

Book Reviews and Notices

END OF A DYNASTY: THE LAST DAYS OF THE PRINCE IMPERIAL, ZULULAND 1879

by DELÉAGE, Paul, translated by FLEUR WEBB.

Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007.

212 pp. illus., map.

ISBN: 978-1-86914-138-7

On the afternoon of 1 June 1879 a Zulu patrol ambushed and killed a young officer, attached as an observer to General Lord Chelmsford's staff, who was scouting in advance of the 2nd Division, South African Field Force. In itself, this would have been a minor incident in the course of the Anglo-Zulu War that cost so many thousands of lives and such widespread devastation. Except that the 23-year-old man was Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, Prince Imperial of France, only child of Napoleon III, the deposed Emperor of the French, and the Bonapartist pretender to the French throne. His death consequently eclipsed even the battle of Isandlwana in the public's imagination in England, where he had been living in exile, and had major political repercussions in France. Strictly speaking, his dynasty did not end with him (as is implied in the title of the book under review) for his line was that of the great Napoleon I's younger brother, Louis, and the current pretender, Napoleon VII, is the direct descendant of Jerome, Napoleon's youngest brother. Nevertheless, the Prince Imperial's death proved, as his followers feared it would, the terminal blow to the Bonapartist cause.

Why the Prince Imperial found it politically essential to prove his military prowess in a distant colonial campaign, how he overcame the opposition of his mother and advisers to go out to Zululand, how he met his death there and how his body was brought back to England have been covered many times in articles and books, none better than by Ian Knight in his definitive study, *With His Face to the Foe: The Life and Death of Louis Napoleon, the Prince Imperial, Zululand 1879* (2001). So what has this latest book to offer?

Paul Deléage was a correspondent attached to the influential French newspaper *Le Figaro* who was sent out to cover the Prince Imperial's activities in Zululand. Although inherently a republican, Deléage found himself completely won over by the Prince's

infectious charm and many abilities including his superb horsemanship. He was deeply affected by his death which he blamed on the selfishness and cowardice of the British officers serving with the Prince, rather than on the Prince's strongly developed streak of recklessness, bravado and military romanticism that Knight has so convincingly identified. On his return to France, an emotional Deléage immediately turned his experiences into a book, *Trois Mois Chez les Zoulous et les Derniers Jours du Prince Impérial* [Three Months among the Zulus and the last Days of the Prince Imperial]. In many ways, it is similar to other books of Anglo-Zulu War reminiscences published by serving officers and war correspondents. It starts with impressions of the voyage out to Zululand, describes the people, places and unfamiliar cultures he encounters as well as the hardships of life on campaign, and indulges in critical commentary on the conduct of the campaign.

Where Deléage's book is different from the rest is that, as a Frenchman, he observed events as an outsider, unlike the British war correspondents who were regarded as honorary officers and subscribed enthusiastically to the prevailing ethos of the British army. Nothing Deléage described, therefore, was from a conventional British perspective, and his gaze was fresh, acute and critical. He never forgot he was a patriotic Frenchman in an alien, 'primitive' land, and this helped draw him close to the Prince, to whom he developed an ever-stronger personal loyalty, and whose exuberant personality comes alive in his pages, as does his burning desire for military action. To Deléage the towns and little settlements of Natal, and their rough inhabitants, both black and white, were unremittently exotic, and he noted how Boers and Africans were united in their common hatred of 'anything English'. He was intrigued by the rudimentary transport system of ox-wagons and post-carts, and the danger posed to horse and rider by the ant holes in the veld. His was also an enviable ability to conjure up a scene and atmosphere with a few, carefully honed phrases. His description of finding the 'small, firm white body' of the Prince in the donga where he had been killed and kissing his 'icy hands' is truly affecting, as is his verbal sketch of Lord Chelmsford watching the slain Prince's cortège move off, 'leaning sadly on his cane, his eyes red rimmed and his heart full of bitterness' over this fresh catastrophe blighting the already tarnished record of his command in South Africa.

