

The next book is even less serious a study — being largely a collection of photographs culled from unacknowledged but apparently published sources, accompanied by a chronological outline based on newspaper or other secondary sources. The only claim to interest of the book is that a reference to the embezzlement of defence funds led to a High Court injunction against its distribution in Zimbabwe Rhodesia.

Few politicians have held office for so long and so much the focus of international attention; yet as these three books show, journalistic attention does not produce even rudimentary understanding or insight. Survivors in politics always arouse suspicion — except, perhaps, among other politicians who, knowing their own precarious position, like Nyerere or Kaunda, cannot begrudge admiration. But admiration and suspicion do not really explain very much: they tend to cancel out and leave a void of understanding, a limbo in which Smith, and even the Rhodesian Front, will languish in the textbooks, unless a professional scholar can be given access. A party and a leader that can, apparently, do the opposite of what it intended and still retain the confidence of its electorate needs to be sympathetically explained, not merely explained away.

R.S.R.

The Shona People: An Ethnography of the Contemporary Shona, with Special Reference to Their Religion By M. F. C. Bourdillon. Gwelo Mambo Press, 1976, Shona Heritage Series: Volume 1, 339pp., maps, illus., bibl. ZR\$6,80 (hard cover; \$4,75 soft cover).

Myths about Africans By M. F. C. Bourdillon. Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1976, 35pp., ZR\$0,45.

Bourdillon's *The Shona Peoples* is the first significant and systematic attempt to present a comprehensive ethnography of the Shona peoples since Bullock's 1928 work (*The Mashona*. Cape Town, Juta, reprinted and revised as *The Mashona and Matabele*, Cape Town, Juta, 1950). During the interim period serious scholars have had to rely for this kind of over-view on the slim volume published by the International African Institute (H. Kuper, A. B. J. Hughes and J. van Velsen, *The Shona and Ndebele of Southern Rhodesia*, London, International African Institute, 1955) or else make their own synthesis through the diffuse literature produced by Holleman, Gelfand and others. Bourdillon's book is a far better one than the Bullock and I. A. I. volumes, and although written primarily for a lay audience its underlying anthropological professionalism renders it without question the current standard ethnography of the Shona. It is therefore an extremely useful addition to our bookshelves, serving a dual purpose. For students and scholars it provides a reliable ethnographic reference base for more specific studies, and for a White lay readership in this country it provides a 'greater understanding of their black compatriots', the stated primary aim of the book (p.9).

Bourdillon utilizes a straightforward ethnographic presentation, covering in various chapters history, kinship, economic institutions, local-level political organization, legal structures and religious organization and practice.

As indicated by the sub-title, considerable attention is given to religion, with separate chapters being devoted to sickness and misfortune, witchcraft, death and the communal aspects of religion in both traditional and contemporary contexts.

This emphasis is not misplaced, for it serves to bring out the epistemological underpinnings of Shona culture, a necessary complement to Bourdillon's treatment of the structural aspects of Shona society. It is this aspect of the book which, more than any other, carries it beyond mere description to an analysis of cultural motivation for action in the best anthropological tradition. Dr Bourdillon succeeds admirably in the difficult task of writing a scholarly and accurate book which is readable; it is analytic without being obscure, detailed without being verbose, and generalizes with appropriate consideration for regional particularities. Well documented and referenced, it provides both a useful synopsis of the available literature and a valuable context in which it can be read.

As a comprehensive contemporary ethnography of the Shona I can fault the volume in only three respects, one of which the author himself raises with disarming candour and for one of which he can hardly be held responsible. A comprehensive Shona ethnography should include more than this one does on the Shona-speaking peoples of Moçambique, in particular the Barwe, the Teve (a sub-division of the Manyika) and the Ndau. But, as I say, Bourdillon can hardly be blamed for this as the extant anthropological literature on these groups in either Portuguese or English is limited, and the exigencies of international politics have made any co-ordinated scholarship difficult if not impossible. A more serious defect of the book is the paucity of material presented on contemporary urban Shona life. The brief chapter, 'Becoming Urban' (pp. 361-74), hardly does justice to this important topic. Bourdillon is at a disadvantage here, since although considerable sociological attention has been given in recent years to this category of the Shona population, in-depth anthropological studies are scarce and do not match the wealth of detail and analysis to be found in, for instance, neighbouring Zambia. Nevertheless the chapter gives the impression of being a postscript hastily written to meet a publisher's deadline, rather than being given the central importance it deserves.

