

ESSAY REVIEW

THE STUDY OF RELIGION IN CENTRAL AFRICA

DURING THE LAST decade and in the social sciences the major publication output with respect to Central Africa has been in the areas of political science and history. From the anthropologists and sociologists there has been a declining output since the halcyon days when the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute initiated and brought to fruition an extensive and co-ordinated research programme on a regional basis for which there are few parallels. There has been, however, a continued output in two areas, those of urbanization and religion. The six volumes reviewed here¹ are all concerned with the latter, and demonstrate the continued vitality of academic interest in religion, which has such myriad inter-connections and ramifications for the other institutions of society.

While, however, they all have a common focus on religion, they represent a wide spectrum of approach and subject matter. Like the other phenomena of human culture and society, religion can be studied descriptively or analytically; it can be examined in its past or contemporary forms; and it can be analysed as either a dependent or independent variable, its forms being regarded either intrinsically as manifestations of Ritual Man or as the epiphenomenal or surrogate activities of Economic or Political Man. In various degrees the authors represented in these six volumes reflect the entire spectrum of approaches suggested by these dichotomies. Gelfand and (largely) the writers of the van Binsbergen and Buijtenhuis volume are concerned with contemporary religious data but while Gelfand is content with straight ritual description the others are involved in interpretation, largely along the theme of cultural adaptation. Fry, Bhebe and the authors of the Schoffeleers and Werbner publications are all concerned with historical data, but their analytical perspectives are significantly different. Fry sees his material primarily as a religious reflex to political contexts; the others are more interested in the way belief systems interrelate with a variety of ecological and societal requirements. All this variety of approach is reflective of both the diversity of the authors' training and interest and also the multifaceted nature and import of religion in society. Taken together, these six volumes constitute a valuable addition to the body of scholarship on religion in Central Africa but their impact is not easily synthesized, nor do they consistently give us insights which constitute analytic advances on the state of the art.

Professor Gelfand, in his *The Spiritual Beliefs of the Shona*, takes a straightforward ethnographer's route. He is concerned only peripherally with analysis and seeks rather to record the results of field-work on Shona history and ritual carried

¹ N. Bhebe, *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe 1859-1923* (London, Longman, 1979), 190 pp., £7.95; P. Fry, *Spirits of Protest: Spirit Mediums and the Articulation of Consensus among the Zezuru of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)* (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976), 145 pp., £4.50; M. Gelfand, *The Spiritual Beliefs of the Shona* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1977), 216 pp., Z\$5.40; J. M. Schoffeleers (ed.), *Guardians of the Land. Essays on Central African Territorial Cults* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, Zambezi Series 5, 1978), 315 pp., Z\$9.00; W. M. J. van Binsbergen and R. Buijtenhuis (eds), *Religious Innovation in Modern African Society* (Leiden, Afrika-Studiecentrum, African Perspectives Series, 1976), 148 pp., Dfl.13; R. P. Werbner (ed.), *Regional Cults* (London, Academic Press, A.S.A. Monograph 16, 1977), 257 pp., £7.20.

out between 1967 and 1976. He eschews 'hypotheses' and sticks to description, in line with his previous work (p.5). Like some of his earlier published volumes, this one is deceptively titled. The content relates not to 'the spiritual beliefs' of the Shona in general, but rather to the ritual practice and belief of four Shona sub-groupings, the Manyika, the Vaunyama, the Hwesa and the Budjga. As such, the book provides a useful complement to Gelfand's previous researches among the Zezuru, the Korekore and the Karanga. For each of the four groups covered in this volume a similar order of presentation is utilized: a brief capsule history is followed by a discussion of the 'clan' spirits and their mediums; then follow sections on diviners, family spirits, death rituals, marriage procedures, hostile and alien spirits and the rituals associated with them. In one respect the book presents the reader with an advantage over previous publications in the series. By having the ritual practice and belief of four different groups juxtaposed in the one volume both the overall similarities and the detailed differences are made more ostensible, giving a clearer picture of the unity and diversity to be found in traditional Shona religion. While this book does not provide the wealth of detail on any one ritual centre that, for instance, Gelfand's earlier book, *Shona Ritual*,² does, it breaks new ground in giving us descriptive material on the ritual detail of the Manyika, the Vaunyama and the Hwesa, groups which have not been extensively covered in this respect by the earlier literature.

