

apartheid South Africa's destabilisation of neighbouring countries even though, by 1995, apartheid was no more. These problems arise, of course, out of the fact that the papers incorporated in the book were written several years before 1995.

These minor errors notwithstanding, *The Mining Sector* is a significant and welcome contribution to Southern African economic discourse and a useful addition to the growing scholarship on the political economy of the region in general and the history of the mining sector in particular.

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Traditional Healers and Childhood in Zimbabwe By Pamela Reynolds.
Athens, Ohio University Press, 1996, 183 pp., ISBN 0-8214-1121-7.

The author must be congratulated for tackling a task that badly needed attention. The book deals with traditional healing as it relates to children and childhood in Zimbabwe. We knew very little about the role of children in the practice of traditional medicine in Zimbabwe. The first chapter examines the process of acquiring traditional medical knowledge. Like many of us, Professor Reynolds is impressed with the amount of technical and other kinds of knowledge that traditional healers have. On the possession of technical knowledge, she observed that many traditional healers know an impressive amount about flora and fauna. They have a wide range of information and show fine discrimination in their observation and classification of leaves, stems, roots, fruits, flowers and bark. They are able to distinguish plants on the basis of taste, touch, smell and their appearance across the seasons.

The author sought to discover from whom, at what age, with what leeway for innovation, and in accord with what checks and balances traditional healers learn the use of plants, symbolic systems, and social and psychological analysis. The findings are interesting. The author has shown that much of this knowledge is not acquired in adulthood; some children are provided the opportunity and encouragement to acquire specialised skills and information to do with healing.

There are many traditional healers who claim that much of their knowledge is revealed to them in dreams. Chapter 2 traces Zezuru healers' dreams as part of the repertoire available to them for the constitution of self and for the direction of others. In addition she sees the use of dreams as part of their strategy for coping with contingencies of their upbringing. Dreams are also viewed as a part of the description of self and help to make connections between personal problems and the burden of an epoch between the present and the past.

Traditional healers in general played a part during and after Zimbabwe's War of Liberation between 1970 and 1980. Chapter 3 gives an account of the part traditional healers played; it also deals especially with children's suffering and the part they played in the fight for freedom. Many children suffered a great deal during the war; they displayed their distress after the war. The author shows that there was more madness after the war than before. On the part of older people this madness was also due, at least in part, to the fact that many spirits of people who had not been given correct ritual burials or whose deaths resulted from acts of wrongdoing remained unsettled. Traditional healers responded to their need largely by mediating between the spirits and the community. On returning from the war, many men and women, who had fought on either side visited healers to be cleansed. Traditional healers provided opportunities through ritual for reconciliation and the soothing of individual trauma.

Chapter 4 largely deals with the problem of evil with particular reference to the exposure of children to evil. The author also discusses innocence and identity. On the problem of evil the author comes to the conclusion that children learn from adults. She writes:

Bear in mind that while I sat and talked with *n'anga* or watched them divine, treat patients, collect and prepare medicines, discuss cases, and conduct rituals, children were almost always there — watching, listening, and sometimes participating. Children are aware of their elders' ideas of the canker of evil and they collect their own stock of lore about evil.

The last chapter examines in more detail the learning process in the field of traditional medicine. It compliments the previous chapters. The chapter shows that in many cases children are selected for medical training early in their lives; they serve their apprenticeships by acting as acolytes. The chapter shows how they eventually become healers.

Professor Reynolds did her fieldwork in three areas of Mashonaland in Zimbabwe. She obviously got to know well the people she worked with and was able to analyse their actions in depth. I am impressed by her sympathy towards and deep understanding of the men, women and children who are the subject of this book. In my view her greatest contribution has been the study of the process of acquiring traditional medical knowledge.

The role of dreams in traditional medical practice did not, in my view, receive adequate attention. There are some traditional healers who deny that they were taught to identify certain plants; they claim that this technical knowledge was revealed to them in dreams. In other words in his or her dream the person is shown the place in the bush where the medicine is to be found. The next morning he or she goes there to find the herb. I have accompanied to the woods a number of people who had dreamt about a cure for a certain ailment. In all the cases in which I have taken part, the herbs discovered in this way have turned out to be useful.

Professor Reynolds did not, in my view, test this hypothesis adequately. She had the opportunity to examine this aspect.

The book, however, remains an important text for those involved in the study of African society. The author has tried, I think successfully, to present her material in a language that ordinary men and women, who have no knowledge of psychology or social anthropology, can understand.

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