

reflection on how the presence of China can benefit the majority in the country to narrow the gap between rich and poor; how the political will of the elite can be reflected on the ground; and how to ensure that Mozambique does not remain an exporter of raw materials and importer of finished goods, such as is often the case in the relations between Africa and the West.

The book has the merit of introducing a new understanding of China in Africa through solid research which was at times challenged by difficult access to information. Notwithstanding this, the authors were able to demystify several misconceptions around the Chinese presence in Mozambique. They, furthermore, took the opportunity to bring forward the voices of the oppressed.

Irrespective of all its merits, the book regrettably fails to give a message to Africa on how to deal with foreign investors and manage its resources sustainably for future generations.

Zefanias Matsimbe
Department of Political Sciences
University of Pretoria

Mlambo, Alois S, *A History of Zimbabwe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, 277 pp.

A History of Zimbabwe is one of the most recent publications which provides a straight forward and coherent account of Zimbabwean history from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial state. The rationale for this book, as outlined (p 7) is to provide an accessible, informative, single volume on Zimbabwean history and politics for learning institutions.

The first chapter is introductory and chapter 2 gives a foundational reading of the rise and fall of pre-colonial states, (c.900-1900). The chapter is situated within the late 20th century debate on whether Africa had a history prior to its contact with Europeans. Outlining the early states from Mapungubwe (1040-1270), Torwa/Rozvi (1450-1685) and the Ndebele on the eve of British conquest, the book demonstrates that Africa had organised and functional political systems. Chapter 3 and chapter 4 focus on colonial conquest in 1890, African resistance and the organisation of the colonial economy and society until 1953. In particular, chapter 4 outlines the development of the colonial state from the British South Africa Company's (BSAC) rule to a modern state. This develop-

ment is analysed simultaneously with colonial racial attitudes and the realities of colonial exploitation which lay the foundation for the post-1950s political confrontations.

Chapter five, six and seven cover the Federal years, Nationalist Movements and the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), respectively. The antecedents of African political organisation in post-conquest Southern Rhodesia were elitist proto-nationalist movements which took the form of mutual-aid, self-help and ethnic-cultural organisations during the interwar years. These organisations only took a national outlook after the Second World War. The transformation of African political movements from sectorial to a national agenda and the radicalisation of their approach in the post-1945 period were in response to an increasingly intransigent colonial state and its unyielding attitudes towards racial integration. The failure of racial partnership and UDI in 1965 undermined chances of political compromise leading to armed conflict which intensified in the 1970s. The book outlines the cost of war, political impasse and the role of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in bringing about a negotiated settlement at Lancaster in 1979 which ushered a new constitution for independent Zimbabwe in 1980. This section demonstrates Mlambo's experience in knitting the critical dots of Zimbabwean political history to come up with clear and flowing narrative.

Chapter 8 of the book outlines the critical junctures of the Zimbabwe economy and society from 1980 to 2000; the land question, economic development from the socialist experiment of the 1980s to the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) of the 1990s, political turmoil and state sponsored terror (*Gukurahundi*) in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces, and Zimbabwe's role in both regional and international cooperation. The economic failures of the first two decades of independence and the concomitant civil and political opposition to the ruling ZANU-PF party set the tone for the multifaceted crisis of the post 2000 period which Mlambo covers in chapter 9. The cataclysmic collapse of the Zimbabwean economy begun with the land invasions in 1998, leading to an almost total collapse of the country's productive capacity and provision of social services by 2008. Mlambo captures the differential response to the Zimbabwean crises between African/South African and Western countries. While the latter considered Zimbabwe as a pariah state for its political crisis and human rights abuses, the former remained silent on the alleged abuses. In 2008, South Africa under the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) mandate facilitated the Government of National Unity (GNU) between ZANU-PF and the MDC. Con-

cluding chapter 10 attempts to hazard a guess at Zimbabwe's future prospects. While the author is not skeptical, he recognises the pitfalls that stand in the way of socio-political reforms and economic recovery in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwean history and its teaching are at a critical phase where the country's troubled political landscape has engendered a state driven patriotic and sometimes parochial interpretation of history. Mlambo gives a clear historical record, equips students with historical facts and provides a platform for students to engage with the past. He identifies the forces that shaped Zimbabwe's recent lived experiences and the pattern of their development with a view to understanding the country's present situation. For example, the timeline of historical benchmarks and profiles of some of the notable figures in Zimbabwean history (pp xv-xxxiii) are critical in teaching history having increasingly been distorted in dominant interpretations. In addition, the book captures historiographical debates at different periods, and feeds them into inter- and intra-racial complexities of Zimbabwean struggles. Mlambo succeeds in balancing historical facts and their interpretation without being voluminous.

Mlambo uses his many years of experience to clearly link the colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwean struggles on the land question and how land policies have precipitated multi-layered crises and responses. While works on the role of protest literature and music (Chimurenga music) in Zimbabwe exist, very few historical accounts include these to any considerable degree. In contrast, Mlambo shows how they have transformed over time (pp 170-174; 244-246). Through the music of Oliver Mtukudzi and Thomas Mapfumo the book reflects transforming perceptions in Zimbabwean society. This social-cultural aspect of history adds to an understanding of the socio-political and ideological discourses of the time.

However, the book chapters are uneven in length. Chapter 4 on colonial economy and society from 1890 to 1953 is arguably the best in terms of detail and analysis (pp 52-119) but also much longer. Chapter 5 on the Federal decade (1953-1963) is too short (pp 119-128) to capture the complexities of the period and skims the surface. Overall, chapters 5 to 7 concentrate on politics from the 1950s to independence in 1980 but at the expense of economic developments. While this period understandably constituted the 'turbulent years' and is critical to students of politics, it was necessary to explore the economic underpinnings which informed the politics. As a result, the book's style of analysis changes from a socio-economic one (chapter 4) to socio-political (chapters 5 to 7), and

reverts to socio-economic (chapters 8 and 9). These minor criticisms, notwithstanding, *A History of Zimbabwe* is the best single authored book on Zimbabwean history and will contribute most significantly to the designing of history and political curricula in learning institutions. Beyond this, Mlambo's long years of experience provide an accessible account to other interested readers who wish to understand the complexities of a post-colonial state in the modern era.

Ivo Mhike
Centre for Africa Studies
University of the Free State