

# *Book Reviews and Notices*

## **THE VIEW ACROSS THE RIVER: Harriette Colenso and the Zulu Struggle against Imperialism**

by JEFF GUY. Cape Town, James Currey, 2001, xii plus 486 pp, illustrated, maps.

Introducing his book *The Heretic* from the pulpit of St Paul's church, Durban, Jeff Guy jocularly remarked on the incongruity of such a venue for someone of his views. It is a measure of the achievement of the sequel to that work that, despite major ideological differences between the author and his subject, Harriette Colenso, he has created such a credible and lively portrait of that determined crusader, set in the context of her life and times.

Guy is able to draw on his unsurpassed knowledge of Zulu history in surveying the events in the late nineteenth century that engulfed the Zulu nation and the Colenso family. He revisits the cordial relationship between Bishop Colenso and Theophilus Shepstone that came to an abrupt end over the Langalibalele affair. The Anglo-Zulu war of 1879 further alienated the Colensos from British policy and brought personal tragedy to Frances Colenso, 'the beauty of the family', when her lover, Anthony Durnford, was killed. The sad story of Frances is pursued until her own untimely death from tuberculosis.

The British 'settlement' of Zululand after the war was so inadequate that it ushered in one of the worst periods of Zulu history, analysed in Jeff Guy's first book *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*. The author rehearses his thesis that it was not the war but the ensuing civil war between the Usuthu and the Mandlakazi that destroyed the kingdom. It is said, for instance, that more people were killed in the battle of Msebe (1883) than in any other battle in Zulu history. In July 1883 the Mandlakazi attacked Ulundi, killing the senior chiefs and many men, women and children. This second battle of Ulundi, Guy avers, 'marks the end of the independent Zulu kingdom'. In 1884 Cetshwayo died but his old supporter, Bishop Colenso, had predeceased him the previous year leaving his redoubtable daughter Harriette to carry on the struggle.

Harriette Colenso's Zulu name was *Udlwedlwe* (staff), conveying the image of a support and guide to her famous father. During his lifetime she ably assisted him in his campaign to help the Zulu, sharing his identification with them and, in particular, the Usuthu royal family. Guy explores her commitment and the driving forces that sustained her stance. At this stage there was a strong belief in the beneficence of British imperialism, despite occasional aberrations such as the Anglo-Zulu war, and – an abiding inspiration – evangelical Christianity. In the years following her father's death Harriette was faced with a new political situation. Cetshwayo's young son Dinuzulu, now leader of the Usuthu, turned to the Boers whose New Republic removed a large area from Zulu control. The Usuthu defeated the Mandlakazi at Ceza (1888) but Dinuzulu was arraigned for high treason and levying rebellion in what had become the British

colony of Zululand.

Dinuzulu was defended by the ambitious Harry Escombe, which brought the Natal politician into close co-operation with Harriette, leading to a major error of judgement on her part. Natal was keen to annex Zululand for economic gain, something the Colonial Office did not welcome but accepted as inevitable. The Natal politicians, especially after self-government in 1893, tried to force the hand of the Colonial Office. Knowing the desire of the latter to return Dinuzulu and his compatriots from exile on St Helena, they insisted on the return being preceded by annexation. Harriette became persuaded that this was the better course: it would hasten the restoration of the exiles since the Natal politicians would be mollified. This line turned out to be a miscalculation, as Guy shows. He claims that Harriette was misled by the Natal cabinet which had no intention of conceding real authority to Dinuzulu, but Harriette was naïve to think that this was ever possible. Meanwhile her change of direction undermined both the Aborigines' Protection Society in London and Sir Marshall Clarke, the resident commissioner, who had been working like her for a settlement that would protect Zulu interests.

Harriette's subsequent disillusion with Escombe completed her disenchantment with imperialism in general. While Britain was moving to a more aggressive phase of empire, with Chamberlain and Rhodes in the van, and even the Aborigines' Protection Society was caught up in the enthusiasm, she was appalled by Rhodes's statement: 'I prefer land to niggers'. (Sir Lewis Mitchell recalls Rhodes saying the same to him.)

