

for instance, and so is the most recent work of the Cameroon director Jean-Marie Teno and the Burkina Faso director Idrissa Ouedraogo, among other prolific directors whose work is not as widely circulated as it should be.

The modesty and precision of the entries would seem to protect the compiler from criticisms of bias, although he occasionally goes out on a (large and stable) limb with a value judgement. Ferid Boughedir, for instance, is indeed 'one of the best known African film critics' (p. 39) and Ousmane Sembene is indisputably 'one of Africa's most prominent film-makers' (p. 127). There is ample room in the largish format for readers' own annotations as filmographies grow.

Given the immense work it must have taken to assemble this information, it seems a shame that basic data which surely must have come with at least some of the raw material was not included. Running times, specific film prizes, short descriptions and credit lists would all have been valuable, even if not available for every film. Of great interest and importance would have been any production information (producer credit, sponsoring government agencies, co-production information). Many African films have a complicated production history, with various governments' assistance; many African film makers make films outside their own country. The fact that Med Hondo is Mauritanian has little to do with the production history of *Sarraounia* (1986), which weathered several changes of government in various West African countries over a period of years. While the list of government film organisations provided at the back is a tremendous help, the names and addresses of private national and international distributors of African films would also have been of great value (even if, as happens inevitably, much of the information goes quickly out of date).

The bibliography, which is as selected as it claims to be, fairly advises readers to consult more complete sources as well, including Nancy Schmidt's *Sub-Saharan African Films and Filmmakers* (1988, reviewed in *Africa* 61, 1991, pp. 131–3). This solid volume fairly and unpretentiously accomplishes its goal, and provides a much-needed reference source that will be gratefully received by film programmers and scholars.

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CHRISTOPHER C. TAYLOR, *Milk, Honey, and Money: changing concepts in Rwandan healing*. Washington, D.C., and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992, 257 pp., £27.25, ISBN 1 56098 104 0.

Taylor's book is an attempt to find the implicit logic of healing in traditional (pre-colonial) Rwandan society and to describe how that logic is changing. He presents us with a powerful key concept which indeed makes healing—and other—practices look more intelligible and coherent: the concept of *flow*. The healthy body is seen as a system of fluids in constant flow, and so are society and the entire universe. Illness, as well as social and cosmological disorder, is interpreted as the result of blockage or excessive flow.

Taylor's 'vision' of the flow/blockage symbolism at every level of Rwandan culture, from the microcosmos of the human body to the macrocosmos of the universe, is refreshing and compelling. Flowing substances which represent the vitality and fertility of life include rain, milk, blood and semen. These are metaphorically linked with the traditional Rwandan economy, which is characterised by a constant circulation of gifts, including beer and bridewealth. 'Rwandans construct social relationships through the fluids they exchange in celebration, hospitality, and ordinary social interaction. Men and women produce new life from the conjoining

of sexual fluids. The sky fertilizes the earth with its rain. Maintaining the continuity of this flow is necessary to biological and social reproduction. Bodily fluids (blood, semen, maternal milk), "social" fluids (cows' milk, sorghum, porridge, beer) and rainfall are analogues of one another. The individual is metaphorically and metonymically implicated within three homologous matrices of flow: his or her own body, that of society, and that of the cosmos' (p. 105). The author himself is so much taken by this image that he—misleadingly—quotes Heraclitus' famous adage ('One cannot step twice into the same river ...') as a motto for his chapter on the 'Dynamics of flow'.

Where blood, milk, or semen cease to flow, human health is in jeopardy; where rains fail and gifts are no longer exchanged, the whole of society is at risk. The transition from a gift economy to one based on the buying and selling of commodities is seen as a process of blockage: things are kept for private gain instead of being distributed to build and maintain social relationships. The body of society is sick. Personal reciprocity is superseded by the impersonal mechanism of the market: 'Visible hands manipulate gifts; an "invisible hand" ... manipulates money and commodities' (p. 6).

In the first chapter Taylor attempts a reconstruction of pre-colonial Rwandan views of the self, the body and society by analysing the texts of royal rituals. The divine king emerges as a potent metonym and personification of the vitality of the whole of Rwandan society, people, animals and crops.

