

Books & the Arts

Studying the dinosaur

Kenneth Mackenzie

South Africa, A Study in Conflict by Pierre L. van den Berghe (Wesleyan University Press, \$8.95)

White Laager, The Rise of Afrikaner Nationalism by William Henry Vatcher Jr. (Pall Mall, 63s.)

A History of Postwar Africa by John Hatch (Andre Deutsch, 50s.)

WHY, PROFESSOR VAN DEN BERGHE asks at the beginning of his book, should a sociologist study South Africa? Because, he says, "the anachronism of its governmental policies and racial attitudes gives South Africa the value of a museum piece, of a living political dinosaur..." Also, he adds hopefully, it will give a good opportunity of studying "rapid and drastic change".

Professor van den Berghe, who was born in the Congo and now works at an American university, lived for almost two years in South Africa doing sociological research in Natal (about which he wrote a previous book, *Caneville*). In this new analysis of the whole situation he shows himself once more to be a most liberal and sympathetic—as well as discerning—student of the dinosaur.

This book is aimed more at sociologists and anthropologists than at laymen, and some readers may find the jargon discouraging (South Africa is a "society characterised by an extraordinarily high level of internal conflict, contradiction and dysfunction... with a rigidly ascriptive and particularistic system of racial segregation and stratification..." and so on). But those who persevere will be rewarded for the professor, although he does not add to our information, has some stimulating and clear-eyed insights.

It is interesting, for instance, to find him saying that the traditional distinction between northern racialism and Cape liberalism "could better be described as a relatively minor difference of opinion between two brands of paternalists." He seems to me wise in insisting that

it is futile to think that there may somehow be a "change of heart" among South African whites, or that overseas pressure can bring about more liberal policies. This is his vision of the future, and it is a strange one to come from an American academic:

At present, repressive measures appear to have disorganised the African opposition, and a prospect of a successful revolt seems slender in the immediate future. Once the colonial territories to the north of South Africa will have become independent, however, the collapse of white supremacy will be imminent. With foreign bases of operation along a two-thousand-mile frontier, and military assistance from outside, guerilla operations in South Africa will be extremely difficult to counteract, as indeed any underground movement which has the passive or active support of the mass of the population. Furthermore, once the fight will have reached the stage of large-scale terrorism, Afro-Asian demands for international sanctions or UN intervention will undoubtedly be stepped up, and become more effective. Revolutionary change will thus probably result from a combination of the following actions: strong international sanctions, strikes and passive resistance in the urban centres, peasant revolts in rural areas, and well-organised sabotage from a foreign-based underground receiving outside military assistance and training.

He adds that "conditions will become favourable for these developments within five years at the most."

White Laager, also by an American academic, covers a smaller field in more detail and from a historical rather than sociological point of view. It deals exclusively with white politics—splits and *toenaderings* and parliamentary manoeuvres and, in the old days, appeals for the "Native problem to be kept out of politics." The writing here is again rather heavy-going in what is almost an American academic tradition, but the research is solid and the book is particularly useful in its documentation of the Nazi links and sympathies of leading Nationalists. This author's conclusion is also that the period of Afrikaner dominance is now drawing to a close.

John Hatch was the Labour Party's Commonwealth expert and is now also on an American campus. He is obviously well-qualified to describe this most exciting period in Africa's history, and he has produced a fine book, written with sympathy but with an admirable lack of any sort of sentimentality (about corruption, for instance). The field is so large that even in a book of 432 pages one sometimes feels one is being hurried on just when things are getting interesting, but if that is a fault it is also a compliment. ●

Were there No Heroes?

C. F. Goodfellow

The Imperial Factor in South Africa by C. W. de Kiewiet (Frank Cass & Co. 45s.).

THERE ARE INEVITABLY two judgments to be made of this important book, first published in 1937, on the occasion of its reappearance in 1965. Professional historians will mainly ask how it helps towards an appreciation of the period dealt with by the author, the years from 1870 to 1885, while the broader audience will wonder what it contributes towards an understanding of modern South Africa, and perhaps of Africa generally.

Yet the two judgments involved ought not to be totally divorced, as of no interest one to the other: for a very obvious connection between them arises from the fact that it is illogical to look for present guidance to an author who fails to interpret his own period satisfactorily. In other words the professional judgment should precede the lay. A number of more or less technical grouses will no doubt be heard from historians, chief among them that the opportunity has not been taken to provide a revised edition, so that the book reappears with the same factual slips as marred the first edition; for example the implication that Richard Southey's formative experience had been gained in the "liberal Western Province" (p.17), and the even more astonishing blunder of attributing to the year 1876 the bitter complaint of a Parliamentary Under-Secretary against Britain's spending her "blood and money upon these wretched Kaffir quarrels in South Africa," which was in fact voiced a few months after Isandhlwana in 1879 (p.67). These instances are in fact indicative of a cavalier attitude to the sources which the author excuses in his preface by saying that "footnotes like friends should not be made to bear too much responsibility for a writer's judgments." *The Imperial Factor in South Africa* is best considered as an extended interpretative essay, based upon a reading of the original sources but containing no serious attempt to use them to prove the hypotheses advanced; an essay, furthermore, very much in the literary tradition of historiography, whose epigrams incessantly distract from the argument and sometimes (as in the one just quoted) are substituted for it.