Because it was written in French, Deléage's intriguing book has not been as readily consulted by historians of the Anglo-Zulu War as it might have been. Now it is accessible to an Anglophone readership in Fleur Webb's translation. She is already known for her excellent translation of the two volumes of the French traveller, hunter and naturalist Adulphe Delegorgue's *Travels in South Africa* (1990 and 1997), and her sprightly translation of Deléage is again commendably fluent. It ably captures the spirit of the original French without falling into the doldrums of some of its more pretentious passages. Bill Guest wrote the introduction to volume II of Delegorgue, and he has done the same for Deléage with equal clarity and informed expertise. He has also supplied reliable explanatory notes to the text that must in many cases have proved challenging because Deléage, especially when relaying orally transmitted history and describing African cultural practices, is often perceptibly off-beam. Guest misses very few opportunities in his notes, though when Deléage is describing casualties in the hospital at Utrecht, and refers to a soldier blinded in both eyes by a shot to the head, I would have been tempted to suggest that the man must have been Major Robert Hackett of the 90th Regiment who

had been wounded in just that singular way at the battle of Khambula.

The book is further enhanced by a useful map and by a good selection of illustrations, many of which come from Deléage's original publication. In all, *End of a Dynasty* is to be welcomed as a significant addition to the literature on the Anglo-Zulu War.

JOHN LABAND

AN HISTORICAL MEANDER THROUGH THE MIDLANDS OF KWAZULU-NATAL

by BIZLEY, William H. and McKENZIE, Patrick C.G.

Howick: Midlands Meander Association, 2007.

153 pp. illus., maps.

ISBN: 978-620-39179-5

R150,00

When a book is written by two members of the *Natalia* editorial board, reviewed by a third member, and the review is published in the journal itself, it may seem too much of a cosy family affair. Not necessarily so: the reader will judge.

The title of this book may be slightly misleading to those whose knowledge of the Natal Midlands is defined by the Midlands Meander, an association of sites and establishments offering accommodation, scenic attractions, artistic endeavour, cuisine and a wide variety of artefacts and agricultural produce for sale. Anyone who thought *An historical meander* was the history of that 23-year-old commercial initiative would soon realise that it is about the Midlands as an area with a history of settlement going back 170 years, not about the modern Meander. The history of the latter is briefly told in a Post Script—and serves as due recognition of the publisher.

This is social history, very anecdotal and concerned with what the newspapers would call 'human interest stories'. It is also carefully referenced, so that a reader wishing to follow something up—and there are many temptations to do so—will know where to go. Pat McKenzie grew up in the Midlands, and his knowledge of its old families is extensive, as shown by the special 'PM remembers' snippets in boxes throughout the book. Where it needed to be supplemented, or given documentary corroboration, the authors consulted published works and also family papers and transcripts of oral tradition, many of the latter now in the Howick Museum. To that institution and those associated with it, now and in the past, they pay grateful tribute. The Museum also provided very many of the photographs with which the book is generously illustrated.

The laudable pursuit of an entertaining and quizzical style sometimes leads the narrative into infelicities and obscurities. For example, saying 'But seductress Natal was not to be won so easily' misrepresents the mating game. Those being seduced are usually spared any need to 'win', because the initiative is all on the other side. Similarly, a sentence like 'The departing trekkers—a well-disposed but sceptical audience to their successors ... etc', requires of the reader an effort to reconcile the ideas of departing and at the same time staying to form an audience. Such things might have been adjusted in a more rigorous editing, and more careful proofreading might have tidied up the errors that can irritate like pebbles in a shoe. When works are cited, accuracy is necessary. Brian Kearney's *Verandas in the Mist* is called *Houses in the Mist*, A.F. Hattersley's *More Annals of Natal* becomes *More Annuls* (sic!) *for Natal*, and Wackford Squeers's

notorious school in *Nicholas Nickleby* is given as ‘Dotheboy Hall’. These are slips that should have been eliminated. And someone surely should have noticed that the University of Natal publisher acknowledged in the Foreword is given the wrong surname. Mary Moore (with an e) is twice deprived of that letter in the Notes. Unimportant? Not in a book about people and families. The Moors were a quite different Natal family.

