

abandoned because of alleged abuses, though Chakanza lists several other sources of Catholic resistance. He takes a theological stand in favour of renewed inculturation and, like Hinga and Phiri, takes liberation rather than oppression to be the high road to acceptability. Gundani also takes the historical approach, following good groundwork on the character and meaning of the indigenous rite, which demonstrates its complexity. There are in fact multiple statuses in transition, not just that of the deceased person, to be catered for. This may account for the cautious and tortuous Catholic deliberations on the issue over a period of 18 years that eventually produced a model rite, complete with a set of operating instructions, but with at least one contentious matter outstanding. It appears however, that the majority of the laity are not sufficiently informed about the new rite. In other words, they continue to make their own compromises with tradition.

This last observation strikes an ominous note for the volume as a whole. That theologians and academic specialists in religion should be wrestling with the problem of integrating two separate religious traditions is to be expected and this effort is no better or worse than others of its kind. But there is a missing dimension, that of everyday life — what lies beyond the standard statements provided by informants, as Bourdillon points out in the epilogue. To what extent are the two religious systems separate, or rather, in whose mind(s) are they deemed to be divided from one another? It tends to be a middle-class urban concern to lace them together in some formal way, precisely because their disjunction is largely conceived by the urban middle class. Ordinary people on the ground have little time for theological niceties and, in their everyday practice and interaction, they readily integrate the two to form a single system. It is this living conjunction, the articulation of a dynamic folk-religion, that is largely absent from these pages and that bears further investigation.

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Images of Yesteryear: Film-making in Central Africa By *Louis Nell*. Harper Collins, 1998, ISBN 1-77904005-9, 206 pp.

Louis Nell's book provides a first hand account of pioneering film-making in Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland through the Central African Film Unit (CAFU) over the fifteen-year period 1948-63. In that time 625 films were made. Initial support for the CAFU project came from the British government through the Colonial Development welfare funds.

England's ruling elite had great faith in the power of cinema as an instrument of persuasion when communicating with the masses, whether the working class of urban industrial England or illiterates in Britain's African colonies.¹

The original objective of CAFU was to make films for African audiences. With the establishment of the Central African Federation in 1953, control of CAFU was assumed by the Federal Department of Information and the priorities shifted to the making of propaganda and publicity films to promote the federation locally and overseas.²

The author, Louis Nell, was appointed to CAFU as a director-cameraman, being part of the CAFU team made up of Allan Izod (producer), Denys Brown (cameraman), and Stephen Peet (director-cameraman). Nell's work primarily covered Zambia, but also Malawi and Zimbabwe. His book is the first comprehensive account of CAFU activities produced by one of the participants. It therefore fills an important gap in the historiography of film-making in Central Africa.

The book provides important information on the technology of film-making in the 1950s. The work was primarily based on small budgets and individual enterprise. CAFU laid the groundwork for modern day film production in Zimbabwe. Sadly, some of the gains of the pre-independence era such as the development of the Central Film Laboratories (CFL) have been lost. The CFL went out of business because of a failure to upgrade its facilities. The country has therefore not been able to build on the pioneering base of knowledge, skills and facilities established during the colonial period.

CAFU films were made during an era where the majority African population was discriminated against socially, economically and politically. These problems were played out in the work activities of the unit. Oral interviews with African participants who worked for CAFU, and archival materials, have shown that film-making by CAFU was in some ways uplifting to local communities, particularly the use of instructional films. The audiences embraced them when they judged them to be consistent with their social and economic aspirations. However, there is evidence that CAFU activities were resisted by local communities, who challenged the political assumptions on which they were based. There is evidence that Africans in Northern Rhodesia became openly hostile to CAFU films that promoted the Central African Federation which they considered to be detrimental to their political aspirations for self-

1 R. Smyth (1998) 'The British Colonial Film Unit and Sub-Saharan Africa', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 8, (iii), 285.