In the Colenso family tradition, Harriette ensured that the African voice was heard, on her lecture tours of England for example, and it is her passionate devotion to the Zulu cause that finds a ready echo in Jeff Guy's 'passionate narrative', as Shula Marks describes the book. This shared enthusiasm helps the author surmount philosophical divergence, but there is another element. Guy's historiography is a far cry from the mindless Marxism of yesteryear that reduced history to crude economic determinism. He is in the mould of British Marxists like Christopher Hill and E.P. Thompson who, while reserving an ultimate role for economics, accept the need to approach non-economic factors, like religion, on their own terms. This enables them to relate to historians of other schools. It is, however, unfortunate that Guy declines to engage the research findings of the late Brenda Nicholls who made a study of the Colenso family her life's work.

Guy's three books were not designed as a trilogy but they interrelate and provide us with a wealth of detail, insights into the political, economic and social turmoil of Zulu society in the period, and the involvement of the Colenso family. Jeff Guy is sensitive to feminist issues, though his empathy with Harriette does not preclude some criticism of his heroine. But as Frances, only weeks before her own death, wrote of her sister's 'splendid' protest at the Boer-British partition of Zululand: 'Is she not her father's own daughter'.

PHILIP WARHURST

**A WARRIOR'S GATEWAY: Durban and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902**

by JOHAN WASSERMANN and BRIAN KEARNEY (eds)

Protea Book House. Pretoria. 2002

I admit at the outset that I have not read this book from cover to cover. I doubt if anyone else has either, except perhaps the editors, Johan Wasserman and Brian Kearney, and a proofreader. It's just not that sort of book where one starts at the beginning and ploughs on to the end. Rather, it is one to be dipped into, looked at and admired. It is a most beautiful book, evocatively and richly illustrated with countless historic photographs illuminating its theme of the role of Durban during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902. It is also a work of considerable scholarship as its six-page bibliography attests and undoubtedly a valuable resource for future research.

Besides the two editors – who are also significant contributors – there are eight others. Their offerings, much the fruit of original research and otherwise unavailable except in master's and doctoral theses, paint a richly textured urban history. They examine, for instance, Durban as a gateway to the theatres of war and the defences which were put in place to protect it, and the soldiers and others from overseas who passed through it and those from the interior (close on 18 000 Boer men, women and children) who arrived, either as refugees, prisoners or as inmates of concentration camps. They look at the town as a logistical gateway and the implications of that for the local transport system. The enormous movement of people – in wartime conditions – had vast medical implications and these, too, are considered. The story of Mohandas Gandhi and his Indian Ambulance Corps is thoroughly examined in this context.

When war broke out in 1899, the general manager of the Natal Government Railways, Sir David Hunter, had already been in his post for 20 years. He refused to hand over his beloved charge to the military and persuaded General Buller that he and his civilian administration could make a better job of handling military traffic than the army could ever hope to do – and so it proved. An example of just how good the NGR was is illustrated by the events of October 5, 1899. On that day four transports docked in Durban between 11.30 am and 4.55 pm. They brought 70 officers, 1 793 NCOs and men, 80 followers, 188 horses, 108 mules, 6 guns, 16 gun carriages, 1 Maxim, 118 tons of baggage, 700 boxes of ammunition and 1 520 tons of stores. This lot was despatched inland in 10 trains between 5.15 pm and midnight. Three trains went 72 miles to Maritzburg, the other seven 191 miles to Ladysmith. The troops for Maritzburg all arrived within less than 12 hours of docking, those for Ladysmith within 24 hours. The fact that this was achieved on a single-line railway and that ordinary traffic continued to be handled makes the achievement all the more astonishing.

In addition to feats of this sort, it was in the sophisticated railway workshops in Durban that hospital trains were fitted out, trucks converted at the shortest of notice to carry armaments and searchlights, and rolling stock damaged in action in Northern Natal repaired. Small wonder, then, that Winston Churchill dedicated *London to Ladysmith*, the account of his adventures as a journalist in Natal, to 'the staff of the Natal Government Railway whose careful and courageous discharge of their everyday duties amid the perils of war has made them honourably conspicuous even among their fellow colonists'.

There was a downside, however. Durban's role as a gateway might have been expected to have brought economic benefits. Not so. The treatment by the military of the civilian authorities was authoritarian and the latter did not stand up for its Durban

subjects. Indeed, the fact that the Natal Government Railways were almost exclusively available for military transport meant that Durban became relegated to the status of a forwarding point for army commissariat and the three Cape ports and Lourenço Marques made economic advances at its expense.