Such irritants, however, do not detract significantly from the appeal of a book which is generally a delight to read. The eleven chapters concentrate on different aspects of Midlands settler life and experience, beginning with ‘Methodists and Romantics in the Garden of Eden’ and ending with ‘Unsung Heroes, Ox and Horse’. Feuds and wars, love and marriages, childhood and school, disasters, and many other things besides, come in between. And always the emphasis on people—ordinary and extraordinary. Among the latter we encounter a vengeful vicar, an anglicised Zulu woman whose life came to an unhappy end in a Soho sidestreet in 1907, a missionary who yielded to Mammon, a former chaplain of the Duchess of Sutherland with a weakness for drink, and the doctor’s daughters whose eyes were opened to many things well outside the scope of a Victorian young lady’s education as they read the back numbers of the *British Medical Journal* placed by their unsuspecting father as toilet paper in the pit lavatory at the bottom of the garden.

These are just some of the many people whose personalities and exploits will captivate the reader, not only in Chapter Eight which is entitled ‘Characters, Great and Small’, but throughout the book. The present reviewer will indulge himself by mentioning also the string of seven (usually Scottish) governesses to the King children at Fort Nottingham, who came and went in a regular procession. One could almost construct a mnemonic like the one about Henry VIII’s wives, though not nearly as succinct (‘divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived’) This one might go ‘consorted with men of colour, had ungovernable temper, could teach only the names of rivers and cities of the British Isles, left in a huff when her cosmetic bottles were washed out, was almost stone deaf, left with the horrors when pupil told how he had lost a finger, fell in love with a teenage boy pupil and was shipped home’.

A reader’s enjoyment of *An historical meander* is sharpened by familiarity, or at least some significant connection, with the attractive area known as the Natal Midlands. The book is, however, likely to appeal to anyone who has an interest in the lives of pioneering people far from their mother country, and who appreciates a lively account of their public and private lives.

JOHN DEANE

STATES OF MIND: SEARCHING FOR MENTAL HEALTH IN NATAL AND ZULULAND, 1868-1918.

by PARLE, Julie

Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007.

334 pp. illus.

ISBN: 13-978-1-86914-098-4

Madness and society’s responses to it have long been a fruitful field of exploration for novelists, reflecting as they do society’s wider symbolic and social representations, while in Europe and North America there is a burgeoning literature exploring the social

history of insanity. Abandoning the ‘either-or’ of the now somewhat sterile debate between ‘essentialists’, who see mental illness as universal and transhistorical, and ‘social constructionists’, who argue that it is simply a social artefact, a label devised by society and its psychiatrists to control the deviant, recent historians have brought to the study of madness the underlying premise of social history—that ‘patients and their communities [are] historical agents in their own right, not merely ... the objects of hegemonic discourses’.¹

Rather slower off the mark, in recent years a small number of African social scientists have also begun to turn their attention to studies of psychiatry and psychiatrists, insanity and the asylum, inspired by the recognition that a study of insanity can help uncover a wider social history, not because ‘the mad are exemplars of a social context (such as colonialism) but precisely from their anomalous status’, as Jonathan Sadowsky has remarked. ‘Their stories’, he continues, ‘can therefore illuminate perceptions of reality, and when their cases are ambiguous, show ways in which perceptions are challenged.’²

