

on these issues. For example, in considering problems of 'dual marriage' (statutory and customary marriages existing simultaneously for a married pair), there is no reference in this book to the extensive work of anthropologists in identifying and defining the marriage process in the 'traditional' societies in question. Nor is the anthropological literature on bridewealth apparently known, with its hard-won distinctions between payments in patrilineal and matrilineal societies, and the precise rights that are transacted by bridewealth in each. Greater clarity in legal understanding might emerge from using this literature.

That said, however — and with no intention of delving into the many specifics of the individual arguments — I found this a serious and useful collection, less uneven in the quality of its individual papers than is commonly the case (though not without some contradictions between individual authors on the 'correct' interpretation of specific aspects of Zimbabwean colonial law). It will undoubtedly and deservedly find a place beyond its primary orientation as a source for students reading law.

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**Guns and Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe** *By D. Lan.*

Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1985, xix, 244 pp., ISBN 0-85255-200-9, Z\$12.50.

It is a performance. The book *Guns and Rain* is a theatrical event, both entertaining and absorbing. The author, David Lan, had the wit and courage to enter a remote corner of Zimbabwe, Dande, at Independence to study the relationship between the spirit mediums and the guerrillas. After spending over eighteen months in Dande, Lan wrote his thesis for which he was awarded his doctorate by the London School of Economics. This book is based on the thesis. It is about one aspect of the struggle for Zimbabwe (1966–80) as reported in an operational zone in the Zambezi valley. It sets out to describe the active support given to the resistance by Shona religious leaders, and to detail the collaboration between ancestors and their descendants, the past and the present, the living and the dead. Using structural analysis, Lan examines the politics of resistance, gives an account of an important historical event, and traces Shona social theory and practice. His study has been widely praised as a model which shows how anthropology can contribute to politics and history.

Lan has a writer's eye for a catchy phrase — 'The Lions of Rain' and 'The Sons of the Soil' are two of his section headings — and a craftsman's ability to thread themes using carefully chosen words like coloured beads so that the whole is an intricately worked and pleasing ornament. Yet my copy of *Guns and Rain* is littered with question marks. How does he know this? I want to ask. Where is his evidence? How many people told him that? Where is the counter evidence? For example, let us see what Lan says about work. In the second chapter, on 'The People and Land', he describes the Korekore of Dande as living in villages in which,

Each household has its own fields where the men work in the early morning while

their wives care for their children and prepare the morning meal. Women and men return to work till midday, eat and rest until mid-afternoon then return to the fields until the sun goes down.

There are very few families in Dande which rely entirely on the land for their subsistence. Most have a father or a son, a brother or a male cousin in work, or seeking work, somewhere 'on the mountain'. Without these wages it would be hard to make it even through the better years, almost impossible to survive the worst. But all these wage earners return to work their own fields when they can. Work in the towns, on the farms, in the mines has of course a powerful influence on shaping their view of their world. Nonetheless work in the fields is somehow a more basic form of work, 'real' work, providing a crucial framework of identity — as a member of a household, a lineage, a chieftancy [*sic*] and ultimately of a clan as well. . . .

In the chapters that follow we will advance deep into the undergrowth of mythology and ritual, of symbolism and belief. As we pick our way between these constructs and imaginings, it will be useful to keep in mind this central image: the villages, their fields near the banks of the rivers, the women and men of Dande working them, following the same paths over the fields, first to hoe out furrows, then back to the start and across again dribbling fertilizer (*mushonga*, or medicine) into the earth's new wounds, then back and across to sow the seeds, then back and across to weed and again to weed, day after day, with one eye on the sky, the birds, the soil, insects, winds, the mountain top seeking the signs of rain and then back and across one final time to harvest the heads of sorghum, the tufts of cotton, the pale green cobs of maize. The final time, that is, until next year (pp. 11-12).

Given the density of the undergrowth and the emphasis that Lan later places on agricultural work his description of labour and reproduction is inadequate. His sketch of field work applies to only some months of the year. I doubt that women stay home to prepare breakfast while men go early to the fields to work; surely people in the hot, dry valley conditions hoe and plant in stations, not in furrows; the people of Dande surely grow sorghum varieties that ripen after the maize, and he gives no figures on remittances from migrant labourers. He claims that in Dande a family needs 3.25 hectares of maize to provide a subsistence and cash for basic needs, yet he does not provide evidence for so finely-wrought a figure nor tell us how large 'a family' is. Lan's description reads easily but what authority do his words bear? I have just completed a study of labour in the Zambezi Valley so it is perhaps mean of me to pick on these points. However, Lan later places enormous importance on his construction of work and it underpins his analysis of the role of mediums. He says of the sexual division of labour that men clear the bush for new fields and some hunt; that women do all household activities and maintain river gardens; and that 'All other agricultural tasks may be carried out by women or by men separately or together' (p. 12). We have been told, thus far, that, apart from clearing virgin land and gardening, men and women do all agricultural tasks; that agricultural work is 'real' work; and that the identity of a person in Dande is framed by agricultural labour.

In Chapter Five, 'The Valley of Affines', Lan gives an elegant analysis of the rituals performed by *mhondoro* (literally 'lions', in this context the most important spirits of the land). He explicates the symbolism of blood and the moon and links these to weekly rest days (*zvisi*, sing. *chisi*) and monthly rest days (*chiropa* and *rusere*) when all agricultural work is forbidden and only domestic labour is allowed. He goes on,

If male work is forbidden when there is no moon in the sky and *mhondoro* do not possess their mediums at the same time and for the same reasons, it seems possible that possession is in a sense thought of as male work. Let us follow this possibility and see if it leads us anywhere worth getting to (p. 92).