In his preface Gelfand states that this is the concluding volume on his researches into the religion of the Shona, commenced amongst the VaZezuru twenty-five years earlier. During that period this indefatigable scholar, in addition to producing a prodigious literature in his own field of medicine and significant publications in the areas of law and history, has faithfully recorded a wealth of ethnographic and ritual detail from assiduous fieldwork amongst the Korekore, Zezuru, Karanga, Manyika and other Shona groups. His writings have frequently been criticized by social anthropologists and historians on a number of grounds, sometimes with justification. Gelfand's lack of formal training in the social sciences often reveals itself in a neglect of social context and as a result the questions evoking analytically important detail are not asked. This is unfortunate, for, to cite one instance, had the social location of the actors in the ritual dramas he describes been more fully analysed the sociological significance of his works would have been immeasurably enhanced. But this is to cavil at the enormously valuable ethnographic gift to our scholarship provided by a professional physician who has generously given of his 'spare' time over much of a lifetime to record the detail we now possess in the corpus of his writings. I sometimes speculate that, had Gelfand received an extended anthropological training at the beginning of his career, Shona ethnography could have had its counterpart to Schapera's lifetime of scholarship on the Tswana. Of course, had this been so, Gelfand's other notable professional accomplishments would have been attenuated and, not least, thousands of Zimbabweans (of whom the writer is one) might not have benefited as they did from the healing touch of his physicianship. But this is all hypothetical, and students of the Shona must now be content with an ethnographic record which, particularly in respect of its representation of local and regional variation, they can ignore only at the peril of their scholarship.

Dr Bhebe's book, *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe*

² M. Gelfand, *Shona Ritual* (Cape Town, Juta, 1959).

1859-1923, is a beautifully crafted volume, tightly structured and presented in attractive format. Written with economy of focus and clarity of expression, the book is arguably the most readable scholarly book on Zimbabwean history that I have encountered. At the same time, its scholarship is impressive, the text being carefully documented by Bhebe's extensive archival and field research. The book, in effect, sets itself two objectives. The first is to trace the establishment of the Christian Church in Western Zimbabwe during the period covered. The second, and more important objective, is to identify and analyse this establishment in its socio-cultural context, leading to a greater understanding of the religious dynamics which have shaped subsequent cultural and socio-political developments in the area. The book incorporates sound historical scholarship with a pervasive sociological perspective which makes a significant contribution to social science literature on Zimbabwe.

Bhebe's starting point contains two fundamental insights, one explicit and one implied. The first is that African religions are to be seen as dynamic, mutating systems in constant and continuing change, not only during but also before the onset of the colonial phase. The second is that these religious systems are to be seen as existing in dynamic and reciprocal interaction with the other structures of society, a relationship which is both reactive and generative. These two insights are of critical importance. The first rescues Bhebe's analysis from the exclusively static view of African traditional religions so often implied by ethnographic literature of the type exemplified by Gelfand's work mentioned earlier. The second takes Bhebe's analysis beyond the simplistic and sterile 'reaction to conquest' paradigm which is implicit in most historical and anthropological treatments of the subject in Zimbabwe, and which characterizes traditional religion, often with Rousseauian romanticism, as being a particularistic mode bereft of context, gallantly fighting a rearguard action in the face of a rapacious onslaught by the ideological predators of a universalistic religion sustained in every respect by the colonial situation. Such a paradigm ignores the complexities of motivation and context shaping the Christian expansion in Zimbabwe (which, as Bhebe shows, rapidly became an African as well as a missionary enterprise) and is a gross insult to the vitality of the indigenous religious traditions which (again as Bhebe points out) have amply demonstrated their ability to respond not only reactively but also creatively to changing contexts, both before and subsequent to the establishment of colonial domination.

