experience.