

## Book Reviews

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## Boekresensies

### Path-breaking study on Victorian expeditionary literature of Africa

**Adrian S. Wisnicki, *Fieldwork of Empire, 1840–1900: Intercultural Dynamics in the Production of British Expeditionary Literature***

Routledge, Abingdon, 2019

206 pp

ISBN 9780367207458

£115.00

As noted in the Acknowledgements to *Fieldwork of Empire, 1840–1900: Intercultural Dynamics in the Production of British Expeditionary Literature*, this work has been long in the making. The original ideas behind it first emerged in the early 2000s. This passage of time has allowed for the ideas on offer to be explored in-depth and detail; to brew and mature into a substantive, convincing piece of scholarship. The publication is a valuable contribution to the field of Victorian colonial literature, though its impact will resonate more widely. The work will appeal to scholars from a broad spectrum of disciplines working on the nineteenth-century history of British colonialism in Africa. In particular, the book delivers a path-breaking contribution to the history of the production of “knowledge” of Africa via Victorian expeditionary literature.

The powerful influence of nineteenth-century expeditionary literature on the discursive construction of Africa and Africans has been well documented. Growing British interest in the interior of Africa following the decline of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the rise of industrial commerce, “fed on the work of expeditions financed by scientific institutions and led by individuals who soon became celebrities in their own right” (p 3). Explorer-celebrities of the age, such as David Livingstone, Richard Francis Burton, John Hanning Speke and Henry Morton Stanley, among others, consolidated their fame through the publication of expeditionary literature. This body of literature proved incredibly influential in keeping Africa in the public eye while ensuring ongoing government interest. Expedition leaders brought attention to what lay beyond sub-Saharan Africa’s coastline, where British settlement and presence remained limited until mid-century (apart from southern Africa). Along with missionaries, explorers were instrumental in drawing metropolitan attention to Africa’s commercial potential, as well as “the apparent moral and spiritual needs of African populations” (p 3). The objectification of Africa and Africans that flowed from the pages of expeditionary literature, including bestsellers, provided some of the “moral” justification for British cultural imperialism that followed in the latter part of the century.

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While drawing extensively on the impressive array of scholarship on Victorian colonial literature of Africa, the originality and impact of Wisnicki's contribution are underscored by its focus on the multiplicity of actors – in particular, local actors – involved in the production of expeditionary literature. The work does so by highlighting the intercultural dynamics that were influential in shaping expeditionary narratives, observations, conclusions and judgements. The influence of what the author terms “non-Western” individuals and populations on expeditionary discourse and literature have received much less critical attention than metropolitan influences. The author notes that expeditionary literature went through several stages of production, from earlier manuscript phases typically penned while on an expedition to later phases, wherein the prerogatives, preconceptions and biases of editors and publishers proved significant in moulding published works, oftentimes in order to appeal to the expectations of metropolitan readerships. That being noted, the study draws attention to the “multilayered, multidirectional process of intercultural interaction” that was present in this process, especially when the authors were still “in the field” (p 12). Of course, expedition leaders seldom acknowledged the impact that intercultural dynamics had on the production of their writings. The author suggests that explorers “often appear to have lacked awareness that their own literary productions were even subject to such external influences” (p 12).

The book – arranged in five chapters along with an Introduction and an Epilogue – follows a chronological trajectory, from the 1840s to the close of the nineteenth century, with each chapter focused on a different case study. The author interrogates “a handful of key moments or encounters in specific locations and involving specific populations” to illuminate how intercultural dynamics fashioned “expeditionary discourse production” (p 12). The author's argument winds its way from David Livingstone's cartographical and discursive efforts to “invent” south-central Africa as an “ideal space” that appealed to “British fantasies” of spreading Christianity, commerce and civilisation (p 34) to Richard Francis Burton's and John Hanning Speke's similar attempts to map and therefore “know” east Africa during their joint East African expedition of 1856 to 1859. The maps produced by Burton and Speke “reveal the substantial role that Arab-African trading routes” and networks “played in determining the cartographical practices” of the expedition (p 56), even as “data obtained from informants” was deliberately concealed so as to secure the “scientific” rigour and fame that only first-hand observation could guarantee (p 60).

