

A. Wessels, *A Century of Postgraduate Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) Studies: Masters' and Doctoral Studies Completed at Universities in South Africa, in English-Speaking Countries and on the European Continent, 1908-2008*

Sun Press, Bloemfontein, 2010

205 pp

ISBN 978-1-920383-09-1

R225.00

André Wessels is professor of History at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, South Africa. In the past he has published extensively on the Anglo-Boer War including acting as editor for *Lord Roberts and the War in South Africa* (2000) and *Lord Kitchener and the War in South Africa* (2006). Of late, much of his research energy has gone into publications on the history of the South African National Defence Force. With this publication, however, he returns to the Anglo-Boer War to update a source publication

-
9. B. Lau, *Central and Southern Namibia in Jonker Afrikaner's Time* (National Archives of Namibia, Windhoek, 1987); T. Dederling, *Hate the Old and Follow the New: Khoekhoe and Missionaries in Early Nineteenth-Century Namibia* (Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, 1997); en N. Penn, *The Forgotten Frontier: Colonist and Khoisan on the Cape's Northern Frontier in the 18th Century* (Ohio University Press, Athens, OH, 2005), naas etlike artikels deur hierdie en ander skrywers.
 10. M. Wallace, *A History of Namibia: from the Beginning to 1990* (Jacana, Johannesburg, 2011) is 'n heldhaftige poging om dit te doen vir die hele land se geskiedenis, maar sy bespreek die negentiende-eeuse geskiedenis van hierdie streek in slegs een hoofstuk van omtrent 30 bladsye.

that first saw the light of day in 1987 under the title, *Suid-Afrikaanse Verhandelinge en Proefskrifte oor die Geskiedenis van die Anglo-Boereoorlog: 'n Bronnestudie*.

Much has happened in terms of postgraduate research work on the Anglo-Boer War since then, both in South Africa and in other parts of the world. Wessels has, in this publication, taken cognisance of this and with the help of a large number of individuals as listed (on p 11), he has tracked down postgraduate work done at Masters and Doctoral level, both nationally and internationally.

The result is an impressive compilation of authors; titles of theses/dissertations; names of universities and countries of origin, as well as other biographical details related to the 223 theses/dissertations that deal exclusively with the war. This list is supplemented with the provision of similar details for 337 postgraduate studies which relate, albeit indirectly at times, to the Anglo-Boer War. Furthermore, the book is enhanced by a breakdown in chapter 4 of the 223 theses/dissertations into 23 topics ranging from the causes of the war to literature on the conflict. The purpose of the publication, as spelt out on p 105, is to “assist the interested student, historian, or any other interested person in his/her research” on the Anglo-Boer War and in this it certainly succeeds admirably. At a glance readers and scholars can determine what has been done at postgraduate level on the war and they are able to gain an overview of how the scholarship and historiography on the war has evolved. It provides an extremely useful research tool for postgraduate work on the war and its era.

However, the publication does have its shortcomings. The use of the phrase “proper theses on the Anglo-Boer War” as a designation for theses dealing exclusively with the war strikes a jarring note. Does this imply that there are “improper” postgraduate studies on the topic? The biggest problem, however, lies with the attempts to do a quantitative analysis of postgraduate dissertations and theses by using the titles themselves as the means of analysis. Allocating percentages to certain themes does little more than disclose the bigger picture that was generally speaking already apparent elsewhere in the publication. It would have been more useful to shed light, for example, on why the Anglo-Boer War is as popular a topic among postgraduate students in Canada and New Zealand as it is in Britain; or what proportion of South African students choose to do postgraduate work on the Anglo-Boer War at overseas universities. What trends and tendencies have there been over time in postgraduate work related to the war? Unfortunately these issues were not addressed. Nevertheless, the “raw data” provided in this publication does provide postgraduate students with an indication of where there are still gaps in our knowledge and what questions still require in-depth qualitative analysis.

These shortcomings are, however, dwarfed by the real value of *A Century of Postgraduate Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) Studies* as outlined above. As such, this publication is a real necessity for the History section of any research library and for all scholars of the Anglo-Boer War.

Johan Wassermann
University of KwaZulu-Natal