One of the most bizarre arrivals in Durban was a 2 200-year-old Egyptian mummy, that of Peten-Amun. Major William Myers of the King's Royal Rifles was a keen collector of antiquities. He appears to have been the person who brought Peten-Amun, an Egyptian priest who lived about 300 BC, to Durban. Peten-Amun was left in the care of the Durban Museum while Myers went to the front. He was killed outside Ladysmith within weeks of the commencement of hostilities and his charge has remained at the Durban Museum ever since.

Durban, as a seaport overflowing with refugees, was also the setting for much cloak-and-dagger activity. As Wasserman notes, the gathering of information by one's own side and the prevention of the enemy from doing so has always been central in warfare. Thus extensive censorship was applied, while suspicious characters were detained and refugees debriefed – the latter undoubtedly yielding the more valuable intelligence.

The story of the concentration camps – at Merebank, Jacobs and Wentworth and, in the last months of the war, at Pinetown – and the daily routines, food, entertainments and sufferings of their inhabitants gives a valuable human interest dimension to the picture.

A nice touch is the dedication of this book to the late George Chadwick. Chadwick's knowledge of the history of Natal and Zululand was encyclopaedic and over the years he was the driving force in the organising of many historical commemorations. Even in his old age, he was involved in planning of those of the Anglo-Boer War and lived long enough to see some of them. (He died in August 2000). The war has produced many centennial writings. This volume is a worthy addition to that corpus and a fitting memorial to one who did so much to publicise the rich history of this province.

JACK FROST

## ZULU NAMES

by ADRIAN KOOPMAN

Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2002. 324pp. ill. paperback, R150.  
ISBN 1 86914 003 6

In the preface to this book, Adrian Koopman confesses that one of his earliest research projects focused on the names of pubs and inns in England – this at the age of 16. The book under review is the product of a rather more sober research interest, one that began in the early 1970s and that has helped bring the author to his present position as a professor of Zulu at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg and as a leading figure in onomastics (the study of names and naming) in South Africa.

In its 320 or so pages, *Zulu Names* deals in a series of detailed chapters with two main topics: the names and naming of persons and of places. Other chapters focus on

the names of historical Zulu regiments, domestic animals, birds, and months and days. It presents a vast amount of information in a way that will appeal to a wide spectrum of readers. For academics, in the experience of this reviewer, it serves as a comprehensive and learned reference work on meanings, derivations and orthographies. For specialists and non-specialists alike, it provides informative and often entertaining discussion of a wide range of topics related to Zulu cultural practices, past and present. For example, in speaking to one's parents, the author tells us, 'The use of personal names as a form of address ... is absolutely unheard of, and when I have told Zulu students that this is sometimes (if seldom) done in Euro-Western families, they have reacted with disbelief and horror' (p. 29). And those who want to know how to spell the name of the river Njasuti will find that there are 31 other possible ways of doing it without being 'wrong' or 'ignorant' (p. 117). And the naming of domestic animals is sometimes done as a way of sending messages to the neighbours, as in the case of the dog called *uBangihlebani*, meaning 'What are they whispering about me?' (p. 222). And how many readers would suspect that most Zulu names for oxen are derived from Dutch/Afrikaans, including the common name for a red ox, *uJamludi*, which comes from 'Jan Bloed' (pp. 215–16, and see also the colour photographs on pp. 229–30)?

When it comes to Zulu place-names, as readers of *Natalia* will know, spelling has recently become something of a controversial issue. Zulu-speaking commentators press in the media for colonial-era spellings imposed by unknowing and uncaring white writers to be modernized. Thus, to take some well known examples, they call for Umbogintwini to be written as eZimbokodweni, Umgeni as uMngeni, and Tugela as uThukela. Some white commentators respond in agreement; others testily demand to know why established spellings should be changed. The author's contribution in *Zulu Names* is to explain in detail how much more complex the issue is than is often made out. Colonial spellings may need to be changed in the interests of cultural decolonisation, but, as he argues, it is by no means always clear what form should replace them. Particularly problematic are the questions of whether to use locative forms (eMngeni, eManzimtoti) or non-locatives (uMngeni, aManzimtoti) and of which letter to capitalise – aManzimtoti, or Amanzimtoti, or amaNzimtoti, and uMngeni, or Umgeni, or umNgeni. Each of these versions has its protagonists. In the end the issue is not so much about who is right and who is wrong as about who has the power to make and enforce the rules.