Essentially the book is important because it is the only introduction in any detail to the period, between the discovery of diamonds and that of gold, which saw the subordination to European control of the last important independent African societies south of the Limpopo: the Pedi, the Xhosa, the Zulu, the Tswana, and, although under somewhat different circumstances from the rest, Lesotho. These were the last years in which the principal resistance to white dominance was offered with tribal spears; thereafter came the slow growth of sub-continental

With no pinch of salt

Obi B. Egbuna

political organisations. How satisfactory is the interpretation offered? The two best chapters in the book, those dealing with the economic origins of the Cape-Xhosa and Anglo-Zulu wars, are perhaps the finest analyses in existence of the processes leading to African dispossession in Southern Africa: pragmatic and free from dogma, they illuminate the scene as no other historian has yet been able to do. The only serious criticism to be made here is that while the aggressive and predatory society of the Europeans is brought sharply into relief, the desperately defensive tribes remain faint and shadowy victims: nevertheless the modern enquirer will gain deep insights into the dynamics of European dominance from these pages.

THE TREATMENT OF THE OTHER MAIN THEME, which gives the book its title, is less satisfactory. British imperialism is presented as the light that failed, whose innate striving towards "a social and economic order in South Africa characterised by a greater tolerance of race, a more ardent trusteeship, a more inspired social wisdom" was defeated by forces both external and internal to itself. For the modern student of affairs this hypothesis may not unfairly be translated into the assertion that the intentions of British imperialists have, by and large, been benevolent, whatever the actual effects of their policies. There will be found few to accept this interpretation as applied to British policy in the mid-twentieth century, whether in relation to the Republic of South Africa, Rhodesia, or elsewhere: if Britain in the end discounted white dominance in Kenya, and if, as remains to be seen, she does so in Zimbabwe, the explanation lies more plausibly in the global balance of power than in the personal righteousness of successive British politicians. Ninety years ago in South Africa the case for imperial benevolence is weaker still, as de Kiewiet might have had to admit if he had attempted to prove it. There exists in the private papers and confidential minutes of the policy-makers of the 1870s overwhelming evidence of a firm pre-occupation with Britain's national interest, and in so far as this basic ingredient was laced with other sentiments, the pinch of humanitarianism was neutralised, to put it no stronger, by a substantial dash of racism. One is driven to suspect that the author, unable to accept the dark fact that in much human history there are no heroes for those who set their standards high, was forced to cast Secretaries of State and High Commissioners in the vacant roles of his plot. In modern terms, this is like believing that Mr. Bottomley has the liberation of Zimbabwe at heart, or that Mr. Wilson wants to promote economic sanctions against South Africa's fascists. ●

Nyitso (a Novel of West Africa) by M. F. C. Roebuck (Macdonald 21s.).

Toads for Supper by Chukwuemeka Ike (Harvill Press 18s.).

MISS ROEBUCK HAS a rare power of description, an ear for sounds and an eye for narrative details. I suspect that she even knows her West Africa well but the place she has portrayed is not the West Africa there is but the one she has a near-pathological obsession to see. Result? Near-believable characters in unbelievable situations! If this book is declared seditious in Ghana (the Nyitso country) and banned, I should not be the least surprised (nor probably would Miss Roebuck) for behind the author's sparkling style lurks naive but calculatedly destructive propaganda. In my opinion, if there is nothing as stimulating as a lively novel that admits to being a political instrument, there is also nothing more nauseating than damaging political literature that shams a village-tale superstructure.

Nyitso is, we are told, the name of a village in an unnamed West African state whose capital is, curiously enough, Accra. In the local language, Nyitso means, "the day before yesterday," or, in some contexts, "the day after tomorrow." And the hero, Paul, is one of those Africans who have graduated in Wisdom because they have been to Europe and back and, in his particular wisdom, resides in what "could be a middle-class home in a pleasant English suburb." An ex-political detainee, he emerges out of "prison" to build a Tower of Babel out of his native Nyitso and thus rescues his people and a dilapidating village from the clutches of a savage regime, a forerunner of total overthrow. Anti-Pan-African to the marrow, he detests even the word "Africans" because "'Africans' is a mighty word. It covers multitudes. . . . In our village we only go ahead in our own way and leave the outside people to their generalisations. . . . We did not achieve independence to fight among ourselves like savages. Leave that to the Congolese."