The following chapter explores the role of non-Western forces and agencies in the production of Samuel White Baker's narratives of central Africa by analysing his diary alongside his published texts. The author's argument continues to build in Chapter Four, “Victorian Field Notes from the Lualaba River, Congo”, which recounts how the village of Nyangwe – visited by Livingstone, Verney Lovett Cameron and Henry Morton Stanley – came to be “a prominent place in subsequent British geographical discussions of and exploratory endeavours in central Africa” (p 103). Driven by the desire “to know and understand the ultimate course of the Lualaba River”, along which Nyangwe was strategically located, British explorers depended on

gaining the knowledge of the river available to the Wagenya, the local population. However, the ontological realities of the Wagenya as a mobile river people – “unfixed, decentered, and multiple” – meant that they were not easily engaged in a manner suited to Western epistemological expectations and “Victorian expeditionary mandates” (pp 114–115). The analysis segues to the discussion of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899) that follows in the fifth chapter by noting that the social obstacles of the Lualaba prevented explorers from mapping and “knowing” the lands that the river traversed, resulting in the inscription of a discursive “darkness” over the region. Stanley’s subsequent travels – which confirmed that the Lualaba was connected to the Congo River – perpetuated this discursive ‘darkness’, giving it “a new, fixed” location at the “heart” of Africa (p 118). As such, while the Victorian publishing industry reinforced the characterisation of Africa as the “dark continent”, Wisnicki demonstrates that the inscription of “darkness” over central Africa “first emerged through the influence of a specific set of field-based intercultural dynamics” (p 118).

The work complements new studies of indigenous interactions with and responses to the colonial imposition, which are increasingly highlighting the global, national and local agencies, participants and audiences which were integral to the production of identities, spaces, material cultures, archives and “knowledge” in and of Africa during the nineteenth century. *Fieldwork of Empire* will appeal to academic researchers engaged in scholarship of nineteenth-century Africa, Victorian-era colonial discourse and literature, histories of knowledge production more broadly speaking (not necessarily limited to Africa), as well as scholarship related to the creation of the colonial archive (particularly researchers working on the politics of the colonial archive in post-colonial Africa). Indeed, the colonial archive is fundamentally compromised by the history of its production and curatorship. But this is largely so because the intercultural dynamics which contributed to the creation of the content of the colonial archive have been neglected, thus perpetuating the perception of this archive as a purely colonial product. Wisnicki manages to weave together an insightful tapestry of the human influences that contributed to the making of Victorian expeditionary literature of Africa, illuminating the neglected, but the fundamental role of local, non-Western individuals and populations in dynamic processes of exchange and contestation.

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**A narrative tackling some of the questions  
that swirl around the assassination of King Shaka in 1828**

**John Laband, *The Assassination of King Shaka***

Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 2017

226 pp

ISBN 978-1-86842-807-6

R275.00

John Laband ranks as one of the best known historians writing on the history of the Zulu people, and here, despite the apparent paucity of the source material, he has managed to write a remarkable book on the assassination of King Shaka by combing a wealth of documentary and oral evidence to construct a gripping narrative. The book is not written from a strict academic perspective, but is nevertheless substantiated by a wealth of primary archival research conducted at, among other archival repositories, the James Stuart Archives (JSA) and the British Parliamentary Papers (BPP). Laband's intimate knowledge of Zulu history (gained over some 45 years) ensures that the manuscript provides a riveting read, during which, he is able to provide his own point of view of how and why King Shaka was assassinated.

In the introduction of the first part of the book, which is titled "They are still fighting, even now" Laband refers to the main story in the chapter which is depicted by two fighting snakes representing the spirits of King Shaka and King Dingane. Part 1, titled "Three Spears", which has four chapters, provides an investigative narrative of three spears (Royal, Ndwandwe and Qwabe) that might have or have not stabbed Shaka in the first attempt to kill him in 1824. Laband explores the possibilities of each one of those spears, and why they would, or not, have stabbed Shaka.

Most Zulu historians focus primarily on the rise and fall of the Zulu kingdom and its quarrels with both the British and the Boers in South Africa. This book, however, does not simply tell the history of Shaka Zulu, or as most will anticipate, his role in the history of the formation of the Zulu Empire. Instead, Laband engages with a somewhat unfamiliar event and builds up the narrative to a single pivotal event in Zulu history – the assassination of Shaka Zulu. The book is also rich in detail on the daily lives of the Zulu people of that time.