Bhebe's treatment is organized chronologically into five sections: (a) Ndebeleland: society and religion before 1859; (b) The Ndebele and the first missionaries, 1859-68; (c) Christianity and Western Zimbabwe under Lobengula, 1870-89; (d) Religious institutions and the fall of the Ndebele kingdom, 1888-97; (e) Missions and the traditional societies, 1897-1923. The book ends with a chapter on Christianity and education and a concluding analytic overview which seeks to place Bhebe's material within the context of other studies of religious change in Africa. In this concluding section Bhebe relies heavily on two typologies, Raymond Oliver's typology of African societies and Humphrey Fisher's typology of African religious transition. The integration of this data in terms of these typologies is useful and effective but not extended. I suspect that these typologies (and indeed the others he mentions, developed by Horton and Murphree) are not adequate for the scope and variety of materials Bhebe produces. He is dealing with a multiplex set of data manifested in a variety of historical, social and cultural dimensions, all

superimposed on each other. I am reminded of Horowitz's observation that any analysis of change must grapple with the problems of consistency (different rates of change), sequence (order of change) and congruence (fit with other aspects of social structure). Bhebe in his concluding analysis deals largely with the issue of sequence; the problems of consistency and congruence are touched on elsewhere throughout the text but not effectively treated in his analytic summation. One senses that the material is there, and that this is the proper subject for Bhebe's next book. In this volume he has approached his subject, as one would expect of an historian, inductively. The stage is now set for this scholar to take a more deductive approach, setting up his own typology and analytic framework on the basis of this work for a conceptual approach which could well lead to a considerable advance in our understanding of the religious dynamics of Africa, past and present.

The entire volume is replete with valuable insights too numerous to mention here. I would, however, particularly draw the attention of the reader to Bhebe's treatment of pre-Christian religious synthesis and innovation (Preface and Chapter 1), Lobengula's intercalary role (pp. 41-66), the role of Black converts (pp. 34-36, 82-83, 99-100, 129-132) and the heterodoxy and heteropraxy of the Christian community, which developed during the period covered. If the book has a weakness in the range of its analysis it lies in Bhebe's failure to explore extensively the socio-political location of the various missions and the significance of this factor for their respective policies and impact. But this is perhaps an issue more important for the period succeeding Bhebe's cut-off point of 1923 and does not significantly detract from a study which is otherwise thorough, concise and lucid.

Dr Fry's *Spirits of Protest: Spirit Mediums and the Articulation of Consensus among the Zezuru of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)*, stems from field-work done by the author in the Chiota Tribal Trust Land for his doctoral thesis in the mid-1960s. It is a slim volume (123 pages of text) based on material collected during a period when Fry was repeatedly frustrated by the inhibitions imposed by the mounting political conflict of the time. The district administration of the Rhodesian Front Government was hostile and restrictive and the indigenous subjects of Fry's research were suspicious of motive and cautious in response. Given these conditions, Fry was forced to abandon the accepted anthropological approach of establishing a thorough sociographic context for his material through an extended social survey, and his primary material consists largely of a small set of extended case-studies of individuals interviewed and observed over time, coupled with situational analysis. As a result we are given no quantitative dimensions to the situational contexts Fry analyses, and no indices by which to evaluate Fry's assertion of 'the decline of Christianity in Chiota and the rise of spirit-mediumship' (p. 4) at this point in time. Given the circumstances, the lack of socio-demographic survey material is understandable; what is inexplicable is the absence of any statistics on religious-group attendance and membership which must surely have been available. Fry's ethnographic homework is similarly scanty. Dr Bourdillon, in a review of this book in *Africa*,³ has commented that it 'fills a notable gap in the ethnography of the Zezuru'. This is over-generous. While there is nothing exceptional about Fry's short background ethnographic sections (pp. 5-29) there is nothing new about them either, nothing that has not already appeared in the works of Bernardi, Broderick, Chavunduka, Garbett, Gelfand and Seed.

³ M. Bourdillon, *Africa* (1978), XLVIII, 410-11.

On this narrow data base Fry erects an ambitious analytic superstructure, an inverted pyramid of generalizations teetering on its head. He sets himself the task of verifying three hypotheses: (a) that the authority of spirit mediums rests primarily on their charismatic gifts and their ability to perceive and articulate consensus rather than on the ascribed status of the spirits they purport to represent; (b) that a sharp contrast is to be perceived between the achievement basis of Zezuru mediumship and the alleged hierocratic basis of authority among Korekore mediums; and (c) that the revival of spirit mediumship among the Zezuru during the period of Fry's fieldwork represents an oscillation away from Christianity and towards traditional religion corresponding to a parallel politico-cultural tendency to reject Western values and revive traditional ones. Fry, within the confines of this data, succeeds brilliantly in the first task, fails completely in the second, and gives, in the third, an argument that can only yield the verdict 'unproven'.