A PARTY SUPPORTER "gets contracts because he is a party man" and the music teacher is dismissed by the sage headmaster for teaching a song starting off, "Our noble president, messiah and redeemer," and the dismissal justified because, "patriotism couldn't grow in the soil of personality cults." Such meaningless clichés so pervade the book that one's fingers begin to itch for a blue pencil. "Now you find," exclaims Seth the

intrepid, "the black communist can exploit you just as ruthlessly as any white capitalist" and the village leading lady philosophises that "one would prefer something nobler than aggressive warfare directed against Katanga, which seems to me to be about the only orderly portion of the Congo." The president, we are told, "runs tuckling to the east, mortgaging the cocoa-crop to Russia. Borrowing money from Peking, China. From Peking! And the Chinese workers eat only a cup of rice a day. We should be ashamed." The only white "Helper" in the village, a German boy, "has maturity beyond his years. Our men have not his ways." The chicken thief has to be Markwei, a great political wrangler popularly known as Karl Marx. And a foreign firm refuses to build a petrol station because "they haven't much confidence in the economic stability of the country." Even the local birds have something detrimental to sing about the social set-up—"Witchdoctor's sick."

This is a village where people strangle dogs, steal meat, chicken and kerosene, shove their grandchildren's hands in the fire, knife each other across meat tables, a village where headless bodies are found in public paths, of tuberculous young women, lepers and matricides, "an atmosphere so charged with exasperation and frustration," that the reader is left with the impression that here is a beautiful village with the wrong people living in it—a whiff of apartheid which, even if unconscious, is no doubt responsible for a mediocre work of this nature being a prize-winner in South Africa, the author's country of birth, upbringing and education.

ON THE OTHER HAND, Mr. Ike's book is about the most engaging West African novel I have read in recent years. Unlike the "recognised" champions of "simplicity" in the Nigerian literary world, Mr. Ike achieves simplicity without betraying any strain or consciousness of effort at being simple and, what is more, says something. It is refreshing to read someone who, though he belongs to the old school of "simplicity," does not regard style as the end but as a means to it.

For this reason, Mr. Ike occupies the ambivalent position of enjoying the popularity of the old scholars (among the Western back-patting patrons of Nigerian literature) and enduring the unpopularity of the outspoken younger writers (in the same quarters).

Harvill gives the work an excellent blurb—"to be engaged to three girls simultaneously, accused by one of being the father of her child, rusticated by University authorities—these are severe setbacks in the career of an undergraduate." The author's understanding sympathy and insight into undergraduate life in Nigeria today make this much more than the farce that the hero's predicament implies. The Ezinkwo village life is sunnily sketched in without vulgar provincialising, another rare thing in Nigerian literature. The characters, whether Ibo or Yoruba, student or porter, male or female, intellectual or intelligent, are real, living, convincing; and the dialogue, whether pidgin or good English, literary translation or hard vernacular, is good, humorous and richly embroidered with proverbs like, "The offspring of a snake cannot be short." And the puzzlement over the title disappears the moment the key proverb is encountered, "When a child eats a toad, it kills his appetite for meat."

At the risk of being quoted out of context, my recommendation must surely be that *Toads for Supper* be devoured without a pinch of salt. ●

A meticulous pattern

Jill Jessop

The Deserter by Kenneth Mackenzie (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 21s)

The Story of Sarah by Sylvia Whitehead (Macdonald, 21s)

Chance to Die by Lionel Black (Cassell, 16s)

Sunrise over Tanesia by Donald Swanson (Simondium Publishers, Cape Town, 16s)

OF THE FOUR, *The Deserter* is the most interesting and easily the best. Kenneth Mackenzie's plot is excellent, so are his ideas about his characters, so are some of his scenes and images. I get the impression, however, that he worked everything out beforehand with meticulous care, then started to write, found his characters weren't quite turning out the way he'd intended, and so forced them into the patterns he had set for them. With unhappy results for the book. More than enough novels are written haphazardly, by writers who presumably argue that left to themselves the characters will somehow work out all right. So I should congratulate Mr. Mackenzie on his control. I do. But it's too firm and inflexible.

The story is about Japie van Niekerk, a young South African, who deserts from his Boer commando after the battle of Spion Kop and returns to the family farm, where he finds little sympathy for his half-articulated ideas about not killing people. He (being, I fear, a half-baked youth, a little too intense and at times even a bit tedious) meanders unhappily from sister to mother to English friend's civilised, tea-sipping mother to simple but flighty girl friend—like Hamlet in isolation and uncertainty, but not in brains or charisma. He struggles to extract from his emotional confusion a workable attitude to life and people. His Calvinist background cannot help him—the few who might have understood him are committed to the war (like his English friend's mother) or to their own rebellion (like his sister Sannie) or to the life they have learnt to accept as inevitable (like his patient and oppressed mother).