Julie Parle’s recent *States of Mind*, published by University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, is a welcome and distinguished addition to this body of work.³ Like her University of KwaZulu-Natal thesis on which this book is based, Parle looks at the history of mental illness and its treatment in colonial Natal from the genesis of the Natal Custody of Lunatics Act of 1868 and the founding of its first and only asylum in 1875, to the incorporation of the Natal asylum into the new psychiatric order inaugurated by the Union’s 1916 Mental Health Act, and its decline thereafter. Her starting point is provided by the records of the colonial government and of the Town Hill Lunatic Asylum (later the Natal Government Asylum and the Pietermaritzburg Mental Hospital) between 1868 and 1918, which reveal, *inter alia*, that legislation for the mentally ill and the establishment of a psychiatric hospital in Natal were earlier than in the Cape—Natal’s first lunacy laws were passed in 1868, while the colony’s Government Asylum on Town Hill was established in 1880 when 37 patients were admitted. This overturns the conventional wisdom that Valkenberg was the first custom-built asylum when it was opened in Cape Town 1894.⁴ And unlike Valkenberg, which admitted only white patients until World War I (when it received its first Coloured and African patients from Robben Island because it needed their labour), Town Hill treated Indians, Africans and whites on the same site, although in the wards patients were segregated by race and gender from the outset, while later on they were housed in different buildings. As at the Cape—and in other colonial situations, rations, sleeping arrangements and clothing were also all determined by race.

Like Valkenberg, which owed its early reputation to its Scottish Superintendent, Dr William Dodds, Town Hill owed its ethos and reputation to another Scotsman, its first superintendent, Dr James Hyslop, who was appointed in 1882.⁵ In both cases, their more humane stewardship ended after World War I, when the 1916 Mental Disorders Act replaced earlier colonial legislation and the responsibility for mental hospitals moved to the Department of the Interior and placed under Dr J.T. Dunston, who became the Commissioner of Mentally Disordered and Defective Persons. As Parle shows, these changes ‘marked a decisive shift towards entrenched racial discrimination, grounded in scientific racism and eugenicist policies’ (p.24). Despite the relatively more humane stewardship of Dodds and Hyslop, however, both asylums suffered from overcrowding within a few years of their foundation, a familiar problem with the ‘silting up’ of

institutions for the mentally ill elsewhere. Within five years of Hyslop's arrival, Town Hill's accommodation intended for 89 patients held 115. Poor food, overcrowding, appalling sanitation and 'the already debilitated state of many admissions' lay behind the high death rate of black patients, which Hyslop himself believed was 'unacceptably high' (p.112).⁶

States of Mind encompasses a far wider world than these statistics, or the importance of race in the asylum's practice, however, and herein lies its novelty and significance. Aware of recent critiques of narrowly focused studies of mental illness restricted to the confines of the asylum or the discourses of its doctors, Parle is concerned not only with institutional history, the 'various paths to the asylum'⁷ taken by its patients and the content of their—and their psychiatrists'—delusions, but also with the many alternative ways in which Natal's disturbed sought solace through folk and popular remedies before turning to—or being interned in—the asylum as a refuge of last resort. In so doing, she shows that the resort to alternative therapies was as true for Natal's white settler population as it was for its African and Indian inhabitants. Moreover, like the best of the recent social historians of madness, while fully acknowledging the methodological difficulties, she is as concerned to discover the agency of those labelled insane and the role of their families and friends in treatment as she is to document the discourses of the psychiatric establishment. As noteworthy is her treatment of the gendered nature not simply of discourses around mental affliction, but also of the experience of mental affliction itself. This sensitivity runs through the book but is most illuminating in her account of African 'idioms of psychological understanding expressed through spirit possession' known as *ndiki*. She analyses this through a vivid exploration of the trial of eleven women tried for 'witchcraft' in Zululand, and interprets their possession as resistance not to colonialism *per se*, but 'to a patriarchal social order that was itself coming under intense strain' (p.14 and chapter 3, 'Witches, Spirits and Hysteria').⁸ Parle deals with equal assurance with changing African and Indian definitions of and treatments for madness, and probes that 'area of confusion' when Western 'notions of consciousness, culpability and insanity came up against very different understandings' (p.23).

