

BOOK REVIEWS

Having people, having heart: charity, sustainable development, and problems of dependence in central Uganda, China Sherz, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2014, 184 pp., US\$25.00 (paperback), ISBN 9780226119670.

China Sherz's *Having People, Having Heart: Charity, Sustainable Development and the Problem of Dependence in Central Uganda* is a work of social science, specifically within the fields of sociology and anthropology, that seeks to explore the relationship between so-called sustainable development and the continuation of dependence by Uganda on other parts of the world.

The book uses a case study approach and the design is qualitative. The study is situated in communities emerging from the National Resistance Army (NRA) bush war in Uganda (1981–1986). The study uses two charities, Hope Child and Mercy House, both located in the Buganda Kingdom, to explore three key questions: What are the political stakes of charity and sustainable development? What is the relationship between charity, poverty and inequality? And, lastly, do those engaged in charity have a stake in keeping people in poverty so as to maintain a population to whom they can distribute the alms necessary to achieve their own salvation?

The author combined ethnographic and survey methods to study the case of the two charity organizations. During ethnographic fieldwork, the author lived among 20 Buganda communities for 13 months (from 2007–2008 and in 2010), observing the routine practices of the people. Key informants from European and American donor organisations with long experience of working with vulnerable communities were drawn on for background purposes, follow-up and comparison.

Sherz' justification of her study area makes sense as the selected Buganda communities experienced the NRA bush war and were hard hit by the HIV/Aids scourge, thus attracting many NGOs in the recovery period. This situation is comparable to that in northern Uganda which has been affected by two decades of atrocities committed by the Lord's Resistance Army and thus possesses similar characteristics. It would be helpful if the author had mentioned the specific villages and sub-county in the Buganda Kingdom in which the study was conducted to guide the readers.

The theoretical underpinning of the book is well articulated to explain interdependence, development and ethics in central Uganda. The author used exchange theory, relevant to explain dependence network and reciprocation. Among others, key theorists used are Jonathan Parry (1986), Mary Douglas (1990) and Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1985). The rational choice and social exchange theories, by Georg C. Homans (1961; see also Scott 2000) and James Coleman (1990) respectively, are also relevant in the study. In terms of these theories, human beings are calculating and choose to create and maintain relationships that maximise reward and minimise cost. Thus, individuals engaged in relationships are often self-centred and not necessarily concerned about equality. The central argument is that relationships that give us the most benefit for the least amount of effort are the ones that we value and are likely to last longer. Perhaps the exchange theory could further be used to illustrate patronage beneficiary relationships in the Buganda Kingdom and explain their sustainability. In view of this context, rational choice theory (Homans 1961) could further demonstrate the economics of social networks and reciprocity, and hence the rational action between patrons, care givers and gift receivers.

However, despite this successful use of theory, other corresponding theories that could be important in explaining sustainable development were not drawn upon. For example, modernisation

(to illustrate the diffusion model of development), dependency theory, world systems theory and some reference to globalisation would all have been useful additions to the book. Social exchange theory could also have been adopted to augment and inform the benchmark of social relations and exchange. In addition, social theory by Harrington (2005) and Elliot (2009) can be useful in explaining the social dynamics of Buganda society.

In the ethnography, the data source is reliable and there is evidence that the author conducted successful fieldwork. The researcher combined documentary analysis and primary data to examine the historical trend of charity, sustainable development and Kiganda ethics of interdependence. The documentary analysis enabled the author to link charity and sustainable development to the global context.

Primary data was obtained from interviews with relevant actors like the field staff of Hope Child and Mercy House, who were purposefully sampled. In addition, a sample of 58 respondents from the community was interviewed. The researcher used participant and direct observation, taking part, for example, in the activities of the field staff, such as visits to support groups and households, and attendance of meetings with community volunteers and workshops organised by Hope Child's primary funder (45–47). The researcher's ethnographic approach was relevant in observing the dynamics in the Kiganda community. The author used a survey to establish the socioeconomic status of households, NGO participation in charity, the political engagement of households as well as patterns of residence. A sample of 140 households was selected for the survey. It would, however, be prudent if the author explained how this sample of 140 was arrived at.

The arguments are consistent and exhaustive and in line with the key assumptions of the research. The introduction of the concept of sustainable development is well articulated from a theoretical perspective. It includes discussion of several debates on the concept of sustainability over time. The evolution of sustainable development is significant in elucidating the concept of sustainability. The book offers new insight by establishing the practical application of sustainable development from the perspective of Kiganda ethics and charity organisations.

The historical trend analysis is very important in tracing the background of charity and dependence in Uganda. Furthermore, the author presents contemporary patron-dependent relationships in Buganda in a nuanced context, which I appreciate. This emphasis steers the reader towards anticipating future forms of relationships and assemblage with regard to charity. In whole, the discussion of the key issues of "having people, having heart" and sustainable development are well threaded through the book, clear and easy to follow.

Objectively, it is appropriate to highlight the challenges presented by Hope Child that is contrarily presented as a case study of "best practices." To some extent, this is subjective in that the ineffectiveness of Hope Child is treated as an outcome of the sustainable development model (10) while the author is silent on the constraints of the organisation itself. The author ought to have highlighted some of the challenges that Hope Child as a charity faced with delivering services to its clients.

The discussion contained in the book is relevant for policy intervention. It gives good insight, in particular to Ugandan government and development agents, into how to develop better models and approaches to planned development schemes. The new approach can solve the challenges of the dependency syndrome that has been a central component of patron-recipient networks, initiated by missionaries and extended by non-governmental organisations in poverty stricken communities and communities emerging from conflict. It can reinforce community participation for sustainable community development in a post-conflict period. The discussion can thus be useful in rehabilitating communities emerging from conflict, vulnerable and living in poverty. I, therefore, recommend the book to scholars in the field of sociology and anthropology, policy makers and development practitioners.

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