He establishes an understanding—if only a half-acknowledged one—with an African labourer from Basutoland. Together they build a dam (though “not a masterpiece of civil engineering,” as a British officer remarks later on)—here is something constructive, close to the earth, and concrete. These scenes are among the best in the book. The symbolism is not overplayed, and I particularly liked the description of Japie's feelings towards the Basuto in the presence of other people—the mixture of determined solidarity, and anxiety lest his friend should put himself outside the pale and force Japie to commit himself on one side or the other. I was also impressed by the scenes

between Japie and his girl friend Martha, when they “sit up” together in her parents' sitting room, the length of the candle allowed them being the measure of parental approval. Japie of course takes full advantage of these plentiful opportunities to demonstrate his gaucheness; Martha, who has a kind of unsophisticated sagacity (and the women in this novel are a pretty sensible lot, compared to the men), lets him run on without ever committing herself. In the end, when Japie is in terrible trouble, she comes to him; by this time it doesn't really matter, though I suppose it was nice to know.

As for Japie, his problem is indecision. He'd like to do the right thing, but sometimes it doesn't seem worth the struggle, and anyway he can't be sure what is the right thing. He allows himself to be pushed into positions he never wanted to take up, and worse, he allows himself to do things he later detests himself for. If you have no general guidelines in life, the nasty things you do are all the more detestable, because you feel they are the result of self-indulgence or carelessness. Japie needs to find out why he should damage other people—or things. When at last he does, he joins those who can explain or justify what they do, because they think they are shaping events, not being shaped by them.

It is vital to Mr. Mackenzie's scheme that Japie should finally evolve a positive policy for life. Unluckily he has not equipped him with the necessary strength of intellect or character to make this plausible. Nor has Japie grown in stature during the story. Condemned to death by the British for killing a British soldier after the war is formally over, Japie is still trying to explain things to his family. Then he escapes and in the course of a remarkable night, discovers that he can kill without remorse, that his father's sexual values are not for him, and that two people can be a physical and affirming comfort to each other without saying anything of importance. In fact he has shed his past and asserted his control over events. Now he is in grave danger of being left, perched out on his lonely limb—the least likely of figures to end a novel with. Mr. Mackenzie manipulates the plot shamelessly to avoid this. I sympathise with him, but I think if he had allowed Japie to develop more naturally, and to be a little less consistent and predictable up to the last chapter, he might have got away with the spiritual revolution and left his hero staring abstractedly at the ashes of the farm house. As it is, he leaves us feeling cheated and a bit sceptical.

“THE STORY OF SARAH” I found oddly touching, repellent though many of Sylvia Whitehead's attitudes are. It is an account of how she, her



From the cover design of Kenneth Mackenzie's novel

husband and her children went out from England to South Africa, and chiefly of the relationship that developed between herself and her African servant, Sarah Jantjies. Mrs. Whitehead's ideas about Africans are the epitome of well-meaning English-speaking middle-class paternalism—probably the most offensive and ultimately the most dangerous of whites' attitudes towards non-whites. And yet as she gets to know Sarah better, and to see her against the background of racialism and suffering (how many white employers do this?), she becomes less laughable, her attitudes less repellent, her predicament and confusion more moving. She evolves, like a character in a novel, and in the end the paternalism seems almost to have switched directions. Only by now it is the dominance of one personality over another, and has nothing to do with race.

“CHANCE TO DIE” is a thriller that happens to be set in Swaziland. It is packed with villainous South African Government police agents, even more villainous Communist agents, a ruthlessly efficient but lovable British agent and the inevitable helpless but energetic amateur. Quite good in parts but not wildly plausible.

“SUNRISE OVER TANESIA” is simply a distasteful, funny book, whose best line, “‘Sonny, why don't you go and play outside?’ said the Captain hatefully, whilst they were flying at ten thousand feet” is surely not new. I wouldn't recommend it for that line alone. ●

Romanticising inaccuracies

Raymond Kunene

South Africa by John Cope (Ernest Benn 37s. 6d.).

MR. COPE HAS NOT ONLY written a very subjective book, he has chosen a style that leaves no doubt as to his inability to write a book at all. First of all, the chapters are arranged in categories that suit more the author's convenience than the logic of history. We have Part One dealing with subjects that demand the background thrown into Part Two. To illustrate this, take the subject like "Africans" in Part One and compare it with "Black Nationalism" dealt with in a much later section of the book, Part Three. "Opponents of the Apartheid Plan" are dealt with in Part One and with no apparent logic, the historical forces responsible for apartheid are right in the heart of the book. In itself this would not be a serious error except that we are deprived of a natural historical sequence in the development of the whole concept apartheid plan. We hear how the Transvaal Republic practised apartheid, long after we have read how the present day Government is implementing apartheid.