Parle's decision to define her subject as mental *health* and not mental *illness* leads her to show both the 'resilience' of indigenous notions of madness, and the limitation of psychiatry as site of colonial control⁹—it remains as limited to this day, given the paucity of mental health services for the large number of people who need them. Popular and alternative healers were the first and often the only source of help for the mentally ill then as now.¹⁰ For whites, as for Africans and Indians, 'nineteenth and early twentieth century psychiatry ... only represented one weapon in the armoury against madness, and one that was often only used as a last resort.' (p.305) As she points out, this did not—and does not—mean that there was no relationship between the state and aspects of psychiatric practice, despite the small numbers of western trained psychiatrists. At the same time, her sensitivity to the voices of the confined provides a counter both to 'heroic' and to purely discursive analyses of the asylum.

Her profound awareness of the world outside the asylum also enables her to give due attention to the mental health of Natal's Indians who rarely entered its walls, and to address the issue of suicide, then still defined as a criminal act.

Despite its apparently narrow focus on Natal, the book is richly informed by Parle's wide-ranging reading and fine understanding of the comparative literature on the history

of psychiatry and mental illness, indigenous knowledge and popular remedies in Africa. Nor does she neglect the possibilities of comparison within Natal — itself something of a microcosm with its diverse population and many different understandings of ‘madness’ — as can be seen from her sophisticated analysis of the incidence of suicide among Indian, African and European men and women. The result is an original, meticulously researched and finely balanced account which shows a welcome awareness of the complexity of the issues under discussion, and handles both the secondary literature and the archival record judiciously. While the focus of the volume and its main contribution is for the period before World War I, its final substantive chapter provides a useful general, if necessarily somewhat summary, account of developments in psychiatry both in Natal and more widely in the Union of South Africa after World War I.

Conceptually sophisticated, elegantly written and subtly argued, *States of Mind* is an important contribution to the growing literature on the history of the mentally afflicted in South Africa, and indeed in Africa and beyond.

SHULA MARKS

NOTES

- ¹ Ann Goldberg, *Sex, Religion and the Making of Modern Madness*. The Eberback Asylum and German Society, 1815–1849 (Oxford: OUP, 1999), pp.7–8.
- ² Jonathan Sadowsky, *Imperial Bedlam. Institutions of Madness in Colonial Southwest Nigeria* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1999), p.18.
- ³ For a recent collection representing some of the key work in this field, see Sloan Mahone and Megan Vaughan, eds, *Psychiatry and Empire* (Basingstoke: Macmillan/Palgrave for Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies, 2007).
- ⁴ This chronology incidentally contradicts Richard Keller’s assertion in an otherwise admirable review article that the first British institutions for the mentally ill in sub-Saharan Africa appeared only in the 1910s; his further assertion that ‘... from Mombasa to Cape Town, psychiatrists, colonial administrators and settlers focused their concerns about madness on indigenous rather than European populations’ is equally mistaken in relation to Cape Town and probably to South Africa more generally (see his ‘Madness and colonization: psychiatry in the British and French empires, 1800–1962’, *Journal of Social History*, 25, 2001, p.305).
- ⁵ Their Scottish provenance is no accident: Scots dominated the South African medical profession in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (John Mackenzie with Nigel P. Dalziel, *The Scots in South Africa. Ethnicity, Identity, Gender and Race, 1772–1914* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007], p.217)
- ⁶ According to M. Minde, the death rate for white patients was high at 30 per cent, but even higher for Africans at 39.6 per cent in the pre-Union period. (M. Minde, ‘History of Mental Health Services in SA, Part V, Natal’, *SAMJ*: 1 March 1975, p.324). Parle, remarks ‘... in the case of ‘Native’ patients ... the odds on dying were greater than recovering’ (p.112).
- ⁷ See Megan Vaughan ‘Introduction’ in Mahone and Vaughan, *Psychiatry and Empire*, p.4
- ⁸ This chapter has also been published in her ‘Witchcraft or Madness? The Amandiki of Zululand, 1894–1914’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.29, 1, 2003.
- ⁹ Cf. Roland Littlewood, ‘Madness, Vice and Tabanka: Post-colonial Residues in Trinidadian Conceptualisations of Mental Illness’, in Mahone and Vaughan, *Psychiatry and Empire*, p.220–1.
- ¹⁰ For the recent importance of indigenous notions of healing in both urban and rural South Africa, see, for example, Adam Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in the New South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) and Jonny Steinberg, *Three Letter Plague. A young man’s journey through a great epidemic* (Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2008).