Chapter 2 introduced Catholic missionaries as—sometimes unwitting—brokers of commodification. They offer Rwandans new concepts such as wage labour, private property, contract, and individualism. This capitalist ethos is reproduced in their religious message: 'Catholicism reinforced the individualistic tendencies of capitalism by insisting that the struggle with fleshy desire was a personal one; salvation was an individual achievement ...' (p. 52). Here Taylor points at a crucial link with the old Hutu–Tutsi antagonism: 'This development, whereby commodity logic came to predominate over gift logic, has succeeded because for the Hutu majority gift logic entailed subjugation to Tutsi patrons, whereas commodity logic held out the prospect of liberation from them' (p. 63).

Chapter 3 moves from the macro to the micro level and examines present-day healing practices in northern Rwanda. Illness is still commonly seen as a disturbance of body humours, caused by outside forces such as spirits and witches. Healers usually try to restore health by fortifying the patient and/or fighting the malignant force.

In chapter 4 Taylor discusses the history of two women in central Rwanda suffering from spirit possession. Their cases illustrate the growing pluralism in thought and practice: traditional concepts of flow and blockage mingle with those of present-day medical science and of Christian faith emphasising personal sin and guilt.

Chapter 5 discusses the work of healers in southern Rwanda, which has been more profoundly affected by cash and Christianity than in the rest of the country. Taylor examines several case histories and shows that, in their explanation of illness, healers tend to stress the effects of external agents as well as internal causation.

In the sixth chapter Taylor describes how healers themselves become brokers of change, trying to compromise between the virtues of openness and flow and those of profit-making and capital accumulation. In his concluding chapter Taylor beautifully recaptures the main themes of his argument, showing the 'intersection of three spheres of thought and action: the body, cultural symbolism, and history' (p. 211).

Two questions remain after reading this fascinating book. One applies to almost half of all ethnographies and may sound somewhat trivial: is Taylor's organising symbol of flow not too neat and logical? Does he not attribute too much order and coherence to Rwandan popular thought?

The second question is also posed by Taylor himself, but not as persistently as I would have liked. His view of commodity economy as blockage looks somewhat outdated and one-dimensional. It ignores the cultural plasticity and social dynamic of money and commodity. Money does not necessarily kill reciprocity and hospitality, and capital is not always accumulated in an antisocial manner. Money can be used in inventive and creative ways to establish sociality, and commodities can become gifts. Money is an eminent example of perpetual movement and, as some say, it makes the world go round. The efforts of present-day Rwandan healers to reconcile the old and the new may not be so wasted after all.

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KETO E. MSHIGENI (ed.), *Traditional Medicinal Plants*. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press (distributed in the UK by African Books Collective Ltd, Oxford), 1991, 391 pp., £21.50, ISBN 9976 60 229 4 paperback.

This book is an edited version of the proceedings of an international conference held at Arusha, Tanzania, in 1990. The conference also dealt with Asia and Latin America but I confine my comments to the sections on Africa, because they amount to 75 per cent of the case studies and will be of greater interest to readers of *Africa*. The papers are nearly all by Africans, most originating in Tanzania (thirteen) and Kenya (five), though twelve other countries are represented. Four papers are examples of North–South co-operation, with researchers from the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK and the United States collaborating with African colleagues. Nearly all contributors come from the physical or natural sciences (especially pharmacology and chemistry), but also participating were twelve 'traditional healers', some of whom, predictably, held unorthodox opinions on such subjects as cures for AIDS. UN bodies, particularly WHO, supported the conference.

Of the thirty-two African case studies, most have a specific theme, several examining the medicinal uses of a particular plant—*Synadenium sp.*, *Cassia sp.*, *Datura sp.*, or 'seaweeds'; others looking at single diseases, including bronchial asthma, and malaria, in relation to traditional remedies. More general papers summarise the state of research (in Botswana, Somalia, Tunisia and Tabora Region, Tanzania). There are also papers on medically marketed drugs in Ethiopia, problems of regulation, ethnobotany and other topics.

The stated *aims* of the conference were to develop an inventory of medicinal plants; to promote effective plant medicines; to encourage ethnobotany and conservation, and to provide resources for a technical, institutional and legal framework for using traditional medicinal plants.

A strong case was made for promoting these aims. Speakers pointed out that in many African countries, 70–80 per cent of the population rely mainly on traditional medicines; modern medicine is costly, and often supplies and skills are short; 'there is paradoxically a trend to return to nature and to "soft" medicine' (p. 18; in passing, I note the recent decision by the British Medical Association to consider 'alternative therapies' in a more friendly way). Julius Nyerere, in his capacity as chairman of the South Commission, made a plea for