The assassination of a king is not an unknown phenomenon among African peoples. The motivations behind regicide vary, but the most logical reason is often to speed up the process of succession. Because of this, the deed is usually carried out by the one whom succession favours, or by those who feel strongly that the current king is no longer fit to rule. Shaka Zulu had no son of his own, so his successors would be one of his half-brothers, notably Dingane and Mahlanga. Laband tells the story of King Shaka's assassination by his half-brothers and his trusted friend, Mbopha. The book focuses on Shaka's assassination by investigating who might have stabbed him. In doing so, Laband gives his own opinion on who may or not have killed Shaka and

why. He provides details of the assassination, and links his point of view with available historical evidence. The book opens up a broader debate, in which Laband welcomes readers to engage.

Two further issues that Laband explores are the relationship that Shaka had with women and the idea that Shaka killed his mother, Queen Nandi. Like many historians of the Zulu, Laband links Shaka's failures to the death of his mother. He considers Shaka's military decisions prior to Nandi's death and his eagerness to punish any kingdom that refused to mourn her. Shaka then ordered an *impi* that had just returned from a campaign to start a new campaign beyond Zulu logistical capabilities in pursuit of punishing disobedient chiefs. The result was total manslaughter of the Zulu *impis* that left Shaka with no loyal army to protect him against his assassins.

Laband uses his knowledge of Zulu culture and language to deliver extraordinary evidence and to back-up his views. He occasionally uses Zulu praise songs, idioms and religious beliefs to tell a tale. This is evident when he outlines the scene of the two snakes that fought in front of Masiphula's kraal, the king's chief *induna*, as representing the never-ending squabble between the spirits of King Shaka and King Dingane. Zulu praises play a vital role in telling Zulu history. An event such as a battle can be recorded as a praise song, and the praise then relates the events that took place in that battle. Laband uses this source to construct Zulu history. However, the downfall of his reasoning is that the praises are translated into English and they do not achieve the desired role of telling Zulu history since the praises are in parables and as such are meaningless to an uninformed reader. Laband does not go deeper in explaining the parables in the praises he cites.

Laband does not cease to impress the reader about Shaka's diplomatic skills. Chapter thirteen demonstrates how Shaka turned a failed diplomatic trip to the Cape by James King and the Zulu delegation to success to avoid being seen as a failure. Another trip followed with a new delegation led by John Cane to secure diplomatic communication with the Cape government.

Laband concedes that the circumstances surrounding Shaka's assassination are difficult to reconstruct with any unambiguous precision and this is because he asserts that the identity of the person who assassinated Shaka is unknown. Whether it was Dingane, or Mhlangana or Mbopha, or perhaps a combination of the three, remains shrouded in mystery. The date of the assassination is also difficult to ascertain. Laband investigates this however by constructing what was recorded by Europeans who had close ties to the kingdom such as Fynn, Farewell, and Isaacs. Laband also goes into other important elements of the assassination such as the time at which it occurred, the company Shaka had during the ordeal, and the last words Shaka uttered. While the events around Shaka's assassination prove confusing, Laband does his best to consider all possible actions that might have taken place.

After considering the successful assassination of Shaka, Laband changes his focus to King Dingane and proceeds to compare Shaka's rule with that of Dingane. The author also offers some insights into the reign of Dingane during his reign. To some extent, he gives the reader an idea of how King Dingane was perceived by his people and by the Europeans who had close ties to the Zulu kingdom. Laband uses Dingane's praises and what Europeans wrote about him to paint a picture of the king. He also dwells on the relationship between Dingane and the Cape government. Laband closes with a short depiction of how Shaka and Dingane are best remembered by different sectors of society today.

Laband maintains his approach as seen in most of his previous works, by providing a timeline, a list of characters, a glossary of Zulu words used in the book, and maps and illustrations that help the reader to understand the Zulu kingdom. Hence the book is reader-friendly, especially for those who do not have an intimate knowledge of the history of the Zulu kingdom. Laband tells this story in an investigative manner that will keep the reader in suspense throughout. In a word, this book can be enjoyed by an audience that enjoys thrillers.