Finally, Bourdillon explicitly attempts to avoid any specific analysis of the national political dimension of his topic on the grounds of complexity and possible subjective influence on both the book and its readership (pp. 10-11). While understanding his reasons, my reaction to this approach by the author was one of considerable disappointment. For one thing, the impact of politicization in a national context is a critical component of contemporary cultural formation for the Shona and therefore pervasively important for the topic of the book. For another thing, Dr Bourdillon is well equipped to handle this topic; he has ample materials in his files and the scholarly integrity and skill to write incisively on the subject. Readers of this book should, in fact, read it in conjunction with his booklet, *Myths About Africans*.

Here Dr Bourdillon shows a keen awareness of the impact of the importance of political context and also of how the conceptualization of a culture by both in-groups and out-groups can be turned and shaped as an instrument of political policy. It is a pity that the insights of this booklet were not utilized by Dr Bourdillon to produce a further chapter for the book, exploring the influence of the envionring political climate on the contemporary development of Shona culture.

But I have no wish to join the long list of reviewers who are critical on the grounds that the book the author wrote was not the one *they* wanted written, and perhaps Dr Bourdillon was right in restricting his goal to a volume which seeks to promote White understanding of Shona culture in a non-polemic way. Aware of past White intransigence Peter Fry, in another review of this book (*Africa* (1978), XLVIII, 92-3) is sceptical of this approach: 'Dr Bourdillon's desire to enlighten the white population through the writing of an honest and straightforward ethnography is, I fear, unduly optimistic, and his deliberate avoidance of political issues unnecessarily cautious.' This is, however, a statement written from the static perspective of one whose first-hand experience of the power structure of this country is now somewhat dated. Whites here are now faced with the requirement of adjusting to a new status of political subordinancy and the necessity of 'a greater understanding of their black compatriots' carries a new urgency and importance. For them, this book is a valuable tool and should be read by all. And, for the benefit of Blacks themselves, this book should be on the shelves of every secondary and tertiary institution of learning in the land, as the standard contemporary ethnography of the Shona.

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Historical Dictionary of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe By R. K. Rasmussen Metuchen, N. Y., Scarecrow Press, 1979, 445pp., US\$20.00.

From Avondale to Zimbabwe By R. Smith. Salisbury, privately, [1978], 314pp., ZR\$6.00 (s/c).

These two reference books will be useful to anyone pursuing research in Rhodesia.

Rasmussen's volume is the more ambitious and follows the established format of the African Historical Dictionaries Series in which this is the eighteenth to be published. It contains some 1,199 entries and the author has made valiant efforts to keep abreast of recent historical research. Inevitably there are numerous points that will not meet general agreement and every reader will find what he regards as serious omissions; for example, Keigwin and N. H. Wilson are not included, although Wilson's Two Pyramid policy is entered but ascribed to Huggins. Similarly the criteria of selection sometimes seem strange — entries for rhinoceros and elephant, but none for the Cold Storage Commission, the Maize Control Board or the Agricultural Marketing Authority. Generally the book is weak on institutions, somewhat erratic on places (cf Goromanzi [sic]), stronger on the Ndebele than the Shona.

Smith's volume is a modest gazetteer of some 130 places in Zimbabwe Rhodesia, and on his chosen places is generally stronger than Rasmussen; see for example, Rasmussen's failure to explain the origin of the Tuli Circle compared with Smith's neat and historically accurate description.

Whatever their failings, these two books, in conjunction with the bibliographies reviewed above (p.105ff), mark a significant and welcome addition to the reference aids on Zimbabwe Rhodesia.

R.S.R.