The author devotes a whole chapter to discussion of those hoary old questions: the meanings of eThekwini (Durban) and uMgungundlovu (Pietermaritzburg) – or is it eMgungundlovu? Most commentators, he indicates, seem to agree that eThekwini derives from *itheku*, but the question is whether this means simply 'bay' or, more picturesquely, 'one-testicled thing'. The author leaves the controversy open. As far as uMgungundlovu is concerned, after an exhaustive discussion he plumps for the meaning 'the place that surrounds the king', from *ukugunga*, to surround, and *undlovu* (from *indlovu*, elephant), the king (p. 168). Elsewhere he joins another long-standing argument about the derivation and meaning of iSandlwana (isAndlwana?) by developing his opinion that the name means 'something like a little hut', or perhaps, as many others have insisted, 'the second stomach of a cow', but not 'the place of the little hand' (pp. 152–3).

This is the sort of book that students of Zulu language and culture can let fall open at any page and become engrossed in. Inevitably in a typographically complex work of this kind some errors of orthography have crept in – I noticed 'Tugela' on pp. 170 and

306, and it is not clear from the context whether or not the author was quoting the very common (in the media) misspelling Amabokoboko on pp. 4 and 7, instead of giving us the much-to-be-wished-for (because the pronunciations are quite different) correct version, Amabhokobhoko, as he does on p. 307. But these are small points: overall Adrian Koopman has given us a richly detailed study that provides a good read and at the same time makes an important contribution to the literature on the Zulu language.

JOHN WRIGHT

**ANTBEARS AND TARGETS FOR ZULU ASSEGAIS: THE LEVYING OF FORCED AFRICAN LABOUR AND MILITARY SERVICE BY THE COLONIAL STATE IN NATAL**

by I.M. MACHIN

Howick, Brevitas, 2002, 326 pages.

*and*

**THE NATAL NATIVE CONTINGENT IN THE ANGLO-ZULU WAR, 1879**

by P.S. THOMPSON

published privately, 1997, 394 pages.

Africans in the active service of colonial and British Imperial interests in Natal, as well as during the invasion of the Zulu kingdom in 1879, are examined in two recent works of history. While often dealt with in passing as part of larger themes on the sometimes contradictory relationship between rulers and their subjects in the region, from land and taxation to armed resistance and war, the detailed attention brought to bear on the topic by Ingrid Machin and Paul Thompson respectively proves highly relevant to present consideration.

Machin scrutinizes the two forms of service exacted from Natal Africans after British annexation, namely the system of forced labour termed *isibhalo* by those subjected to it, and the conscription of African levy forces to assist colonial and Imperial military endeavour. Both institutions lasted from the establishment of British rule until shortly before Union in 1910.

A rather stark picture of early Natal is created. Without a viable settler population to tax or any other means of generating an income internally, the colonial authorities routinely pressed random sections of the African population into labour to create the necessary infrastructure in the colony. In charge of the practice loomed Theophilus Shepstone, the all-powerful Secretary for Native Affairs who presided over the rather neat convergence of prejudice regarding class and race ultimately used to justify the policy.

The extraordinary, almost accidental, series of events that resulted in the exposure of *isibhalo* are charted, from the incriminating letter J.F. Clark wrote in 1875 to inform Lord Carnarvon that 'orders have been given to the Chiefs to send Kafirs to work on the Railway whether they will or not', which was the first the Secretary of State for the

Colonies had heard of the system. 'I can hardly suppose, however,' Carnarvon reflected, 'that the system can have more than a very limited trial' (p. 62). In behaviour typical of the secretive Shepstone though, it had operated effectively for nearly three decades before startled senior officials in Britain discovered it even existed.

Called to account for the exploitation of fellow subjects in a Confidential Despatch of 31 May 1876, the response of the Natal administration was novel. As there was still no discrete legislation regulating the widely accepted convention, nor would there be any until the passage of Law 19 of 1891, Shepstone advised the successor in his post, and others, to explain that *isibhalo* was merely a customary entitlement of tribute in labour the Lieutenant-Governor could call upon Africans to deliver. Its provision thus lay within the terms of Ordinance 3 of 1849, which described the authority of the Lieutenant-Governor in his role as 'Supreme Chief'. For good measure Theophilus Shepstone went to lengths explaining that *isibhalo* was actually the colonial form of the *ibutho* system used by the Zulu kings to extract labour from homesteads and which was still in use in the kingdom at that time. Machin demonstrates the considerable fiction sustaining this interpretation.