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**A healthy admiration for some of history's successful  
and better-known guerrilla leaders**

**Peter Polack, *Guerrilla Warfare: Kings of Revolution***

Casemate, Oxford, 2018  
160 pp  
ISBN 978-1-61200-675-8  
R150.00

"The only certain thing is that history will repeat itself" (p 13), is argued by Peter Polack in his book titled *Guerrilla Warfare: Kings of Revolution*. This publication provides a collection of biographies of ten notable guerrilla leaders who could serve as an inspiration to modern-day strategists, military personnel and politicians.

The term guerrilla is often associated with hardy, bearded men in groups that are ungovernable and marginalised, or often with disgruntled minorities. Polack, however, establishes that the use of the term guerrilla only surfaced during the nineteenth century, because it was used by British forces during the Peninsular War. The British soldiers used the term guerrilla to describe the actual operational deployment of local Spanish forces during their encounter with Napoleon's French armies. The local Spanish guerrilla forces employed unconventional combat methods, such as hit-and-run tactics, during the protracted conflict with the French army that still fought conventionally.

Varying terminologies have been adopted over the centuries to refer to guerrillas and even guerrilla warfare, and they are more commonly referred to in modern military terminology as either insurgents or even as those who conducted asymmetrical warfare. The phenomenon of guerrilla warfare has been described by scholars such as Sun Tzu, and even Carl von Clausewitz, as a means of instigating rapid political changes in societies, often with recourse to violence. More often than not, discussions of guerrilla warfare and guerrilla leaders cite icons like Shamil Basayev of Chechnya, Che Guevara who was notorious for his role in the Cuban revolution, and even Samora Machel who became Mozambique's first president after the country gained independence in 1975.

However, in *Kings of Revolution*, Polack adopts a broader approach. In as few as 160 pages, Polack provides an insightful introduction as to how guerrilla or separatist leaders achieved success in various forms of political, military or systemic changes in their societies. His cross-sectional analysis allows the reader to understand the key philosophies of a swathe of guerrilla leaders who formed the basis of the successful execution of their separate guerrilla warfare campaigns. Furthermore, Polack's broad approach allows him to use an array of rich, and often varying, primary and secondary sources ranging in origin from documentaries, archives and museums – including in South Africa, for example, the Anglo-Boer War Museum in Bloemfontein.

Polack has gone beyond the generally preconceived notions of whom and what guerrilla leaders are. He uses some interesting individuals in the profiles of the guerrilla leaders he discusses. Unexpectedly, for example, one finds in chapter four, General Koos de la Rey, the leader of a Boer force in the South African War; and the United States of America's founding father and its first president, George Washington, appears in in chapter two. There is even Velupillai Prabhakaran in chapter ten, a man who was the former leader of the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka. Polack manages to provide a fairly detailed profile of each guerrilla leader by outlining a number of commonalities. For example, he tells us the leaders profiled often came from poor or middle class working families in marginalised sectors of society; and they were often economically disenfranchised and oppressed. Polack goes on to say that these leaders studied and acquired either law or political science-related degrees, and more often than not they had some sort of political agenda as well. The cases of Jonas Savimbi and Velupillai Prabhakaran are the most striking examples in the sense that in both cases, their ambitions ultimately led to their downfall.

Perhaps this book could have provided some insight into understanding why wars happen, especially guerrilla wars. Instead Polack merely describes his so-called ten "kings" of revolution, namely; William Wallace of Scotland, George Washington of the USA, Simon Bolivar of Venezuela, Koos de la Rey of South Africa, King Abdul-Aziz Bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud of Saudi Arabia, Mao Zedong of China, Nguyen Giap of Vietnam, Manuel Marulanda of Colombia, Jonas Savimbi of Angola and finally, Velupillai Prabhakaran of Sri Lanka. In each chapter, he discusses the specific leader's

rise to guerrilla status and his victories. He narrates their philosophies and operations in an effort to explain their historiographical significance.