It would be forgivable if the pattern of the book was the only aspect to criticise, but Mr. Cope infuriates by his very lack of accurate historical facts. He tells us the old fable that the Europeans were pushing into the interior whilst similar "late arrivals," the "Bantu," were pushing into the south.

Of the Ka he claims a primitive origin. "It may well have been here (Kalahari) where *Australopithecus* evolved into the earliest forbear of the Bushman. . . ." Of the Khoikhoi he claims "The Bantu in Central Africa were more advanced than these Hottentots. . . ." One wonders how Mr. Cope with his claim to knowledge of ancient African history has failed to find out that the Mapungubwe culture of the Transvaal is Khoi Khoi in origin. The Bantu of course, are in turn primitive compared to Europeans. Gold mining and iron making are said to be of foreign origin.

The history both of the Zulus, Sothos and Xhosas in more recent times is to say the least wholly inaccurate. Romanticising the pre-industrial African communities, Mr. Cope says "the various tribes were living in a state of relative peace." Moving on to deal with Zulu history he tells us Nandi was waylaid by *Senzangakhona* when everyone knows that she consented in a moment of weakness and later was to regret her mistake for the greater part of her life. Mr. Cope also tells us that Dingiswayo was ambushed, when in fact he was killed on the orders of Zwide.

He is just as misinformed about Xhosa history. Not for the first time one hears the rumour that the "great Basuto chief Moshesh . . . wished to destroy the power of the Xhosas."

In fact Africans more logically believe that the whole deception was engineered by the whites, more specifically by Sir George Grey.

Much more serious than these historical inaccuracies are the claims made about the African National Congress. Surely Mr. Cope should know that in 1912 it was the South African Native Congress that was formed, not the ANC nor did this herald a new and unknown desire to unite the Africans against the invaders. Cetshwayo, Sekhukhuni and Xhosa rulers had earlier tried to forge such an alliance, much to the terror of the Boers in the Transvaal.

Writing about the ICU, Mr. Cope states that "Kadalié made the fatal move by removing the headquarters from the Cape Town to Johannesburg. This deprived Kadalié of the services and advice and guidance of a number of Cape Coloureds who had far greater experience and organisational ability than did he or his fellow Africans." On the contrary it was when ICU moved its headquarters to Johannesburg that it flourished. Again, dealing with the All-African Convention he makes the wildest claim—that it was organised by Dr. Jabavu. Those who know the history of this organisation will tell Mr. Cope that in the first place the Hertzog Bills were introduced in 1935 and the African National Congress, represented by Dr. P. kaI Seme, the President General, called the All-African Convention jointly with Prof. D. D. T. Jabavu who represented the Federation of African Teachers and the Cape African Voters Association.

WRITING ON THE NEIGHBOURS of South Africa, Mr. Cope tells us, "A little over a century ago a clan of Ngunis under Chief Sobhuza moved away from Pongola to settle in the mountain country of Swaziland." Of course the founder of the Swazi nation was Dlamini I, who ruled what is now known as Swaziland, in the 12th century. It was Mbandzeni, not Sobhuza, who in more recent years "played off Boer against Briton," and finally ceded large portions of the country to the Boers.

This ignorance of historical facts goes on *ad nauseum* throughout the book. But we are also presented with inaccuracies of the most elementary type. Contrary to all statistical evidence Mr. Cope states, "Curiously enough African women are more literate than their menfolk." We are also told that prostitution is rife, when in fact one of the baffling phenomena to all social scientists, is the low level of its occurrence among Africans in South Africa.

Mr. Cope's remark that "these African mine labourers live under hygienic conditions in large compounds and are adequately and scientifically fed, clothed and cared for" shows to what lengths he is prepared to go to shelve the truth. The rural areas are rightly stated to be overcrowded and eroded, but in another chapter their unproductivity is attributed to African ignorance. In the same breath in which Bantustans are condemned we are told that the "government is making strenuous efforts to replan the rural areas . . . but it is an uphill fight against the traditional cattle-cult, against ignorance, and the general spirit of suspicion and hostility to the authorities."

In one section we are told that external pressures and a wave of riots and protest demonstrations can topple apartheid. In the same chapter, claims are made that a serious crisis tends to move the whites into a laager.

Except for a few chapters on the rise of Afrikaner nationalism and the Broederbond, the rest of the book became an anachronism the moment the ink was dry. ●

Handmaid of power

Mlahleni Njisané

Akan Religion and the Christian Faith by Sidney George Williamson (Ghana University Press, Accra, Oxford University Press, London, 30s.)

IN THIS STUDY THE AUTHOR EXAMINES very eruditely the impact of a proselytising faith, Christianity, on the religious life of the Akan people of Ghana. The author's background as missionary, theologian, and faculty member of the University of Ghana Divinity Department, makes him eminently qualified as an authority on the subject he undertakes to analyse, and also combines training and experience in a unique manner which explains the profundity with which he handles his subject.