CLASSROOMS IN THE SHADE

by SHANTHEE MANJOO.

Johannesburg, STE Publishers, 2008.

300pp. illus.

R145.00

Classrooms in the Shade is in fact not about those classrooms, but about the dedication to excellent teaching, combined with the love and compassion which Shantee Manjoo brought to those classrooms in the greater Pietermaritzburg area from the 1960s to the 1990s. It is encapsulated in the letter written to her when she was overseas visiting family in 1992, which reads in part:

When are you coming back to us? Here things are worse each day that goes by. The whole class miss you a lot.

The way English has gone so boring. I can't even express it. Each day by the end of the period half of the class has fallen asleep. We no more have the energy we used to have when you were with us Ma'am. We just sit there for the whole lesson doing the listening and she the talking.

We don't get a chance to talk or say something. The last time we added on our vocabulary is the last day you were with us. Everyone has dropped in his standard.

Please do come back because we need you and miss you a lot.

Love

Cynthia

The Preface by Betty Govinden and the Foreword by Fatima Meer direct readers to the scope and texture of what is to follow as the author 'entertains and enriches', describing her richly textured family and community life as a backdrop to the events of those decades.

Her reminiscences covering her own schooling and college days include frequent references to the discrimination suffered by 'non-white' students. The early days of the Natal Indian Congress and the wider resistance movements, as well as former Market Square landmarks such as McDonalds' (the seed and grain merchants, not the fast food chain), the old Plough Hotel and the Lambert Wilson Library will be familiar to many readers. Anecdotes around the mango tree in the garden as well as the peacock from the local temple will also be familiar to many who know the easternmost area of central Pietermaritzburg.

As a member of a Hindu family Shantee Manjoo describes in moving terms her struggle to wed across the religious divide, finally converting to Islam before marrying her husband. Their rich family life was affected by the brutalities of apartheid restrictions, but through all shines her devotion to excellence in her teaching and mothering of family and students.

The photographs of early days at Haythorne and Woodlands schools capture the characters who led education at the time, and she traces the success of her own children and other students who travelled overseas to qualify in medicine and other disciplines. Her love of English literature and drama was easily communicated to her pupils.

In recalling the unveiling of the Gandhi statue in central Pietermaritzburg she quotes the words on the pedestal 'My life is my message', and this surely is also what her memoirs show of her own richly lived life in the city.

The present reviewer taught under some of the same conditions she and her students experienced, and hopes that her message of devotion to excellence in teaching could be emulated. Alas, even today, decades later, with improved conditions in many schools, the same doleful and uninspired teaching is prevalent in many classrooms in and out of the shade. May Shanthee Manjoo's testimony inspire other teachers of today, or at least aspiring student-teachers still in training, how to love and inspire as she did. This is the message of her beautifully written autobiography.

DEANNE LAWRENCE

ZULU IDENTITIES: BEING ZULU, PAST AND PRESENT

Edited by BENEDICT CARTON, JOHN LABAND and JABULANI SITHOLE.

Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008. xxvi, 633pp. illus., maps. ISBN 978-1-86914-154-7.