Polack does well in contextualising the ten “kings” in that he understands the person in question, his upbringing, and his life experiences that arguably shaped and moulded that person. He further places each of them in a global context of world events that may have in some way shaped or influenced his decisions at the time. For example, in his narration of Jonas Savimbi he shows how his political ambitions influenced his decisions of alliance thereby impacting his leadership in the camps of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) which was characterised by dominance, fear and superstition, to name but a few imperatives, which ultimately led to his downfall. Likewise, the story of William Wallace of Scotland in chapter one, is of interest, particularly since he began his career as a fugitive, but later became Scotland’s “guardian”. Polack argues that Wallace’s environment helped shape and determine his future, and ultimately that of his “... self-sustaining rebel army...” (p 31). Although his case is not so much one of political power but more of fighting against the oppression of England over Scotland, it is common and just as relevant in the contemporary global context that guerrilla leaders often take on the plight of the oppressed to lead them in their fight for liberation.

Polack argues that the thirteenth-century guerrilla leader, in certain ways or forms, reflects the twenty-first century insurgent. He claims that the book reinforces the fact that guerrilla warfare and guerrilla leaders will remain relevant for the foreseeable future and therefore that this short book is useful to military generals, military historians, and even military strategists, particularly in explaining the nuances and commonalities in the leadership style of guerrilla leaders and their specific philosophies, strategies and tactics. These concepts, he suggests, remain relevant over time, regions and civilisations. Better yet, it makes for great storytelling for generations to come. For a more practical approach the military practitioner, strategist and politician could use this book in an attempt to plan more efficiently for the uncertain future. *Kings of Revolution* outlines some of history’s “greats”, illustrating the lengths these leaders went to, to bring revolutionary change. But at the same time it in no way supports or advocates guerrilla leaders or warfare.

For the most part there is little to fault the author on, although more length might have allowed for additional depth of analysis. Polack has captured the sense of what it takes to be a guerrilla leader. He transports the reader to a dimension that, for some, is both exhilarating and captivating.

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**Exploring chieftainship at the time of colonial conquest  
under apartheid and the post-apartheid era**

**Jeff P. Velelo and Anne Mager, *The House of Tshatshu: Power, politics and chiefs north-west of the Great Kei River c 1818–2018***

Juta, Johannesburg, 2018

256 pp

ISBN-13:978-1775822257

Price: R 522.85

The current debates concerning land reform with or without compensation; the role of royalty in leadership; curriculum review in South Africa's basic and higher education fields and the continued search for personal, regional and national identity are all discussed in this new publication by Jeff Phiko Velelo and Anne Mager. This book focuses on the region now known as the Eastern Cape Province and encompasses various indigenous peoples like the amaTshatshu, Khoesan, AmaThembu and non-indigenous/colonialist groups such as the British and Afrikaners. It also looks at some of the early religious institutions that established themselves in the region, including the Anglican and Moravian mission stations.

This confluence of many narratives and historical events is commendable, captured by the quote on the opening page, which states:

... this is a story of conquest, dispossession and un-naming. It begins in the mid-1820s when the Bawena, descendants of the Thembu chief, Tshatshu, and a group of about 3 000 followers crossed westwards over the Tsomo River, the northern tributary of the Great Kei River, into Bushmanland" (p 1).

While the book explores many nuanced narratives, this opening statement captures some of the original intentions of the authors in the best possible way.

Both Velelo and Mager are to be congratulated for the way they construct the six chapters, beginning with chapter one, entitled "Bawana and Maphasa on the Tambookie frontier: Colonial conquest and internal violence" and following with chapters on the destruction of chiefly authority; the inroads of settler colonialism and the vendetta against Gungubele; the politics of public office under apartheid and the rise of Kaiser Daliwonga Mantanzima. The final chapters look at the same region and deal with the rise of the House of Tshatshu, the politics of Bantustan independence and finally, the matter of chiefly politics in the era of democracy.

It is important to appreciate the way the chapters have been put together, for three reasons. Firstly, it allows for a chronological reading of the history of this province and its people. Secondly, each of the chapters is so rich in content that they could have been stand-alone books. Thirdly, the chapters, although focusing on a specific region and grouping, do an excellent job of exploring various socioeconomic concepts in this fraught, 200-year period of South Africa's history.