I am impressed by the number of topical questions which the inquiry raises, and also by the fact that some of these were the focus of interest at the Africanist Congress held in the University of Ghana three years ago. Briefly stated the common theme was whether or not we must expect a reorientation of the analysis of African problems now that *the African is no longer a chattel or a means to an end* (except in southern Africa). The author's focus of interest is on what is to become of the Christian religion in its future interaction with a traditional Akan religion and way of life which, as the author observes, is now reasserting itself, and at a time when it is in a position to do so effectively in the wake of a recently acquired independence. In the colonial regime Christianity or a Christian Church gained ground as the handmaid of western cultures and the exponent of the religion of the white race (p.xi). Today the Christian Church must declare "*its relevance for the Akan*" through its own excellence, independent of political power.

To begin to understand the author's attempt at a comparative recapitulation (Chapter VIII) it is necessary to read the introduction very carefully. After reading over and over again both the Introduction and Chapter VIII I concluded that it would have been very helpful if the author had not shirked the task of explaining (and operationalising) Christianity in greater detail by including in the main body of the writing something of a fuller definition of what he distinguishes as "empirical Christianity", the "Christian faith", and "revelation in Christ". To assume that prospective readers will have read the New Testament is also to assume that they will find it easy to relate the New Testament to Christianity as lived and preached by the missionary in Africa. It is doubtful if the missionary majority did ever "unlearn the rash and erroneous identification of empirical Christianity with the revelation in Christ" (xvi).

THE AUTHOR'S DECLARED intention (p.138) is to view Christianity in "its manifestation as a

religion expressed in the Christian society and its historical institutions" rather than in its ecumenical and ideal character. His reference to Kraemer raises the expectation that a distinction will be maintained between the ideal Christian faith and the variable forms of European Christianity as well as between the ideal Christian faith and Akan Christian religion cast against the background of Akan traditional life. The ideal Christian faith in any such analysis and comparison would be neither eastern, western, Akan, nor European; the variable forms of Christianity would be those practised in Europe, as observable in the settler elements and as lived (and preached?) by the missionary. These would provide basically different levels of substruction.

The author emphasises the fact that Akan religion is very much a way of life, a "world view" as Busia very aptly describes it. Religion is woven into a more or less systemic institutional complex in which context it is not conceivable as a separable entity. Durkheim observes also that it is not necessarily defined by belief in god, and that it gives birth to all that is essential and sacred in society. It is this diffuse character and integration of such socialised religion with other institutional complexes that makes it difficult to think of Akan religion in ecumenical and theological terms, and which, therefore, makes the author's selected comparative indicants unsuitable. Has Christianity no socialised observable concrete indicants, such as are referred to in the Bible's injunction, "By their acts shall ye know them"?

THE AUTHOR'S DEPENDENCE on secondary sources

In abundance

Collingwood August

Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs translated and edited by I. Schapera (Oxford University Press 45s.)

SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE I knew such a book existed a friend who was staying with me made me get up at some heathenishly early hour in order to listen to him reciting the praise-poems of Zulu kings. (Kings, Mr. Schapera, please—remember these were hereditary monarchs; the term "chief" could be left for white man-made stooges.)

To return to the morning of the praises. As we were both not quite sober (having been to a party the night before), I kept on interrupting. One interlude went on something like this:

ME: Fine, fine. But where do these poems exist?

FRIEND: In the minds of men.

ME: That's not a very reliable place, you know. Oral tradition, and all that. Why don't you write them down?

FRIEND: You're the one who thinks he can write. Do it yourself.

ME: But I don't know any.

FRIEND: Go and learn them—like I did—and stop interrupting me.

Alas, poor me! I cannot even "go and learn".

makes it imperative for the reader to pause over his reference to Gluckman and Barbara Ward. Gluckman conjures up the image of "burgeoning fears of witchcraft" and "blossoming magic" with the usual anthropological efficiency and sensation. Trend developments no longer lend themselves to such broad generalisations, and for credence and validity we shall be justified in demanding more reliable measures of the "very considerable increase" of witchcraft beliefs reported also by Ward (p.128-9). To keep impressionism at a minimum it seems obvious (especially in a computer age such as ours) that some use, however primitive, of the statistical methods must be made if we want to talk about what we have today as against what we had twenty years ago. Is this an increase in intensity or is it the extension of these practices to areas of social behaviour or regions (physical) where they were formerly non-existent? In fairness to the missionary, moreover, if we take the timespan of Christian influences in England, Southern Italy, or Ireland respectively, and compare and contrast those influences with the century-old Christian activities among the Akan, I feel that the missionaries deserve better credit than these sensational reports give them.

