

historical wrongs done to a people who have for generations suffered the oppression, ridicule and incomprehension of other cultures. Under the respectful ethnographic description, the encoded message urges the Tonga to take upon themselves that task of self-determination. This book is produced in both English and ciTonga for that reason.

Nevertheless, there are improvements to be made. Although Reynolds tries to simplify her allusive and often poetic style the book will not, however, be found a uniformly easy read. The author's voice is often that of scholar and poet, rather than pedagogue.

Some of the explanations of terms (as on pp. 203 and 216) are contentious. It should be made clear that these are not intended as dictionary definitions. Similarly, the sub-sections 'Soul' and 'Body' which appear in each of the three parts are given idiosyncratic meanings which astonish the unprepared reader. Editing has not been as thorough as one would have liked. The pictures and names of the potter and basket-weaver on pages 116–17 have been reversed and the mouse traps on pages 177–8 seem to have been wrongly labelled. The book has a useful bibliography but no index.

*Harare*

CAROLE PEARCE

**Dance Civet Cat: Child Labour in the Zambezi Valley** By Pamela Reynolds. Harare, Baobab Books, 1991, 176 pp., ISBN 0-86232-933-7 (pbk), Z\$54.00.

Not only is it heartening to read a study set in the mode of the classics — an eloquent and educated use of words, and constellations of tables and diagrams where words may be confusing — but it is refreshing too. This study is short. In a mere 161 pages, including tables and diagrams, it pursues and achieves its goal: to unravel the complexities of a society in which the work of children is crucial, and to show that crux.

The author perceives at the outset that the approach to African farming used hitherto, that is, through household units 'has been found wanting as it obscures women's tactics, work and success as well as inter-house co-operation. As women tend to control child labour, it often obscures that too.' Later on in the book the point is made that adults often do not actually know what the children really do, and that people routinely underestimate the amount of time that even they themselves spend working. The problem of condensing the findings of an awesomely diverse and detailed methodology has, I think, been well handled. Analysis of labour has to take account of so many things: seasonality, outputs, diversity of task; the list is endless. Wisely, virtually no statistical analysis has been attempted. Juxtaposed anecdotal and tabular approaches answer most of the questions a student or reader might have, without losing the thrust of the argument.

The importance of this study can hardly be overemphasized. At a time when African farming is once again under pressure to produce for the cash economy — and the Tonga people, subjects of this study, are more

under pressure than most — it illuminates the process of marginalization that serves to undervalue, and, perhaps because of this, to lose, the labour of women and children — to society's cost. Indeed the study makes abundantly clear that this price is already being paid, mostly by women and children. The conclusion, that people must be allowed to live and grow in families, is not a trite one. It follows a study which reveals starkly how easily family structures can be subverted by external factors, such as the law. As life becomes more difficult for women it becomes positively dire for their daughters. And yet many of their problems derive from one of the central problems faced by the men of the area: 'Ironically, they now have no guns nor the right to trap and hunt, although the population of game is higher and their lives are more directly threatened by game than in the last century'.

Perhaps is it too much to hope that, after such a splendid example, similar studies will now be undertaken for other societies. We can at least hope that it is the thin edge of a wedge: a firm opening has definitely been made here.

Dr Reynolds is very well served by her graphic designers and type-setters, though it is disappointing to see none of the promised photographs by the justly famous Alexander Joe. Editing does slip up sometimes: the elegant language and breadth of knowledge is marred, for instance, by reference to the language 'kwaNdebele'. And one enormous failing is the lack of an index. All the same this is a book that no library on African sociology can afford to be without.

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PETA JONES

**Poor, Harassed but Very Much Alive: An Account of Street People and their Organisation** By M. F. C. Bourdillon. Gweru, Mambo Press, 1991, 107 pp., ISBN 0-86922-500-6, Z\$16,00.

Bourdillon describes this book as being about one community of homeless people in Harare. He declares his own sympathies in the Introduction: the street people are 'a group of people who found they had nowhere to go to, and no-one to help them, and who learnt to support each other in their poverty. It is a group who tried to help themselves, and who were constantly frustrated by wider society' (p. 4). The book was written in order to try to correct the generally negative image of street people that exists in Zimbabwe by portraying them as resilient, creative people struggling to earn a living in an urban environment in which employment is difficult to find and in which housing, if it is available at all, is expensive.

To learn the true nature of the street people, particularly of the children who were seen as potential criminals, Bourdillon spent time with one particular homeless community which was moved several times by the authorities, sometimes brutally and frequently with little care for the people or their meagre possessions. He describes their attempts to develop a co-operative, the Street People's Organization, and focuses on the personal stories of individual members of the community. They were a