What makes the book such a fascinating read for this reviewer and indeed all those interested in South African history, politics and the issue of African traditional leadership, are the first two chapters. The first does a masterful job of setting the scene and detailing the history of the sub-group now known as the amaXhosa in post-1994 South Africa in the region of the Eastern Cape. The authors detail how settler authorities began the process of destroying traditional communities and their linkages to their land. Using the colonial authority figure of George Cathcart to illustrate this point, the authors explain that:

Cathcart's justification for dispossessing the amaTshatshu was accepted by the British Parliament, [and that] Maphasa's former territory was to serve as a defensive cordon for the [Cape] Colony ... [it was to be] parcelled out to young white men of "strong character" who had served the Colony in the War of Mlanjeni in 1850-1852. Both Dutch and English settlers would be considered for land grants (p 56).

The problematic legacy of the strategy of using colonial laws to confiscate indigenous African people's land and replacing the rightful owners with settlers is still ongoing in modern-day South Africa. The authors are to be commended for illustrating how colonialism encroached on and eventually disrupted the inner workings of ethnic groups/kingdoms such as the amaTshatshu and their traditional leader, Maphasa.

Velelo and Mager detail the agony and pain many of the traditional leaders/kings had to suffer in the process of being delegitimised and eventually losing their land. As they explain so vividly, "Maphasa's people lost more than their land. Cathcart's proclamation declared that the name and independence of the tribe Maphasa [would] cease and the remnants of his 'almost annihilated' people would be dispersed among others". In other words, Maphasa's people suffered the "worst recrimination possible" for their chief's resistance (p 57). This first chapter sets the scene for the rest of the book, leading to the second chapter which details the destruction of chiefly/traditional authority in the Tambookie location.

Chapter 2 provides detail on how colonised people African communities began to experience life. The authors explain that living in a colonial location was a form of confinement where there was no freedom to move beyond the boundaries of the demarcated area and rules of behaviour were prescribed by the superintendent. As they put it:

The inhabitants, including chiefs, councillors and followers, became subjects of a colonial experiment intended to introduce a new lifestyle. People lived in close proximity in a manner to which they were wholly unaccustomed; they and their livestock were subject to a census and their movements were known by everyone (p 65).

The insight the authors give into how the colonial legal systems affected and eventually re-created indigenous African lives, is written in a clear but heartfelt

manner. It leaves the reader and those unfamiliar with African people's grievances on the impact of colonialism, far wiser on how this process destroyed the way of life of many indigenous South African polities and ethnic groupings.

Velelo and Mager highlight the fact that people in this region were not mere novices in agriculture but understood how to work their land; and that even the settlers recognised that African farming skills were superior to those of European agricultural labourers. As an illustration, a field cornet in the Queenstown district commented that settlers could, in all probability, perform some two or three things very well, such as plough, dig, or thatch, perhaps, and possibly possessed other accomplishments not hitherto practised in Africa. He went on to add that the local farmers were "almost as handy as Europeans in these matters, and [that] one and all, can do a dozen things, essentially requisite in African farming, which the average European cannot do at all" (p 71). Today, in the context of modern-day South Africa, there are suggestions that if land is returned to African peoples "they" might struggle to cope with farming. The counter argument, a historical record given above, illustrates that agriculture has not been the preserve of one people but, rather, an educational process for anyone willing to undertake it. Therefore, and despite the painful subject matter of colonial encroachment in the form of legal measures and shrinking space engineered by British authority figures like Cathcart, the authors of this new publication do an excellent job in giving other insights on this period and time.

*The House of Tshatshu: Power, Politics and Chiefs North-west of the Great Kei River* is a most relevant book for those interested in learning about colonialism in modern-day Eastern Cape; there are echoes of pre-1994 South Africa here. While the focus is on the House of amaTshatshu, it would have been useful if, as an aside, the authors had made the point that this is a common South African problem involving indigenous African people countywide. However, this is a minor criticism in the light of their masterful case study of colonial land encroachment in the Eastern Cape region.

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### **A riveting account of the institution of the Zulu monarchy**

**John Laband, *The Eight Zulu Kings: From Shaka to Goodwill Zwelithini***

Jonathan Ball, 2018

440 pp

ISBN 978-1-86842-838-0R282.00

R282.00

Most of South African history which is documented coincides with the arrival of Europeans, specifically the Dutch and their first contact with the Khoi-Khoi. The history of the British in South Africa, however, coincides largely with that of the Zulus,

especially from the period when Shaka was the Zulu king. In this publication, John Laband provides a succinct narrative of the history of the Zulu from the period of Shaka until the reign of Goodwill Zwelithini. In this period, there were no fewer than eight Zulu kings: Shaka, Dingane, Mpande, Cetshwayo, Dinuzulu, Solomon, Cyprian and Goodwill Zwelithini. Laband highlights the changes in the social structure, customs, and political circumstances during the reign of each of these monarchs, and elaborates on how they used their powers to achieve certain social and political objectives within the Zulu kingdom.