In the first instance, the relationship of obligation between *amakhosi* and their people was reciprocal, but very little benefit could be found in colonial administration for the average *isibhalo* participant. Further, 'tribute' was already exacted from homesteads across Natal in the form of various taxes paid by Africans living in government locations. Finally, the *ibutho* arrangement of young men in the Zulu kingdom was the product of integrated customs the entire community was aware of and freely participated in. The imposition of *isibhalo* was part of the arbitrary application of Shepstone's power and most Africans saw it as a punishment.

As a result of the official curiosity regarding *isibhalo*, fuelled by concerns over treatment of Africans in Natal following the Langalibalele debacle in 1873, the Lieutenant-Governor was obliged to test the opinion of high-ranking local bureaucrats regarding the matter. The summary of their responses is enlightening. Of course, even more relevant are the feelings of the men put to work and the *amakhosi* calling upon them at government behest. Machin presents the relative independence still allowed by the homestead economy, which made it possible for many African communities to prosper, and the lure of selling their labour on the open market as the preferred alternative of most people eligible for *isibhalo*. Aside from legitimate resentment at the comparatively low wages paid by the government there was apparently much hard feeling about the nature of the work, and *amakhosi* struggled to provide labour in the numbers demanded by the colonial government.

Ironically, the authorities found it easier to raise African levy forces which would probably face greater dangers than road gangs, and these levies are the focus of the book's second part. What emerges is the reliance of the Colony of Natal on local forces, initially armed with spears and shields, for a variety of military duties. Joint expeditions with Imperial troops and colonial volunteers against San-Bushmen cattle rustlers along the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg were enthusiastically embraced by both *amakhosi* and ordinary African men. Their herds were also preyed upon regularly, but the undeniable excitement of campaign played a role as well. Familiarity with terrain and conditions, in addition to common purpose, made these African men doubly valuable to the officers responsible and they generally responded promptly when called up

in the early levies.

Of more sinister import were a series of call-ups in a show of force against various *amakhosi* perceived as threats to the government, including Langalibalele kaMthimkulu of the Hlubi who was reluctant to move off land initially allocated to his people in 1848. A number of incidents involving other *amakhosi* were to prove precursors to major government action against the Hlubi in 1873, and levies were used in all of these, most famously in the Bushman's River Pass engagement where three 'Tlokwa' (or amaHlongwane) mounted levies lost their lives. Apart from the attraction of adventure, most *amakhosi* contributed forces because they expected a share in cattle taken as loot, but the prospect of a fight also proved a strangely strong motivation.

Circumstances were slightly different in 1878 when a case for war was made against King Cetshwayo kaMpande of the Zulu. Imperial troops would rely on the support of vast regiments of levies, many of whom were drawn from communities with longstanding grudges against the warriors of the king and eagerly anticipated the opportunity to settle scores. As might be expected, however, responses of African communities were not uniform and some *amakhosi* were tardy in sending men. Unfortunately, a host of problems attended the organization and training of the Natal Native Contingent, as it was called, and a terrible price was paid at Isandlwana.

As the British invasion of the kingdom forms only part of this study, the aftermath of that massacre and resultant reorganization of the contingent are addressed only briefly. Subsequent chapters illustrate the contribution made by levy forces in both the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902 and the Bhambatha 'Rebellion' in 1906, describing the degrees to which *amakhosi* acquiesced to demands made upon them and the manner in which the process was handled by the officials responsible.

In contrasting the despised *isibhalo* duties with the slightly more acceptable levies for military undertakings, and her survey of the regulations and staff used in this deployment of African colonial subjects, Ingrid Machin has added a vital degree of detail to the view we have of life in Natal during the colonial era. The combination of two separate elements of African service to the colonial government and Imperial army, spanning the time Natal was a colony, partly dictates the structure of the book, with the two aspects dealt with discretely. Her text suffers slightly from an erratic organization of information which tends to move with sudden jumps between dates and episodes within the two main categories of *isibhalo* and levies. This is particularly evident in the account of the Anglo-Zulu War where it is often difficult to follow events. The problem is evident to a lesser degree in other passages.