Zulu Identities is a big, ambitious book. 'A central aim,' editor Jabulani Sithole states, is 'to represent different voices. What we bring together are diverse interpretations, which we hope will initiate an interdisciplinary dialogue.' In this the editors succeed admirably, if not completely. There are 50 contributors and 52 chapters. Twenty contributors are connected with the University of KwaZulu-Natal and eight have Zulu surnames, indicating the work is solidly based on home ground. Eleven contributors are at other South African institutions. Four contributors are situated elsewhere in the Commonwealth. It is remarkable that no less than 10 of the contributors are in the United States. The three editors, who contribute eight of the chapters, are from KwaZulu-Natal, Canada and the United States. This breadth of scholarship assures us that this is no parochial work. Indeed, there is nothing quite like this book. It will become a standard reference.

The book comprises six main sections: 1) Frames of Debate; 2) Foundations of Zuluness: Iron Age to Late 1800s; 3) The Roots of Gathering Struggles: Late Nineteenth to Middle Twentieth Century; 4) Hybridities: Customary Traditions, Healing and Spirituality, and Contentious Politics; 5) Symbolisms of Culture; and 6) Futures of Zuluness. The text is illustrated and there are colour plates to accompany the chapters on pots and beadwork; however, there are only two maps.

'Zuluness', a term, we are told (p. 387), coined by Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi as early as 1984, in connection with his promotion of ethnic nationalism, is interpreted more broadly here. Editor Ben Carton believes it 'is not a vanishing relic, but a malleable construct' (p. 4), and Jabulani Sithole refers to 'our Zuluness' (*ubuZulu bethu*), which 'is not a sealed vernacular idea, but a phrase that encompasses competing views held by different actors for different reasons' (p. 328). The editors set ethnic limits, not political ones, to Zuluness, and the book is informed by ideas and interpretations of writers, in so far as they reveal themselves, who are more sympathetic to the African National Congress than to the Inkatha Freedom Party. Buthelezi and his partisans do not come out well in this book.

The editors are historians, and they are very much aware of the importance of historiographical shifts in the interpretation of the Zulu past. There are at least seven chapters which deal with the different perspectives and tensions between old and new political

groupings. Nowhere are these differences more evident than the in methodological critiques of sources contained in the chapters concerning Shaka and Dingane.

The sections of the book have, more or less, an historical sequence, but the chapters therein range widely, according to themes. There are chapters on art, culture and literature. Others are essentially archaeology, anthropology, sociology and political science. There is something for everyone.

Or almost.

The editors succeed admirably, but not completely.

There are gaps, particularly in the narrative, which should have been filled. The weight of material is cultural/social, not political/economic, and the work is very uneven. Disparate chapters give a centrifugal quality to the larger sections, especially the fourth and fifth ones. Editor Ben Carton tries manfully to sum up all the chapters compendiously in sequence in his Introduction, but this does not work. The reader needs an introduction to each section, to give the disparate chapters coherence as well as to bridge gaps. The book falls short of being comprehensive. It is not quite a 'companion' to Zulu Studies, but rather a portmanteau full of variegated pieces. Most of the chapters are good, and a dozen or so are very good indeed, but some are not. A few do not even seem relevant. And it is ironic that the historian editors do not give us a coherent history, not even section by section, of the Zulu people (or nation).

But, of course, they have given us a great deal, and the strengths outweigh the weaknesses. It is doubtful that we shall see the like again—at least for long time.

PAUL THOMPSON

ORAL HISTORY IN A WOUNDED COUNTRY: INTERACTIVE INTERVIEWING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Edited by PHILIPPE DENIS and RADIKOBO NTSIMANE. Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008. vii, 196pp. ISBN 978-1-86914-147-9.