Fry's failure to sustain his argument in his comparison between Zezuru and Korekore mediumship is the result of two critical analytic weaknesses, the comparison of two different types of data on the assumption that they are the same, and the tendency to construct facile dichotomies for the purposes of generalization. Garbett's material on the Korekore, on which Fry relies, is concerned with a particularly stable instance of Korekore mediumship, existing in a different historico-political context. One cannot take this data, therefore, contrast it with Fry's and conclude, *ergo*, that Korekore and Zezuru mediumship are different. They are in certain respects; but the evidence for this conclusion is not found in Fry's book. Indeed the record, as shown in Garbett's chapter in the Werbner volume reviewed below, indicates that many of the entrepreneurial aspects of mediumship found by Fry among the Zezuru are also to be found among the Korekore. The same analytic weaknesses vitiate Fry's depiction of a decline in Christianity and a corresponding resurgence of traditional religion in Chiota. It is clear that Fry's case-studies represent an important strand in the warp and woof of the dynamic religious system in Chiota, but he does not give us the data required for rigid analytic contrast and comparison. Fry sees the spirit mediums as being 'unequivocally opposed structurally to Christianity' (p. 120) on a line delineated by opposed views on African nationalism. This is not convincing in the light of strong support for the nationalistic cause by many Christians. Fry's rigid dichotomization here is as misleading as when he says that the authority of the chiefs is coercive and that of the mediums is consensual (p. 9). Here a tendency is elevated to a rule; the facts are that many Shona chiefs opt for a consensual basis for their authority, as Weinrich has shown.⁴

In one respect Fry's analysis is convincing. This is his demonstration of the entrepreneurial dimension of mediumship which effectively discredits the conventional stereotype, often naively accepted by Shona ethnographers, of a rigid and given hierarchy of spirits and mediums. The spirit medium role has considerable 'room for manoeuvre', to use Lucy Mair's phrase, and Fry skilfully demonstrates its function of consensual summation. It is a pity that field-work conditions did not permit the author to range more widely in pursuit of the analysis of this role and function. A book with this kind of focus would have been a far better one.

I turn now to the three volumes edited, respectively, by van Binsbergen and Buijtenhuis, Werbner, and Schoffeleers. The van Binsbergen and Buijtenhuis

⁴ A. K. H. Weinrich, *Chiefs and Councils in Rhodesia* (London, Heinemann, 1971).

volume is of the least interest since it has little internal cohesion and consists of a series of working papers by authors who have published more scholarly work elsewhere. The idea behind the publication was a good one: to re-examine standard analyses of African religious experience in the light of recent socio-political events, with special reference to the importance attached to the colonial situation and emergent nationalism as being the causal nexus of these analyses. Unfortunately the contributions fail to contribute significantly to this goal. Daneel gives a rambling pot-pourri of field notes with little analytic progression, and Harold Turner ties himself up in knots trying, unsuccessfully, to improve on Sundkler's typology of independence. The one useful chapter is van Binsbergen's case study of the Lumpa church in Zambia which stands on its own as an insightful analysis of one variety of religious independency within the context of a newly independent African state. But taking the volume as a whole, one can only agree with the editors themselves when they admit that it 'is fair representation of the lack of consensus and the state of flux currently dominating this field of inquiry' (p. 7).

The last two volumes, edited, respectively, by Schoffeleers and Werbner, are a different matter. Both are seminal, and while containing admittedly exploratory analyses are informed by an analytic rigour and correspondence of focus that provide a cohesiveness lacking in the van Binsbergen and Buijtenhuis volume. Chronology is an important consideration in the evaluation of these two books. In the Werbner volume, published in 1977, the editor states, 'These essays begin a new phase in the anthropological study of regional cults. It is the first time that the cults are treated as a major focus of comparative analysis' (p. xxxvi). Strictly speaking this is incorrect, for although the Schoffeleers volume was only published in 1979, it represents papers produced on the theme of territorial cults in 1972, with an introduction written by the editor in 1974. Although the distinction between territorial and regional cults is of significance, the two volumes present cognate material. Both chronologically and conceptually the two publications represent a progression and I shall take up the Schoffeleers volume first.

