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Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People

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organised, and highly readable. It is not an exaggeration perhaps to say that no such unique, broad, yet substantive work has been published on the South African struggle before. In two volumes, the authors classify a vast amount of information on each political (including trade unions), economic, cultural and community organisations and institutions of the oppressor and the oppressed. These are given in a context of an elaborate yet incisive background analysis of circumstances out of which each entity arose. Included, are many tables and an impressive supply of statistics on both sides of the conflict. By and large, if the reader only understands that on PAC and BCM this series is misleading, the rest of the work is an indispensable-guide to South African politics.

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Comaroff, Jean, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance. The Culture and History of a South African People.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. pp. 296.

Jean Comaroff's book has much to recommend, while at the same time it has serious flaws. It provides insight into the Zionist Independent Church Movement as expressed amongst the Tshidi of Botswana and South Africa as well as intriguing--but to my mind suspect--interpretations of the conjuncture between traditional Tshidi praxis and the "world system" expressed in Christianity, the migrant labor system, and apartheid in general. Reflecting the influence of French scholars such as Foucault, Baudrillard, and Bourdieu, as well as the annalist historians, she attempts to incorporate event history with symbolic analysis of the body, gender, physical space, and ritual practice. The work is ambitious in scope and the author deserves credit for her familiarity with the current literature, but her all too ready use of jargon makes it difficult reading.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part has separate chapters devoted to event history, the structure of the precolonial sociocultural system, and precolonial cosmology and ritual (especially initiation ritual). The second part deals with the relationship between culture, ideology and consciousness. The last part describes the origin of the American Zionist sect in Chicago, its development in South Africa, and its particular manifestation amongst believers in Mafeking in 1969-70. Her major conclusion is that Zionism exemplifies a process in which precolonial

systems of meaning and order are transformed both to resolve contradictions of the past and to mediate the Tshidi world with the world of wage-labor and white domination. Symbolic mediation, however, does not mean submission, for the new system of Zionist belief embodies resistance to capitalist commodity production, alienation, and subordination.

Comaroff is at her best when describing events such as performance of traditional initiation ritual and modern Zionist practice. But she is open to a common criticism levelled against structuralism; that is, that there is not necessarily a relationship between how the scholar deconstructs a given society's implicit symbolic order and how an individual living in that society might construct it. In this case, Comaroff draws structural dichotomies between male and female domains but does not show that her interpretation corresponds with how Batshidi actually think. (She fails to consider, for example, the possible role of children as mediators between male and female domains.) She also contradicts herself by saying that traditional male pastoral activities are not central to everyday production (p. 60) while also saying that milk was an expected part of everyday consumption (p. 68). There are other problems related to her construction of the Tshidi symbolic world. The symbolism of color, for example, is analyzed in terms of the ritual importance of red, black, white, green, and blue, yet she does not indicate how Setswana color terms are often highly specific in reference to cattle and other livestock, but not to primary colors. Finally, by seeing in Zionism only forms of resistance and mediation with the capitalist world, she does not consider that the Tshidi independent churches may also be expressing frustration at the inability to fully acquire the many material goods newly available in this world. This then may not be a protest against capitalism per se, but against a racist system that excludes Africans from equal access to resources.

In short, the book is worth reading as an expression of the kinds of issues current in contemporary analyses of African religious movements, but it alone should not be consulted for explication of Tshidi belief or symbolic practice.

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Browne, Robert and Cummings, Robert: The Lagos Plan Of Action VS. The Berg Report. Monographs in African Studies. Howard University, The African Studies and Research Program, Washington, D.C., 1984. 216 pp. \$10.50 paper.