

issues are discussed in relation to their implications under the general and customary legal systems. In the first and second sections, the author rarely comments whether the courts had, in important post-Independence cases, reached the correct decision. On page 129, for example, the Supreme Court appears in *Dolby v. Lewis* SC No. 34 of 1987 to have come to a blatantly political, rather than legal, decision regarding the removal of a child (of divorced parents) from its jurisdiction. It is important, in a legal system governed by precedent, to challenge potentially wrong decisions so that they can be overruled if necessary.

In the second section, the author considers the law as it affects children. A wide range of interesting and topical points are discussed, including the status of children conceived through artificial insemination, where Ncube gives a succinct appraisal of what he believes the legal situation to be. A hint of the haste earlier alluded to can be seen on page 77 where the author has omitted an important alternative to Section 62 of the Adoption Act (*Chapter 33*). The text makes reference only to potential applicants who are known to the parents and completely omits paragraph B of Section 62(a)(ii) which allows the court to select applicants on the register of the Director of Social Services.

Ncube seems more sure of himself in the section on marriage. His previous tendency to disregard anomalies and contentious decisions is replaced by a sure touch, especially when discussing the proprietary consequences of the breakup of a marriage under both systems of law. Ncube sensitively discusses the need for the courts, when splitting the matrimonial property, to be aware of obligations both parties — but particularly the man — may have to future families. Then, suddenly, after this excellent analysis, the last paragraph is abruptly reached.

As is inevitable with a text of this nature, it will be out of date as soon as the (constantly referred to) Customary Law and Primary Courts Act (No. 2 of 1990) becomes operative. It is hoped that in future updated versions, Ncube will take the time to provide the comprehensive cover promised in the preface of this first edition.

MARY STOCKER

**The Conundrum Trees** By C. Emily Dibb. Harare, Modus, 1989, vi, 153 pp., illus., ISBN 0-908309-03-1 (pbk), Z\$29,28.

Few authors can write successfully about their attitudes towards animals and nature, possibly because nature inspires such intensely personal feelings. This little book of recollections is written by someone who clearly loves the Zimbabwean bush and the author's enthusiasm is strongly evidenced. Unfortunately, there is no clear theme to the book and it comes across as a series of small stories with only the author's love of nature and outdoor life in this country to connect them. Although the book is well written I had some difficulty in reading it because, at times, I could not be sure what the point of it all was.

The first part of the book ('On Safari') deals with incidents that the author and her family experienced in the Zambezi Valley. Having myself lived in the Zambezi Valley for several years, I have heard many similar stories, embellished to varying degrees, and there was nothing novel in this section for me. The second part of the book ('Simple Pleasures') was, I thought, rather better as the experiences it describes are simpler, less dramatic and so better written.

Perhaps this is because many of these stories stem from the author's experiences as a child. Childhood memories may be more vivid than later experiences and, with the passage of time, become romanticized. I certainly enjoyed a wave of nostalgia while reading about many of the same things that I did as a youngster, including sampling that most wonderful of indigenous fruits, the snot apple (I much prefer its delightfully onomatopoeic Sindebele name — *Xaguxagu*).

The third part of the book ('Abdul') is about an injured Abdim's Stork which the author rescued and cared for until it was able to fly away. This is an interesting and well-written piece which taught me something about these birds, but I feel that Abdul's story does not deserve such a large proportion of the book and that one or two chapters could have been eliminated without much loss.

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B. E. MARSHALL

**The Praises of Dingana: Izibongo zikaDingana** Edited by D. K. Rycroft and A. B. Ngcobo. Pietermaritzburg, Univ. of Natal Press, Killie Campbell Africana Library Series, 1988, xiii, 258 pp., ISBN 0-86950-629-7, R46,50.

It is a fitting tribute to Dingane (Dingana) that Rycroft and Ngcobo should have reproduced his praise-poem (*izibongo*) in written form. This poem brilliantly illustrates the genius of the Zulu *izimbongi*, perhaps most memorably expressed in the following immortal lines (p. 74)

*Vezi kof' abantu*  
*Kosa' izibongo*  
*Izona zosala zibadalula*  
*Izona zosala zibalil' emanxiweni*

Vezi, though people may die, praises remain  
 These will remain and bring grief for them  
 Remain and lament for them in the empty homes.

The book is also a tribute to James Stuart's extended study of Zulu history and culture. The present *izibongo*, a tremendous 432 lines, were collated by James Stuart from sixteen different sources and have never been published before in this full form. The present transcription was made from six recordings made by Stuart for the Zenophone Record Company in London between 1927 and 1930, of which only the first was ever issued commercially. Accompanying the transcription is an English translation with a detailed line-by-line commentary to aid the literary historian and the literary critic. It provides the reader with material as near as possible to the nineteenth-century recitals of *izibongo*, and the sound recording has been diagrammized to represent the way in which the *imbongi* recited the poem, thus animating the frozen *izibongo* as much as possible.

But for a reader seeking ground-breaking research on *izibongo*, this book is a disappointment. There is a lack of rigorous analysis that such a subject now requires. For example, Rycroft and Ngcobo do not defend their definition of