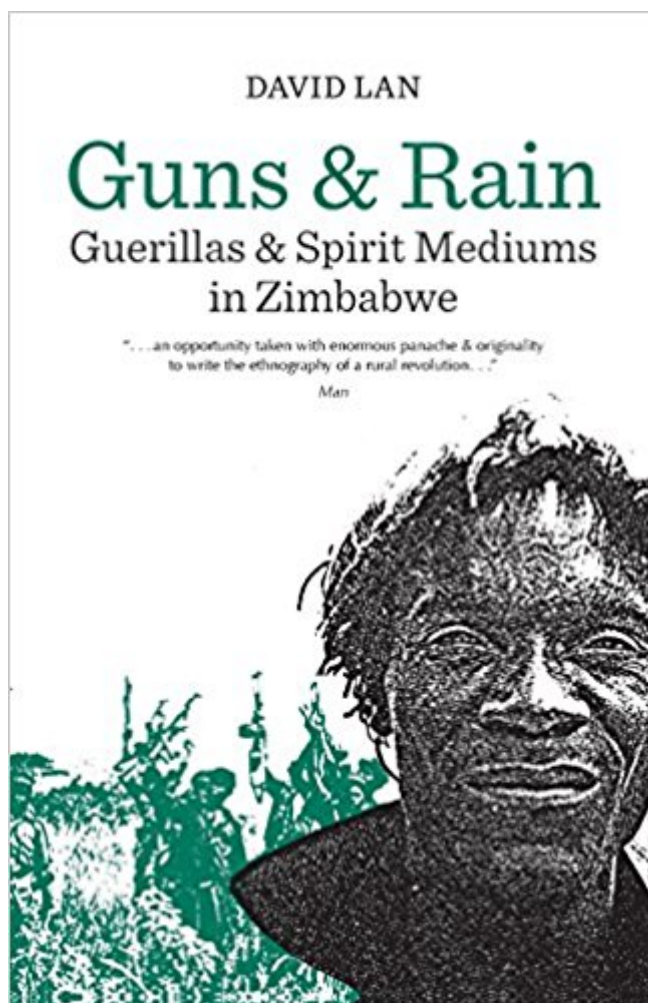


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Guns And Rain: Guerrillas & Spirit Mediums In Zimbabwe



Synopsis

Almost every anti-colonial struggle this century has been led by an army of guerrillas. No such struggle has succeeded without a very high degree of cooperation between guerrillas and the local peasantry. But what does "cooperation" between peasants and guerrillas really consist of? What effect does it have on the way they view the world for which they fight? In the struggle for Zimbabwe (1966-80), hundreds of thousands of peasants provided the guerrillas with practical help and support. But they went a good deal further. Throughout the country scores of spirit mediums, the religious leaders of Shona, gave active support to resistance. With their participation, the scale of the war expanded into an astonishing act of collaboration between ancestors and their descendants, the past and the present, the living and the dead. This book is a detailed study of one key "operational zone" in the Zambezi valley. It shows that to understand the meaning the war and independence have for the people of Zimbabwe themselves, we must take into account not only the nationalist guerrillas and politicians, the bearers of guns, but also the mediums of the spirits of the Shona royal ancestors, the bringers of rain.

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Customer Reviews

"This book makes us understand an historical event of world importance, the liberation of Zimbabwe, from the point of view of ordinary people...It is not only a specific study of great brilliance but also a model which shows how anthropology can contribute to politics and history."—Maurice Bloch, Professor of Anthropology, London School of Economics, in his

preface to this book

David Lan, playwright and social anthropologist, was born in South Africa in 1952 and has been based in England since 1972. He was awarded his doctorate by the London School of Economics (LSE). His plays for the theater include "Painting a Wall," "Red Earth," "The Winter Dancers," "Sergeant Ola and his Followers," and for television; "The Sunday Judge."

As a son of Zimbabwe I would dare say herein lies many of the clues, explanations and answers to some of the seemingly illogical occurrences and happenings in Zimbabwe. I consider the book essential reading to anyone even vaguely interested in the history of Zimbabwe and its politics.

Guns and Rain is a very good ethnography which demonstrates how creative human relationships can be despite the most adverse of conditions. The book is set during the civil war which ensues in former Rhodesia with a minority white government unwilling to extend voting rights to the majority unrepresented black population. In highlighting the human level of these problems, Lan very effectively shows us how destructive and instructive colonialism can be for a people. By reading of the relationships that existed before white rule and their destruction and also their emergence out of this experience, we are ultimately awed by how strong the human spirit can be. In spite of such horrific abuse and forced repression, the local people are able to conquer their lives and move forward and create a new life. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants a different perspective on life and humanity in such traumatic circumstances as war and colonialism.

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