Though the book would be enhanced by allowing narrative flow to develop to a greater extent, the lack of engagement with claims that territory between the Thukela and Mzimkhulu rivers was largely devoid of inhabitants in the early 19th century is a position worthy of query. Overall, *Antbears and Targets for Zulu Assegais* evinces palpable empathy with the plight of Natal Africans and *amakhosi* in the unusual demands placed on them, and is a useful account of the scope and duration of both *isibhalo* and levy drafts. In spite of some structural weakness, it will prove interesting reading to anyone drawn to the history of KwaZulu-Natal.

An interesting post-script to the legacy of *isibhalo* is the resounding success of the current *Zimbabwe* rural job creation project of the provincial Roads Department. Groups of unemployed people are assigned sections of roads and are responsible for

maintaining proper drainage, clearing verges and carrying out minor repairs. Where previous generations resisted exactly this form of work, protesting that they were not 'antbears', a democratic government has used road works to bring welcome economic relief to communities suffering from long-term under-development.

The most celebrated mobilization of African levies in Natal resulted in the formation of the Natal Native Contingent in 1879 and is the subject of Paul Thompson's exhaustively researched book. The NNC naturally features in any text on the British invasion of the Zulu kingdom, but only on one prior occasion has it formed the basis of a separate study. This is surprising, considering the wealth of information Thompson has marshalled on its brief but eventful history.

In most histories of the Anglo-Zulu War the NNC is referred to disparagingly due to the misfortune that befell detachments at Isandlwana and is only fleetingly alluded to in other episodes of the war, while regular Imperial regiments and colonial volunteer forces receive most of the attention. Thompson departs radically from previous approaches with a treatment that can only be described as comprehensive. The famous redcoat troops so familiar in conventional chronicles fade away and the war takes on a decidedly different complexion.

Instead of the standard type of reference to 'two companies of the Native Contingent', which treated it as if it were a homogenous group of Africans, the distinct regiments and battalions of this unique force now emerge as manifestly different from one another and enrich the story. From the second chapter Thompson describes not only the conception of the three initial regiments, but how the numbers of levies were raised and from which *amakhosis*' areas they were drawn. Suddenly companies become more tangible when they are known to be amaNgwane from the foothills of uKhahlamba-Drakensberg, amaQadi from Inanda near Durban or amaMchunu from the arid thornveld of the Thukela valley. The texture of the regiments emerges clearly for the first time.

Beyond the men of the contingent, the terse dispute over the nature of its organization also becomes clear. The Acting Secretary for Native Affairs, John Wesley Shepstone, out of his depth in dealing with senior military figures and with the effectiveness of his communication with the magistrates often questionable, was a poor image of his brother. The near farcical deployment of white officers resulted, for example, in Germans who were able to speak no Zulu and little English being made leaders of some units. No attempt was made to explain to the men why their traditional form of military structure was abandoned in favour of the unfamiliar British regimental system, and they were drilled ceaselessly without being told why. Reading the account makes a great deal of what came to pass more understandable, and more tragic.

Isandlwana is transformed. A considerable blame has always tainted the record of the NNC in that fight, but the complexity of their behaviour in the gruelling battle and the diversity of their experience is faithfully portrayed. Some units are already well known: *Nkosi* Hlubi and his mounted Tlokwa (or amaHlongwane), Simeon Kambule, Jabez Molife and the earnest *amakholwa* of Edendale are there with Colonel Durnford. Most fascinating, though, are the men of No.9 Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Regiment NNC. Veterans of the civil war of 1856, they had fled the Zulu kingdom after their *iziGqoza* faction was defeated and had taken refuge in Natal. Sent by their *Nkosi*, Mkhungo kaMpande, to aid the British against their old foe Cetshwayo kaMpande, they were a full-blooded Zulu company standing side by side with Imperial troops. It is not

an aspect of the story readily imagined, much less told.

Neither are the reports of brave amaNgwane holding back the Zulu right horn until they ran out of ammunition, or of two companies of amaMchunu commanded by the *Nkosi*'s son Gabangaye kaPhakade who lost 80% of their men, including their *induna*. While it has always been clear that more than half the British force engaged was in fact African and Zulu-speaking, the way it fought has never been portrayed with such gripping intensity. Reasons for the NNC leaving the firing line before other detachments, long cited as the fundamental cause of the final disaster, are also examined and explained as part of a broader context.