The struggles faced by each of the Zulu kings in question differed depending on the period in which they reigned. Shaka, the son of Senzangakhona, who established the Zulu Kingdom, fought mainly to acquire wealth and to eradicate threats from outsiders, notably European traders and other African kings. He was succeeded by Dingane, his brother, who had to contend with the threat posed by the Voortrekkers. Dingane was succeeded by Mpande, who was the younger brother of Shaka and Dingane. Mpande's reign was dominated by his attempts to form alliances with both the Voortrekkers and British in the Cape. He was the first king to die of natural causes, and purportedly was also the first of the eight kings to have progeny. He was succeeded by his son, Cetshwayo, who fought extensively against the British. His reign was also the last in an independent Zulu kingdom. He was succeeded by his son Dinuzulu, who was not as involved in physical conflict as his predecessors, but nevertheless fought against the British and was imprisoned at St Helena.

The reign of Dinuzulu saw the emergence of and reliance of successive Zulu kings on recognition by either the Voortrekkers or the British and this became customary until the reign of the current Zulu king. Following his death, he was succeeded by Solomon who was recognised by the British, but the burden of responsibilities soon drove him to alcohol. After his death, Cyprian, whose reign coincided with the implementation of apartheid policies, was recognised by the apartheid government as the king of the Zulu people. Lastly, Laband writes about the current Zulu king, Goodwill Zwelithini, whose reign began during the era of high apartheid.

Laband shows that the nature of each king's rule differed. There was the king who believed that war was the solution to the problems the kingdom faced; and the king who would do anything to retain his position in the kingdom. There was the Zulu monarch who tried to find the existence of the kingdom in the new arena; and the one who had to petition for the existence of the Zulu kingdom. Yet another king experienced the demolition of the Zulu monarchy; and there was one whose reign was blighted by the influence of alcohol. He was followed by the king who was obliged to resuscitate the Zulu monarchy, and last but not least, there is the current king who has political influence but does not govern. Regardless of the different challenges these kings faced, they all had the common responsibility of preserving the identity and heritage of the Zulu people whether by recourse to war or through political and diplomatic means.

There are several reasons why Laband's book is especially interesting for military historians. The history of the Zulu kingdom under the eight kings can be used as a lens to study changes in warfare, the evolution of weapons, how war was used to achieve political goals, or, perhaps, to how war was used to maintain the social structure and identity of the Zulu people. Laband presents his narration on the rule of each monarch by comparing the current king with the previous incumbent. Another aspect that is highlighted in the book is the commonalities of African monarchies prior to colonisation and those who ruled after the arrival of the colonisers. Laband mentions that the African leaders, and by inference the eight Zulu kings, often made the common mistake of focusing on short-term political objectives instead of forming alliances against a "common foe". Such errors of judgement were prevalent throughout the period of colonial warfare in Africa.

The author has made use of written, pictorial and oral sources and this adds great value to the book. His thorough research adds richness and detail. Among the sources used are Zulu poems, songs and tales that have been passed down over the decades. Laband manages to provide readers with a rich description of characters, places and circumstances that were prevalent at the time. There is also a chronology and a list of monarchs from King Shaka to King Goodwill Zwelithini. Furthermore, a select bibliography provides a solid starting point for those who wish to read further on the subject.

It is evident that Laband has a vast knowledge of the history of Zulu people. He has made an important contribution to the history of South Africa and in particular the Zulu nation. He incorporates Zulu terminology throughout the book, which allows the reader to gain an appreciation of Zulu society. However, someone who does not understand isiZulu, might find it difficult and time-consuming to read the entire book with its extensive Zulu terminology. There are also some unfortunate spelling mistakes, but these, for the most part, can be overlooked. However, the errors do mean it may be unwise to prescribe the book for academic coursework.