Take *libation* (p.132-3) which to my tortuous African mind is as interesting as I find the *Christian Asperges*, and as I think the Akan would find the Christian reference to the *Souls of the Departed* to be. To mention ancestor worship without explaining how the practice differs from All Souls' Day and All Saints' Day anniversaries in the mind of the Akan is to leave out an important consideration in the analysis. I think all these points are logically

Congratulations, then, Mr. Schapera on putting together such a necessary book. Where are the Schaperas of the other linguistic groups?

The introduction tells us, among many other things, what praise-poems are, and they are "... a form of traditional literature common in all clusters of Southern Bantu (Nguni, Tsonga, Sotho and Venda). . . . They are composed not only about chiefs, headmen, famous warriors, and other prominent tribesmen, but about ordinary commoners also, including women; there are, in addition, praise-poems of tribes and subdivisions of tribes . . . of domestic animals (notably cattle), of wild animals (including birds and insects), of trees and crops, of rivers, hills, and other scenic features, and of such inanimate objects as divining-bones. In modern times some have been composed about schools, railway trains, and bicycles."

The introduction then goes on to describe the general characteristics of praise-poems. Mr. Schapera is here too polite a man to say what needs saying strongly. So, let me do it for him and it is this: Thank God, the days are gone when poetry was not poetry that did not conform to European poetry in form. The vigour of Mqhayi's "formless" poetry is infinitely more poetic than Vilakazi's effete sonnets which should be read only at literary tea-parties. This is as far as his politeness allows him to go: "Of their 'literary art', Tswana scholar [B. C. Thema, 'The trend of Setswana Poetry (1939), p.44] writes: There is no question about the abundance of poetry in the language, but in its purely primitive form Setswana poetry has no prosody. There is no question of rhyme or metre about it, nor that of division into stanzas. In fact I do not think that it would savour the name 'poetry' if it had to be written in the form in which we find it in the primitive *Maboko* (praises generally of chiefs and heroes)."

"This judgement, by a language teacher, has

relevant comparative references which belong to Chapter VIII even if the author by assumption (p.168) regards them as "scientific" with respect to the "world view" contexts.

THE SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPORTANCE of this book must also be judged by its most timely appearance. Quite recently this year the secular authority of Ghana (through one of its ministers) declared: "The Christian Churches of Ghana today should actively join in the Crusade for national reconstruction at the basis of which are today's concepts and values symbolic of spiritual, intellectual and political emancipation." At the end of the book one feels that the focus has been very much on the ecumenical and philosophical differences, and that it does not grapple directly with the more vexing questions of state-church relationship. The "dichotomy of mind" (p.128) which the author finds seems to be part of the whole inherent conflict which is going to become sharper now that the same church is being called upon to become (as before) a handmaid of the new regime. It is the same dichotomy which has led in the more totalitarian white-controlled African colonies to "separatist" movements such as are found in South Africa. We are accustomed, however, to the accommodative character of the Christian Church and therefore the new demands made upon it by the new states of Africa should not be very strange nor presumptuous. In Chapter IX ("Akan Criticisms of Missions") a careful review is made of the criticisms emanating from different strata of the Akan society, and an old nagging question comes again to my mind: Can one be African and Christian? ●

obviously been influenced by what he thought [Would not "had been made to think" be better, Mr. Schapera?] to be English conceptions of poetry. But as Lestrade has shown [*Bantu Praise-Poems* (1935), pp.4 ff.] "Tswana praise-poems do in fact have characteristics that readily distinguish them from normal prose. Those he specifies are dynamic stress (metrical rhythm), parallelism, chiasmus, and linking."

I HAVE ALWAYS FOUND parallelism a charming characteristic of Bantu poetry. Here are two examples quoted by the author:

(a) *leithôla bommaêno gobeolwa,*
leithôla bommanêo golala balla
(you foredoom your mothers to mourn,
you foredoom your mothers to weep all night);

(b) *mogatsa-Legwale gaabône moses,*
mogatsa-Legwale oishotsho boithoko
(Legwale's wife does not menstruate,
Legwale's wife is afflicted with sorrow)."

Apart from being a good example of parallelism, the second, is a good example of poetic innuendo: What causes Legwale's wife sorrow is the fact that she is infertile and therefore not fit to be anybody's wife.

The translations, mainly because Mr. Schapera is at home in the Tswana language, capture with apparent effortless the vitality of the original poems; this becomes yet more apparent when the pieces are read aloud—as they are meant to be.

This then is a good book, made easier to understand (even by people whose knowledge of Tswana is either rudimentary or completely non-existent) by the use of clearly-written footnotes and thumb-nail biographies of the kings who are being praised.

No serious student of Africana can afford to be without a copy of this book. ●

The Transkei's Answer

PART TWO

L. JIPULA

BOOKS AND THE ARTS

The Restoration of Man

D. E. Steward

White Lotus by John Hersey (Alfred Knopf, New York)

THE MAN WHO MADE conclusive statements on Hiroshima, the Warsaw Ghetto, people who love war, and even on the frosty character of people who are native to the New England states, has made an important statement on racism in America and slavery as it has existed anywhere.

