

Southall has offered his colleagues a book of immense detail about the structures which contributed and continue to contribute to the black middle classes “precarious positionality”. But, to “ordinary” readers and members of the black middle class, the book lacks in many regards. Primarily due to its stiff nature and forfeiting “juicy” details for structures such as politics, corporate and their structures affecting the black middle class.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 had great potential of being “juicy”, by capturing the lived experience of model-C education (Matlwa, 2013) and “clever blacks”. Moreover, “job hoppers” were another rich vein to be cut open; the notion of “strategic guilt” articulated by Thabang Sefalafala (M&G, 28 August, 2015) would have enriched the analysis of black corporate managers. These and other rich veins were sidelined in favour of “major sources of power in contemporary South African society; post-apartheid state and large corporations” (p. 159). The book was largely disappointing.

Tales of the Old East Coast from Zululand to the Cape

(I-Go-Books, 2015, 271 pp. ISBN 978-6206-4994-0)

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The aptly-titled *Tales of the Old East Coast from Zululand to the Cape* is a compilation of absorbing sub-narratives that compose an enlightening narrative of the history of the South African East Coast. The book covers the period from the first European arrivals on the East Coast in the late fifteenth century up to late nineteenth century when British colonial rule was firmly established in the Cape and Natal colonies.

Each chapter of the book is headed by a catchy title such as “Birds with many wings” and “Nightfall at noon.” Some of the chapter titles such as “Seers and sorcerers” and “Cannibals and crocodiles” lean on the provocative side. The first chapter explains how the first Europeans on the Old East Coast were

castaways who were involved in the European trade with India. From such initial coincidental contact with the local Khoi population, the book reveals how more contact was established with other locals since there were at least twenty-five shipwrecks on the South East coast during the seventeenth century alone. The second chapter then demonstrates how the east coast developed into a “melting pot” with the establishment of planned and unplanned European settlements. The author emphasises how most European settlers (including Jan van Riebeeck) did not enjoy this early settlement, to the extent that even some British criminals chose to go and hang back home rather than die of the unknown in a faraway land.

The narrative develops as the Ron Lock illustrates the violent contacts between the different European settler nationalities (British, Dutch, French and Portuguese) and against the local populations. The subsequent slave trade and slavery are explained showing the involvement of different groups of people, including a case study of a Black African called Efendi.

The story moves into the nineteenth century as the European settlers clashed more with, particularly, the Xhosa and the Zulu. The contrasting roles of the Khoi as resisters and collaborators are also illuminated. Other local ethnic groups such as the Pondo are mentioned, but do not contribute much to the narrative. Similarly, the San are also included, but largely in dedicated chapter titled “The Bushmen”, and nothing more. The detailed encounters include the Frontier Wars, in which the Europeans clashed with generations of Xhosa people under leaders such as Hintza Nqika and Sandile. The encroachment into Zululand and the encounters with Zulu leaders such as Shaka, Dingane, Mpande, and Cetshwayo are also discussed. The book ends with the final defeat and subjugation of the both the Xhosa and Zulu Kingdoms.

The author writes in simple language that enables the reader to focus on the intriguing content of book. Furthermore, the author does not inundate the narrative with needless dates, something which traditional history books are often criticised for. As a result, the content of the book is accessible, not just to historians, but also to all historically curious readers. The book is full of well-illustrated, some humorous and some tragic, anecdotes which flavour the narrative making it a captivating read. Many contemporary images are used to illustrate the tales helping the reader to create a vivid picture of events.

Ron Lock’s book is very useful for history teaching and learning. It covers content that school teachers and learners would do well to know, especially on topics such as European colonization, Slavery and the Mfecane. Very useful

information is provided about leaders such as Shaka (whose history is one of the most contentious in African history). Social life at the Zulu court is illustrated, showing how some of the brutality attributed to Shaka and his successors were exaggerated. The book also reveals the role of traders and Christian missionaries during the early days of European colonialism.

Through reading this book a history learner can develop an understanding of second order concepts such as change and continuity, cause and consequence and empathy. The Old East Coast experienced major changes within the 450 years under focus, while some traditions are explained to be continuing in the present-day. An interesting example is how the place presently known as the Red Desert at the end of Maurice Road in Port Edward was created as a result of one of Shaka's cattle raids. The reader can explore the causes and consequences of the Frontier Wars and understand their complex nature. The author also helps the reader to empathise with the Xhosa society which heeded Nongquase's call to slaughter all their cattle by explaining how the society had reached a point where they had virtually nothing to lose.

However, the book has a few weaknesses which can be raised. While self-published books are now very prevalent, they are still looked down upon as lacking critique. The narratives are written largely from a European point of view which could lead critics to label the narrative as "the history Europeans on the East Coast". Other populations fit into the narrative of what the then European settlers were involved in. Acceptably, the author has a right to his historiography. The book also contains a few typological errors which could have been eliminated with more critical editing.