The book is divided into three sections containing articles respectively on Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe, a total of ten essays. Some of the essays are of limited impact, bearing the marks of hastily constructed papers prepared for conference presentation. But a number of others are workmanlike analyses which expand on the field of work of their authors and advance our knowledge of the variety and complexity of the territorial cults in this part of Africa, a study which has not received systematic attention heretofore. In particular I would single out in this respect the chapters by van Binsbergen on Zambia, Schoffeleers on the Chisumphi and Mbona cults in Malawi, Bourdillon on the Korekore and Tavera, and Rennie on the Musikavanhu cult of Zimbabwe and Moçambique. Schoffeleers also presents, together with Mwanza, an interesting piece on the Mwari shrines of south-western Zimbabwe which is significant in the light of Werbner's treatment of the same subject in the book reviewed below.

But the real jewel in this book is Schoffeleers's introductory chapter, taking up 46 pages of text and providing an overview of the subject. Schoffeleers defines the territorial cult as one 'whose constituency is a territorial group identified by common occupation of a particular land area, so that membership of the cult is . . . a consequence of residence and not kinship or ethnic designation' (p. 1). Territorial cults are therefore a specific mode of religious organization to be distinguished from, for instance, cults of affliction or the ancestral cults. Unlike the latter they

have a specific geographic base and, concomitantly, are inclusive in nature, all the inhabitants of the territory being their constituency. This spatially determined and inclusive character also implies that they closely parallel the institutions of secular authority, although the correspondence does not always hold when the cults expand to become what Schoffeleers calls 'federative' cults. 'One can . . . state that territorial cults are by nature political since they are the religious representation of what are basically and primarily territorial and political groups' (p. 6).

From this definitional base Schoffeleers proceeds to the difficult task of synthesizing the material at his disposal into a coherent whole of conceptual value for further analysis. He succeeds remarkably well. Modestly, Schoffeleers comments in his conclusion that 'Although more useful ways of classifying may be proposed in the future, the one that has been proposed allows us at least to create a beginning of order in an otherwise bewildering variety of cults' (p. 42). Schoffeleers's essay does provide this 'beginning of order' in an analysis that is innovative, concise and convincing.

In his first, and perhaps most original, section Schoffeleers argues that the territorial cults are, in essence, profoundly ecological in nature. They are the institutionalized manifestations of the earth philosophies of the region, the articulation of communal and ecological concerns. They have a prescriptive function with respect to food production and distribution, the protection of natural resources and the control of human settlement and migration. Such is their impact on the ecological system that Schoffeleers borrows Rappaport's phrase and speaks of 'a ritually directed eco-system' (p. 3). The coalescence of religious, communal and ecological concerns stems from a logic positing a causal connection between the physical and moral orders. Or, as Schoffeleers puts it, 'management of nature depends on the correct management and control of society' (p. 5).

Schoffeleers then proceeds to an organizational typology of the territorial cults, a section which I suspect is more likely to be subject to revision than the rest of this chapter. He then turns to an historical overview of the territorial cults in a section containing seminal insights on a number of issues too numerous to mention here. He has important things to say regarding the dynamic and varied posture of the territorial cults *vis-à-vis* other competing tendencies, and foresees their demise concomitantly with the erosion of their ecological and communal base as a result of the introduction of bureaucratic government with its secularizing tendencies, land alienation and wage earning.

One issue of comparative importance escapes significant treatment in Schoffeleers's analytic net. He does not effectively contrast the inclusive principle of the territorial cults with the exclusive principle of other religious modes, including Christianity, or the implications of this contrast for innovation and adaptability at individual and group levels. These facts are critical in the process of 'modernization', and both inclusiveness and exclusiveness would appear to have their evolutionary advantages and disadvantages in this respect. I find it curious, in fact, that Schoffeleers is so pessimistic about the future of the territorial cults. In the light of their manifest adaptability and vitality in the past, and the continuing centrality of ecological concerns, one wonders if they will not, Phoenix-like, emerge from the ashes of the present into a transmogrified future bearing an essential continuity with the past, a continuing component of the rich mosaic of the religion of Central Africa.

The Werbner volume is a collection of eight papers presented at a 1976

conference on regional cults sponsored by the Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth, together with an introduction by the editor. Six of the eight essays deal with Central African materials, the other two drawing on data from Western Morocco and South Sinai. All are conceptually sophisticated and the volume exhibits the professionalism we have come to expect in the ASA Monograph Series.