John Hersey wrote *White Lotus* midstream in the passion of the American Civil Rights Movement. It should have been written long before now, yet that it was written at all is absolute proof that the world has passed far beyond the point of a century ago when Disraeli could say, "... race implies difference, difference implies superiority, and superiority leads to predominance."

Hersey compresses his history of the agony of the African in America into one lifetime, that of a white girl from Arizona who, after being taken into slavery, is given the name White Lotus. Her saga ends as she stands alone in non-violent protest against the racial power which has nearly erased her soul.

White Lotus is a long allegory; it is set in what is either a distantly possible future or in an undetermined past. In this novel China is to North America exactly as historically North America has been to Africa. Hersey is absolutely successful because every aspect of White Lotus's life is allegorically correct. He is a master at the detailed fantasy of allegorical reality; here so completely that every chapter is a further parable, and so the book becomes a chain of parables which leads down into the darkest pits of racism.

Even though he knows Chinese culture intimately, John Hersey has not written a book about China. *White Lotus* is about every horrible reality in the sorry history of race relations all over the world so far. ●

DURING THE 1963 ELECTIONS there was general intimidation. Incidents of actual assaults on the opposition have been recorded. In Matanzima's area, for example, those who urged others to vote against Matanzima were publicly assaulted. Although many of these cases were reported to the police, no prosecutions followed. Matanzima and his thugs were thus able to brutalise their opponents with impunity. Elsewhere the people were told to vote or face dire consequences, including loss of "rights" in their areas. On the actual voting day an army of police moved in. Fleets of White police toured the length and breadth of the land night and day. Planes and helicopters stood at the alert.

Despite the fraud, corruption and intimidation, the fear of reprisals, attempts were made to boycott the elections. This movement was inspired by the African People's Democratic Union of Southern Africa (APDUSA) an affiliate of the Unity Movement of South Africa. In Pondoland where the movement was strongest, impis were sent out to intimidate those who showed reluctance to vote and cow down the opposition. But in some areas, notably Mqanduli, whole vilages stayed away from the polls. Large sections of the population in Baziya, Tsmo and Engcobo also boycotted these sham elections.

Pressure was brought to bear upon all layers of the Transkei to vote for Matanzima and his men. There was intense intrigue and manipulation. The chiefs also came into the fray. Chief Havington Zulu, a member of Poto's Party has this to say on the subject:

"I was nearly dismissed by the Republican Government for fighting against rehabilitation. I was called an underground Poqo. Chiefs who joined the Democratic Party were threatened with dismissal from their positions. At Umtata I was taken into a dark house and questioned by people I could not see. They urged me to support Chief Kaiser Matanzima because he had saved me from dismissal."

Matanzima himself in one of his more boastful moments has said: "I have a keen eye on chiefs and will protect them. I have files on all chiefs and headmen and I am keen to see how they work."

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IN SPITE OF ALL THESE machinations by the South African Fascist Government, the people themselves remain resolute. When the results of the mock general election were announced they showed that of the 45 elected members 38 supported Poto. Matanzima had his greatest support from the 64 puppet chiefs, who are recognised or appointed by the South African Government and paid by it as its servants. The final result was a 54 to 49 victory for Matanzima over Poto. Thus the chiefs supported the Broederbond-backed candidates while the people rejected them. The majority of the people had voted overwhelmingly against apartheid and the creation of a Bantustan.

In the by-election that took place in Gcalekaland, following the shooting by unknown persons of one of Matanzima's followers, Chief Mlingo Salakupatwa, in April, 1964, Matanzima's candidate, Paul Majavu, was defeated by Poto's candidate, Moses Dumalisile, by 7,434 votes. The actual votes were 36,137 for Dumalisile and 28,703 for Majavu. The election itself was the first in the Transkei Bantustan to be conducted on a party political basis. The people were called upon to choose between two policies. Again they voted against apartheid.

Here again intrigue, intimidation and corruption were used in favour of Matanzima's man. On the eve of the by-election, Matanzima in his capacity as Chief Minister of the Transkei Bantustan sent the following letter to chiefs and headmen in Gcalekaland:

Chief Minister's Office,
Transkei Government,
UMTATA.
6th October, 1964.

Chief/Headman,
Gcaleka Region,
Re: Gcalekaland by-election.

As you are aware the By-election is close at hand. I advise all chiefs and headmen to beware of jackals that will turn against their own people. The usual practice of these jackals is to lead the people into difficult positions where they will find themselves chased by the police. These jackals bring about trouble between the chiefs and their people.

Stand with the Government if you wish to lead a happy and contented life because these jackals themselves are being hounded by the police as they have Communists sheltered under their blankets.

Vote for Paul Majavu, who is supported by Paramount Chief Zwelidumile Sigcawi and also by the Chief Minister of the Transkei.