This slender but informative book is a guide and manual for the practitioners of oral history in South Africa. The editors, who are also authors, are located in the School of Theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Philippe Denis, Professor of the History of Christianity, is the Director of the Sinomlando Centre for Oral History and Memory Work in Africa; and Radikobo Ntsimane, a doctoral student, is a researcher with the centre. The other contributors are South African or American academics with long experience in the field.

In the Introduction Professor Denis states: 'Our ambition in publishing this book is to equip South African oral history practitioners with the skills necessary to better practise their discipline. In a country still wounded by a legacy of racial discrimination, the retrieving of oral memories is a task more urgent than ever.' (p. 16) The aims are (1) 'to provide guidance to oral history practitioners, programme directors and educators who wish to start an oral history project;' and (2) 'to analyse aspects of oral history practice of particular relevance to South Africa.' (p. 16)

'Oral history, as we understand it, is the complete interaction between an interviewer and interviewee about events of the past, which requires questioning, as well as listening, on the part of the interviewer.' (p. 3) Oral history is not simply a discrete type of

historical study with a special methodology; its focus on plain people and the passion it involves also makes it what Ronald Grele calls 'a movement' (p. 3).

The development of oral history is described in some detail from the 1970s to the establishment in 2005 of the Oral History Association of South Africa, partly sustained by the Department of Arts and Culture and the National Archives (pp. 5–16). For many years it was a phenomenon of academe, nurtured by radical historians concerned with common people, but after 1994 the new regime took it up as a means of securing the indigenous heritage and promoting a new nationalism, and it has since been introduced into the history programmes of schools and institutions.

The application and practice of oral history is contextualised in the Introduction and chapters 1, 4 and 6. The writers of these chapters are very positive about its application, but they are not unaware of the new History's possible flaws, just as the old History had its flaws. The success of the government's policy is assessed by Julia Wells, in 'Are We Nation-Building Yet? The Role of Oral Historians in Documenting the Transition out of Apartheid', which fixes on the parameters, and by Cynthia Kros and Nicole Ulrich, in 'The Truth of Tales: Oral testimony and Teaching History in the Schools' (chapter 4), which gives a glimpse of the application in Mpumalanga, where it faces many challenges, but has had some striking successes.

In South Africa oral history is also attractive for 'its perceived ability to retrieve, affirm and disseminate long-repressed African traditions' (p. 4). Jan Vansina distinguished between 'oral history, a conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee based on the latter's personal reminiscences, and oral tradition, a record of past events transmitted from generation to generation.' (p. 3) In 'Are rural communities Open Sources of Knowledge?' (chapter 6) Mxolisi Mchunu writes of applications in KwaZulu-Natal: in his home community of KwaShange, and in the Ngome community near Greytown. Mchunu's experience at Greytown involved the recovery of oral tradition as part of an Indigenous Knowledge Systems project on the 1906 rebellion, and as such contrasts markedly with the oral history work described in the other chapters.

The real utility of the book lies in the advice for practitioners in chapters 2, 3, 5 and 7. The advice and instructions given by Ben Carton and Louise Vis, in 'Doing Oral History' (chapter 2) and Philippe Denis, in 'The Ethics of Oral History' (chapter 3) have general relevance. The same may be said for most of the Appendices. These include a check list and questionnaire for interviews, a code of ethics and guide lines for school projects, and a sample interview release form. The thrust of the book is, of course, towards helping the 'wounded'. This was made clear in the Introduction, and it is implicit in the contextual chapters. There are two chapters which focus on just these individuals—Radikobo Ntsimane's 'Why Should I Tell My Story?: Culture and Gender in Oral History' (chapter 5), and Sean Field's 'What Can I Do When the Interviewee Cries?: Oral History Strategies for Containment and Regeneration' (chapter 7). These chapters are most carefully and sensitively written, for the obvious reasons, and are deserving of the reader's special attention. While the book will become a standard reference for oral historians in this country, the last mentioned four chapters and appendices might profitably be converted to a separate handbook for work in the field.

PAUL THOMPSON