

One of the fascinating qualities of *The Bridge of Beyond* lies in its belief in the magic of the spoken word. The word contains prophecies, and may decide over life and death, happiness and desolation, salvation and doom. This appears plausible only because of the close adherence of structure and speech to the Creole Afro-Caribbean oral tradition and to the collective wisdom enclosed in proverbs, songs, magical tales.

The “Bildungsroman” *The Bridge of Beyond* is, along with the works by the Haitians Jacques Roumain and Jacques Alexis and those by the Martiniquians Rene Maran, Joseph Zobel and Edouard Glissant, a potent and moving voice from the French Caribbean. Any course on women or black writers of the western hemisphere will be enriched by its inclusion.

—Wolfgang Binder
University of Erlangen, West Germany

Reuben K. Udo. *The Human Geography of Tropical Africa*. (Exeter: NH: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 1982) 244 pp., \$21.00 paper.

The author explains in the preface that his book “is written for students preparing for the General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level)” as well as “students in Advanced Teachers’ Colleges, Colleges of Education and undergraduates taking courses on Africa or African Studies.”

Reuben Udo defines tropical Africa as the entire continent exclusive of Lesotho, Swaziland, Republic of South Africa, Egypt, Lybia, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Western Sahara. He is to be congratulated for taking-on the Herculean task of writing a human geography of tropical Africa but he must be criticized for (1) presenting an unclear geographic picture, i.e., subordinating observed reality to theories and methods. (2) vague, often poor, writing, and (3) frequently offering a neo-colonialist vision for an African cosmos. Although generous, the number of figures, plates, and tables, for the most part, have no relationship to the text. For example, the author himself notes about Table II, which occupies more than half a page, that “Table II is not very helpful in assessing the importance of livestock to the economy of the various countries” (p. 131). Furthermore, Udo uses Nigeria as the focal area for his work and adds incidental information about other countries. The information contained in the text is

basically tangential—a “workbook” masquerading as a textbook.

Although Udo's pioneering work has more flaws than good qualities, it offers a point of departure for a second edition or for other scholars. The author's knowledgeable assessment of the “Process and Problems of National Integration” (Chapter 19) should begin any serious treatment of a cultural geography of tropical Africa. His discussions of the “Legacies of the Slave Trade and the Colonial Imprint” (Chapter 17) and “Economic Integration and African Unity” (Chapter 20) reflect other significant perceptions which must be included in any meaningful analysis of tropical Africa. Subsequent cultural geographies must link the people with the physical geography in a manner which shows this linkage explicitly. They must not only include *recent* findings by scholars who study geographical and physical phenomena but also fiction written by Africans who are concerned with the legacies of colonialism in their art, for these are the people who contend with the conflicts characterizing traditional values in an urban environment.

The Human Geography of Tropical Africa contains a massive amount of information but still cannot do justice to forty independent countries searching for their identities. A second edition of this book can make a notable impact on the study of tropical Africa only if it is arranged to fit an African cosmos rather than geographic tradition.

—Charles C. Irby
California State Polytechnic
University, Pomona

James Diego Vigil. *From Indians to Chicanos: A Sociocultural History*. (St. Louis: C.V. Mosby, 1980) 245 pp., \$14.50 paper.

Historians are typically satisfied with pinpointing dates and describing associated events while minimizing speculation and interpretations which cannot be directly supported with evidence. There is no question that this is a vital and popular methodological approach, and Chicano studies historians have usually complied with this norm—until now.

A challenging work has come along which defies the norm by proposing and utilizing an atypical methodology, thereby producing a wealth of hypotheses not previously considered. James Diego Vigil