Nonetheless, John Laband's *Eight Zulu Kings: From Shaka to Goodwill Zwelithini* does come highly recommended to anyone hoping to obtain a broader understanding of the history of the Zulu nation, the most numerous indigenous African grouping in South Africa. It is definitely a book worth reading.

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## **The poignant and inspirational letters of a South African struggle icon**

**Sahm Venter (ed.), *The Prison Letters of Nelson Mandela***

Foreword by Zamaswazi Dlamini-Mandela

Blackwell and Ruth Ltd, 2018

620pp

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R425

As a library consultant and bibliographer, this reviewer was commissioned in 2012 by the Nelson Mandela Foundation to create an inventory of the images and video recordings featuring Nelson Mandela, many of which were taken or recorded worldwide. The collection includes framed photographs of Mandela with Bill Clinton; some with other dignitaries; several of Mandela's wife, Winnie, and many others. During my *Financial Times* of London newspaper days, I attended a conference at the Nelson Mandela Foundation. As Mr Mandela neared the exit door, he called out to me, saying: "Are you not coming to greet me?" The "shy me" went up to greet him, as he is my elder (p iii).

Edited by Sahm Venter, a senior researcher at the Nelson Mandela Foundation, this remarkable book is organised chronologically and divided into the periods when Mandela was held in the following four prisons, namely, Pretoria Local Prison from November 1962 to May 1963; Robben Island Maximum Security Prison from June 1964 to March 1982; Pollsmoor Maximum Security Prison from March 1982 to August 1988; Tygerberg Hospital and Constantiaberg MediClinic, in August to December 1988; and finally, the Victor Verster Prison from December, 1988 to February 1990.

Venter took about ten years to complete this book and it was sourced from various collections such as the National Archives and Records Services of South Africa; the Himan Bernadt Collection, and the collections of Meyer de Waal, Morabo Morojele, Fatima Meer, Michael Dingake, Amina Cachalia, Peter Wellman, and Ray Carter. Some letters were also taken from the collection of Donald Card, a former security policeman who in 2004 returned to Mandela the hardcover notebooks in which he copied his letters before he handed them in for posting.

In her foreword, Zamaswazi Dlamini-Mandela states that this collection has answered many of the questions that used to baffle her. She asked, "How did my grandfather survive twenty-seven years in jail"? "What kept him going"? (p vii) Mandela wrote many letters and it is through his words that we can find the answers. As Zamaswazi further states, the selection that appears in this book acquaints readers intimately not only with Nelson Mandela the political activist and prisoner, but also with Nelson Mandela the lawyer, the father, husband, uncle and friend.

The letters inform us that prison conditions began to improve after 1967 due to the intervention of Helen Suzman, an opposition member of parliament to whom

Mandela reported that there was a “reign of terror” on the Island (p x). We also learn that Amina Cachalia, a good friend of Mandela, requested Dr Moosa Patel to hide J.N. Singh and Monty Naicker away. Both were duly disguised in Muslim garb, with Dr Patel carrying out the instruction in the cellar of his Claremont Medical Surgery. Interestingly, Patel's brother, Sulayman, was a contemporary of Oliver Tambo at St. Peter's School in Rosettenville (a suburb of Johannesburg) and Oliver Tambo always spoke to them about the liberation struggle as the “French Revolution”.

In conclusion: Nelson Mandela left a rich archive of letters documenting his twenty-seven years in prison; they echo his anger, his self-control, and his love for family and country. There are also books like Mandela *the Authorized Portrait* (2006) which has a foreword by Bill Clinton and an introduction by Archbishop Tutu and *Good Morning Mr Mandela: A Memoir*, compiled by Zelda le Grange (2014), which give us an idea of who Mandela was as depicted by different individuals. In addition, other books about Mandela and his many biographies in a number of different languages include *Dare Not Linger* (by Nelson Mandela and Mandla Langa) published in 2017; *Nelson Mandela: Conversations with Myself* (2011) which has a foreword by Barack Obama; and his most famous biography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, published by Little Brown & Company in 1994. This reviewer has a copy of *Long Walk to Freedom* signed by Mr Mandela. The phrase “Long walk to freedom” was borrowed and adapted from the former prime minister of India, Mr Jawaharlal Nehru.

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