The same deliberate care is taken in analysis of the aftermath of the fight, including accusations of desertion and the restructuring of the contingent reckoned necessary. Probably most surprising is the distinguished role played by men of the contingent in every single engagement of the entire war, excluding the attack on Ntombe Drift on 12 March 1879. As a result, the invasion of the Zulu kingdom comes across as more noticeably a conflict engaging local people than in any other account.

Particularly relevant in this regard are the 'demonstrations' across Middle Drift on the Thukela River below Ntunjambili at Kranskop. Several of these included raids across the river during which homesteads were burned. '[These] orders were to have unpleasant consequences for the people who lived in the middle Thukela valley, for raiding invited retaliation. For the sake of a grand strategy peace in the valley was destroyed. An intermittent, sometimes cruel war was introduced with a life of its own' (p.236). Who knows to what degree the contemporary violence in that region can be traced back to these raids?

The path of the NNC is tracked through the capture of Cetshwayo, towards whom the amaQadi demonstrated acute animosity, mocking the deposed monarch in terms revealing certain Natal African sentiment toward the House of Senzangakhona. Thompson's account concludes with the final disbandment of the contingent and the poignant celebration held by the *amakholwa* of Edendale as they welcomed their mounted troop home. Affirming themselves once more as loyal subjects of the Queen, they expressed in their actions a simple faith that this, in conjunction with a proud war record, might gain them some degree of respect from the white colonists. The knowledge of how bitterly they were betrayed makes their actions even more heartrending.

Some of the *amakhosi* had a better sense of what to expect in the future. Denied a share of the cattle captured during the course of the war, Mqawe kaDabeka of the amaQadi declared: 'Now I find that we have been fighting for nothing, for a shadow. We are wholly the losers by the campaign... I come out of the fight unrequited in any sense. Well, so be it. You are not human beings, you white men, but phenomena' (p. 373). If only he had known what the coming century held.

While Thompson's subject is defined by a very precise title, and to widen the scope would increase an already substantial text, there is still a conspicuous lack of comment on the treatment of Africans by the Natal colonial government, as opposed to simply the officers that commanded them. The effort and sacrifice of the NNC is thus not set in the context of what those men might have expected from the Establishment in return.

It is not due to the author's reluctance to speculate, for several passages offer conjecture on aspects of certain engagements and other military action. The general predicament faced by Africans could perhaps be judged in the light of some excessive

claims made for the Colony of Natal. Stating that the 'life of the people was in fact little changed by British rule', Thompson describes *isibhalo* and the various taxes levied as an unaccustomed cost of steady government. 'These were consequences of the British coming, but did not appear to be part of a British plan to overhaul the existing way of life' (p. 3).

Yet the way of life changed dramatically over a short time. Thompson describes part of the process. 'The white settlers were encroaching and demanding. Fortunately the Supreme Chief checked their extravagance and pretension. A man could live his life away from them without being troubled by them. The government sought to protect the old and true. Above all the British kept the peace' (p. 10). This sounds discordant in a book concerning a war local British officials specifically orchestrated, apart from other clashes with *amakhosi* like Matshana kaMondisa and Langalibalele kaMthimkulu. In addition, there are several other examples of armed intervention catalogued by Ingrid Machin in the second part of her book.

In terms of content, Thompson's text demonstrates a degree of confusion regarding the particular constitution of various NNC regiments. On page 23 it is stated that 'Phakade [kaMacingwane of the Mchunu] was ordered to furnish 600 men for the 3rd Regiment of the Native Contingent', but later on, 'The 2nd Battalion [of the 1st Regiment] consisted almost entirely of men from Locations in Umvoti County, selected by the Acting Secretary [of Native Affairs]. There were two separate levies of amaBomvu, one each of the amaChunu and abaThembu, and a smaller one of amaZondi, also known as the abaseNgome' (p. 44). The former view is restated on pages 69-70 where the Thembu and Mchunu are described as levies of the 3rd Regiment without indication of whether these are different levies to the ones mentioned as part of the 1st Regiment. The identity of the 2/1st Regiment is never entirely clarified.

There is also an inconsistent use of Zulu orthography which pervades the book. On occasion older forms of words appear, such as 'Sandlwana', 'amaChunu' and 'Kumalo', among others. There are also examples of words such as 'isiGqoza' (p.85), 'Gamdane [kaXongo]' (p. 88) and 'amaQwabi' (p. 174) which are not commonly found at all. Although such variations detract somewhat from the general impression of the book, it remains a point of reference for the history of an armed force that has been severely neglected until now.

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