Curiously, nowhere in the book can I find a definition of a regional cult. Many of the authors are dealing effectively with what Schoffeleers has defined as 'territorial cults', but in some instances the cults dealt with do not conform to his criterion of inclusive territoriality. Instead the focus of this book is on 'cults of the middle range—more far-reaching than any parochial cult of the little community, yet less inclusive in belief and membership than a world religion in its most universal form' (p. ix). Contrasted with the Schoffeleers volume, this expansion in scope provides this book with the comparative data on inclusive/exclusive principles which are lacking in the other work. At the same time this leads to a certain diffuseness of focus and the cohesiveness of the volume is only rescued by the synthesis provided by Werbner in his introduction.

Werbner identifies as the central theoretical concern of the book the issue of 'correspondence', the widely accepted theory in an anthropological tradition stemming from Robertson Smith via Durkheim that postulates a correspondence 'between symbolic representations of the social world and patterns of conduct' (p. xviii). Or, as another contributor, Eickelman, puts it, this is the presumption of 'an elegant one-to-one correlation between ideology and social action' (p. 4).

Werbner, Eickelman and, implicitly, most of their co-authors suggest that the uncritical acceptance of this proposition leads to an attenuated and inadequate analysis, disguising the ability of religious systems to generate their own momentums which are not only modified by, but also modify, the direction of social action—a perspective paralleling my earlier comment on Bhebe's insight on the reactive and generative aspects of religious institutions. They propose an alternative conceptual stance, at one point presented under the rubric 'interaction': 'The notion of correspondence masks the two-way interaction which occurs between symbolic conceptions of the social order and patterns of social action. The idea of interaction, as opposed to correspondence, necessarily implies a lack of fit between the two analytic levels at any given moment' (p. 4). A concomitant stance to the 'interaction' perspective taken by the volume is the abjuration of rigid, opposed dichotomies. Commenting on Victor Turner's parallel dichotomization, Werbner states, 'Like other ideal typologies, however, it tends to represent as mutually exclusive alternatives which are, in fact, *aspects* which combine in a surprising variety of ways within a range of actual cases' (p. xiii).

Two methodological approaches inform the authors' approach to their subject. They are concerned, first, to analyse their data over time; change, in both its reactive and generative dimensions, is an essential component in their data. Secondly, they are concerned to ensure that their analysis arises inductively, with an emphasis on the perceptions and perspectives of the actors themselves. None of this is new to anthropological analysis, but the combined conceptual and methodological approach taken in the book is refreshing and stimulating, marking, it is hoped, a new era in the anthropological study of religion. The book fails in any attempt to construct a model yielding high-level generalizations. Yet it abounds in creative analytic insights, and in its respective chapters presents a series of valuable

caveats against simplistic analyses of the interactive process between religion and the other institutions of society based on older models of conventional anthropological wisdom. For this alone it is more than worth the purchase price.

In retrospect, my reading of these six volumes confirms the happy suspicion that the study of religion in Central Africa is alive and well. I find the Bhebe, Schoffeleers and Werbner volumes of far greater value than the others. Werbner is the most stimulating and provocative book; the Bhebe and Schoffeleers works are the most convincing. They are, in their respective disciplines, 'studies of the middle-range', to paraphrase Merton, studies 'intermediate to the minor working hypotheses evolved in abundance during the day-to-day routines of research, and the all-inclusive speculations comprising a master conceptual scheme'.³ Satisfying in their rounded, cohesive argument, they do not frustrate by wanton generalization patently beyond the limits of the evidence. That scholarship in Central African religion has graduated from Merton's 'minor working hypotheses' to mid-range theory is a considerable achievement, and it is to this level of analytic enterprise that work should now be directed during the next decade. The works reviewed in this essay indicate that the capacity is there. And I would remind those tempted to make the precipitous leap from 'minor working hypotheses' to grand theory that, as Goldkind has said,⁴ while any theory may be better than none at all, good description is better than bad theorizing.

University of Zimbabwe

M. W. MURPHREE

³ R. K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York, The Free Press, 1949), 5-6.

⁴ V. Goldkind, 'Three studies of Mexican Indians: A methodological critique', *American Anthropologist* (1979), LXXXI, 894.