2 R. Smyth (1983) 'The Central African Film Unit's images of empire, 1948-1963', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 3, (ii).

determination.³ Interviews that I have conducted with African assistants to CAFU crews have indicated that rural audiences resisted some CAFU films that promoted land resettlement policies and the re-location of African peasant farmers in support of the Land Apportionment Act.⁴ A third area of difficulty for CAFU were the controls imposed by the state on the production and marketing of crops. There were selective bans on cash crop production of some commodities (e.g. Tobacco in Southern Rhodesia) and discriminatory commodity pricing policies. These rash policies were intended to promote White agriculture against African competition. Given these policies, CAFU films that promoted enterprise and wealth accumulation through hard work ran into obvious contradictions that the audience came to increasingly discern.

There is hardly a hint of these difficulties in Nell's account. He chooses to be largely detached from the political context of his work. The furthest he gets addressing these problems is to comment vaguely that, 'people were openly beginning to show hostility to anything federal'.⁵ But when he says that, the example that he goes on to cite is that of campaigns against the federal health system, rather than CAFU activities. This is unfortunate, as a more deliberate engagement of the problem of film-making in the colonial context would have enriched his narrative. Such an account was all the more necessary because the professed goal of the unit was to promote African development, particularly rural Africans. This goal became increasingly elusive because of discriminatory land tenure policies that relegated African farming to marginal and overcrowded land. Peter Fraenkel's book on the development of early radio in Zambia is an outstanding example of a narrative that fully engages the problem of mass media in the political context of the region during the same period as is covered by Nell. Commenting on the problems of radio broadcasting in Northern Rhodesia during the federal period he notes that:

The faith that our audiences had once had in our broadcasting station slowly collapsed completely. Our announcers were threatened. Our recording-vans had their tyres punctured in remote villages. People refused to record for us. If they could be persuaded to do so, many of their songs had the refrain, 'We don't want the Federation.' We had reached rock-bottom.⁶

3 Interview with David Hlazo, 1987. Hlazo worked as an assistant to CAFU crews in Zambia. All the interviews cited were conducted by Dr. K. Manungo and myself, unless otherwise stated.

4 The Land Apportionment Act of 1930 was a cornerstone of colonial discriminatory policies. It allocated land on the basis of race and provided the legal framework for the forced eviction of Africans from areas designated for White settlement by the state.

5 L. Nell, *Images of Yesterday: Film-making in Central Africa*, 187.

6 See Peter Fraenkel's *Wayalashi* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1959), 207.

It would have been useful to dwell on the broader social problems of film producing over the period under review. Nell however, chose to confine his discussion of audience reaction to episodes where receptions were enthusiastic and audiences were entranced by the magic of the 'moving images'. Ultimately CAFU was a White run organization that sought to promote a limited vision of African development in a segregated society. Nell defends the absence of Africans in CAFU's decision-making structures citing the absence of suitably qualified Africans. It is not clear why he is motivated to such a defence, when it is patently clear that the racial politics of that era would not have allowed Africans to be trained in film-making. That there were Africans who could have been co-opted and trained as film-makers is evidenced by recent oral interviews with former CAFU 'African assistants', David Hlazo and Samuel Tutani.⁷ Both had good academic qualifications, having received at least four years of secondary education. They could have been taken on as trainee director-cameramen or scriptwriters. Indeed there is evidence from interviews with Stephen Peet⁸ that African assistants were sometimes asked to do camera work, but this was not officially acknowledged. The bottom line is that CAFU never considered such positions as open to Africans, which was consistent with the politics of the day. The failure to open up film-making for Africans created problems for CAFU that were inherent in the colonial government's native policy. In the end, as the political tensions rose, leading to the break-up of the federation and UDI, CAFU lost some of its staff through emigration, and those who remained were largely absorbed by the Rhodesian government as part of its propaganda machine.

The shortcomings in Nell's account notwithstanding, his book is an important account of the history of film-making in Zimbabwe.

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The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla Warfare and The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe By *Ngwabi Bhebe*. Mambo Press, 1999.

I read this book on Heroes Day, when the leaders of the liberation struggle were expecting the masses to gather at Heroes Acre, a monument for the dead built by the Koreans in the outskirts of Harare. Bhebe's book is of interest to read today as an important addition to stories about the liberation struggle by Africans. One hears about ZANU, ZAPU and/or

⁷ Interviews with David Hlazo, 1987 and Interview with Samuel Tutani, 1988.

⁸ Interview with Stephen Peet, 1987.