Well, one is surprised to learn that agricultural work is male work. But let us follow Lan further. He shows that rest days are

associated with death on which no male work, including possession, can take place. But on the anniversaries of these highly significant deaths (the deaths of the *mhondoro*, the chiefs of the past, the death of the moon) one kind of work, women's work may go ahead as usual. Does this mean that men's work is in some sense opposed to death, on a death-day it must cease, whereas women's work is somehow associated with death, so closely associated in fact that on a death-day this work alone may continue? We need to look a little more closely at what women's work, in the widest implications of this phrase, actually is (p. 92).

Not only is agricultural work male work (a fact that has escaped the attention of most anthropologists in sub-Saharan Africa) but women's work is associated with death. We give birth to death? Wait, Lan proves it.

Where I worked, in the Omay, on *zvizi* days men made fishing nets; built houses, granaries, goat pens, and chicken coops; carved hoe handles, stools or drums; wove slings; fixed bicycles or sandals; and spent hours nourishing relations among kin and neighbours not necessarily over pots of beer. Do the men of Dande not do these tasks? Is none of that male work? My study shows that women spend much more time on agricultural activities than men do even when men are at home and not away earning money. (In a recent ILO study, 'Labour Productivity in Zimbabwe', 1984, a large sample of farmers were interviewed of whom only one third were men because the rest were migrants, yet the author of the report concludes that 'men are farmers and women are their assistants'.) Is it different in Dande? Are the women doing male work? What nonsense. Lan continues his analysis, tying together notions of impurity (menstrual blood) and the loss of teeth and burial practice and life as a drying-out process (with women reverting periodically to 'utter wetness'), until he concludes that,

Women's work is thought of as the reproduction of human life by biological means with all the wetness, softness and blood that that entails. Men's work, by contrast, is the reproduction of human life through the agency of the mediums, the recreation of the lives of the senior lineage ancestors by means of the rituals of possession (p. 94).

This extraordinary exclusion of women from the reproduction of human life through the ancestors is backed up by comments on women's 'very insignificant part' in the burials of adults and their role as 'de-individualised women' at possession rituals. Finally, Lan says,

To string all this imagery together: on *chiropa* [*chiropa* is the day after the non-appearance of the moon in the sky — a rest day] the moon is dead. It is the day of blood when the earth may not be cut into with a hoe nor may any other men's work such as hunting be done. Only women's work in the house or the gathering of wild plants is allowed. On *chiropa* there are no *mhondoro*, no spirits, none of the life after death, the re-emergence of the ancestors of the lineage made possible by the mediums and the men. There is only biological life, the life of the menstrual blood of wives, that is to say the life made possible

by affines. On *chiropa* the ancestors of one's own lineage do no work. They are dead and the mediums cannot restore them to life, for *chiropa* is a day polluted by affinal blood . . .

For the Korekore, then, there are two kinds of life. There is the biological blood-drenched life associated with women as affines, and there is the social and intellectual life-in-death of the *mhondoro* controlled by men . . .

It is as if the symbolism of biological reproduction, in reality the most significant source of fertility and creativity, has been stolen by men to lend lustre to their own cheap-jack construction of cloth, beads, sticks and beer (pp. 95-8).

Who, I wonder, is employing cheap-jack constructions? Lan grants women only biological reproductive powers and identifies them with death (see p. 95) and as affines, which is the same, in his overall analysis, as strangers. He empowers men with control over the social and intellectual life of the shades. Men do the 'real work' and have 'ancestral fertility'. His analysis of Korekore myths is similarly extraordinary in the smooth manner in which he turns the central role of women into one of insignificance and subservience. Despite the handicaps that women carry — they are blood-drenched, insignificant and de-individualized — four *mhondoro* are, Lan admits, regarded as women or as having a female aspect (p. 88) (four, I presume, of the fifteen *mhondoro* Lan interviewed, p. 232). Of these four, only two are 'unequivocally women': Nehanda is the daughter of Mutota, Chiqua is the daughter of Nyamapfeka, and the mediums who are possessed by them are always female. Besides, there are other female mediums in Dande but they are possessed by male *mhondoro*. The author then comments, 'Despite this I do not deal with Nehanda and Chiqua in what follows because their 'femaleness' is purely functional' (p. 88). 'Maleness' is dysfunctional and therefore worthy of attention?

He eventually places the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe in debt to the spirit of a woman, Ambuya Nehanda, 'the *mhondoro* whose mediums had participated both in the first liberation struggle, the rebellion of 1896, and in the second' (pp. 217-18). During the second War of Liberation, Nehanda's medium was Kunzaruwa, a woman, and it is with her power and influence in Dande that Lan opens his book. Perhaps Nehanda and Kunzaruwa are honorary males, like female anthropologists.

*Guns and Rain* is a fine performance. But Lan has done a great disservice to Shona women. It is my understanding that Shona women can take hold of positions of enormous power, that their myths grant them places of honour and significance, that their rituals offer scope for the control and direction of events, and that their part in reproduction (both as mothers and as agriculturalists) is of prime, not secondary, importance to the welfare of the nation. Women are not free: the burden of male domination is great but an analysis such as the one Lan gives undermines the opportunities Shona culture provides — opportunities only being won back now by women in the West.