

women like their male counterparts played significant and necessary roles in the Zulu Kingdom.

Shaka's iron rule led to his attempted assassination and eventually his death. He was assassinated by his half-brothers Dingani and Mhlangane. This confirms that those who live by the sword die by the sword. Dingane took over as the Zulu Chief after the assassination of Mhlangane. It was the change of personalities at the helm but the continuation of the same socio-political system that prevailed under Shaka's reign. Dingane continued killing his opponents and his brothers to consolidate his power. His accession to power coincided with the increased migration of Europeans – with their superior firepower – into Southern Africa. This ultimately led to the disintegration of the Zulu Kingdom and opened a new era of exploitation.

The creation of the Zulu kingdom is a very valuable study of the emergence and growth of the Zulu Kingdom in Southern Africa under the leadership of the military genius, Shaka. The author was able to use diverse Zulu oral traditions to reconstruct the history of the Zulu Kingdom under the leadership of Shaka. The vivid oral accounts coupled with the analysis of the events keeps the reader riveted. The scholarly account is therefore a valuable font of information for historians wishing to study the history of the Zulu Kingdom from 1815 to 1828.

Race, class and power. Harold Wolpe and the radical critique of apartheid

(Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2015, 368 pp., ISBN: 978-1-86914-286-5)

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Harold Wolpe and three other detainees captured the imagination of an international audience after their daring escape from a South African prison in 1963. Wolpe had been arrested a month before for his involvement at the anti-apartheid base at Liliesleaf. Unable to continue his life in apartheid

South Africa, Wolpe instead led an exiled existence in England. However, his newly-found fame, and even infamy in some circles, came at a painful personal cost of being divorced from the coalface of the struggle. *Race, class and power* explores this trope by providing an intellectual overview of the ideological contributions that Wolpe made remotely to Marxist theory in an apartheid milieu.

Steven Friedman's latest publication is not another ubiquitous biography of a proponent of the liberation movement. Instead, *Race, class and power* aims to explore how Wolpe's academic contributions affected the consciousness of a country struggling, first, under inimical apartheid legislation, and thereafter, struggling with safeguarding a smooth transition to democracy. Concomitant to this aim, *Race, class and power* also seeks to place Marxist theory into a transnational perspective, quantifying, in three general phases, how Wolpe's contributions influenced those individuals who prescribed to Marxism from the 1970s and beyond.

Race, class and power is replete with oral sources of prolific thinkers of the time, who extensively shared their personal perceptions of not only Wolpe but of the Marxist and liberal *zeitgeist*. This is indeed, from a historical perspective, one of the book's strengths, much to the credit of Judith Hudson, who was responsible for collecting these memories. A lot of conclusions pertaining to Wolpe's influence on Marxist theory is predicated on these interviews of figures such as Martin Legassick, Ahmed Kathrada, Jeremy Cronin, Raymond Suttner and Shula Marks, to name but a few. If historians strive towards constructing the most objective truth through an exhaustive survey of sources, Hudson's contributions are certainly the fulcrum on which this book is based. In the interest of balance, however, and in a minority of instances, the scope of interviews could perhaps have extended to other echelons of intellectual thought.

If the reader is interested in a theoretical overview of Marxist ideological development in South Africa and internationally, *Race, class and power* comes highly recommended. In particular, Friedman's erudition of the Marxist debates within academia, anti-apartheid political organisations and intellectual circles captures the abundance of conflicted and multifarious approaches with remarkable efficiency. Not only does *Race, class and power* provide a prism into Marxist thought, but it also enlightens the reader of the rigid and intransigent Stalinist convictions of the South African Communist Party at the time. This inculcates with Wolpe's travails to contribute intellectually to the liberation

struggle while remaining loyal and perceivably uncritical (at the fear of being further ostracised) to the organisations to which he belonged.

Grounded on Friedman's personal experience as a journalist and academic, *Race, class and power* also provides adept contextualisation of Marxism's influence (or often lack thereof) in both South African politics and the public domain. Towards the end of the book, the author alludes to some of the current challenges which the country faces, as well as the contemporary implementation and relevance of Marxist theory. The book certainly gains relevance as a result thereof. One of the book's highlights relates to Wolpe's prescient approach towards redressing inequalities in higher education during his so-called 'third career' (after law and sociology) devising educational policy in the 1990s. Wolpe's difficult task related to keeping 'the ANC conceptually coherent while not remaining oblivious to political realities' (Friedman, 2015: 244). The reader cannot help but wonder how the current movement towards free, decolonised education in a tertiary environment would have been affected, had Wolpe's debates enjoyed more traction with influential governing bodies.

Up to the penultimate chapter, *Race, class and power* is somewhat bifurcated. While Wolpe's contributions to the development of South African Marxist theory is ostensibly significant, Friedman points out that the evidence of the legacy of his work through concrete examples is sparse. Friedman's discussions are predominantly presupposed on a comprehensive prior knowledge of not only Marxism but also South African politics and central figures thereof, which does run the risk of alienating certain audiences. Similarly, Friedman uses abbreviations expansively and the inclusion of an abbreviation list would have greatly improved the ease of understanding the book. *Race, class and power* relies on extensive quotations and as a result some sections are formulaic: Wolpe's argument is stated, followed by a summary of the most important reactions to it. Often analysis of reactions to Wolpe's writings could have portrayed evidence of deeper engagement. However, the author does redeem himself in this regard in the final chapter, 'Questions, not answers: Transcending the Marxist tradition'.

Ultimately, *Race, class and power* subsumes Wolpe's theoretical contributions to wider historical debates surrounding Marxism. A recurring motif in the book is Wolpe's intellectual rigour, which (like the French Marxist, Louis Althusser) was never fully embraced. Friedman attributes this observation on the largely theoretical nature of Wolpe's work, making it inaccessible to the

casual reader. Ultimately, much like Wolpe, *Race, class and power's* theoretical base is likely to obfuscate some readers, despite the salient scholarly contribution which it makes to provide not only an overview of South African Marxist historiography but also a prism into Wolpe's role in the evolution of Marxist thought.

West Africa before the colonial era. A history to 1850

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The field of African history in general and West African history in particular has come of age in the last five decades. West Africa has attracted scholarly attention because it was the centre of the slave trade and most of the populations (approximately 50%) of the African diaspora in the US, the Caribbean and Latin America came ultimately from pre-colonial West Africa. Although a lot has been written about West Africa, it still remains a poorly understood region in part because of precolonial African myths, unfounded and sometimes erroneous, which often colour our understanding of West African history. Other scholars – JD Fage (Cambridge, 1955), JD Hargreaves (Macmillan, 1963), A Boahen and JA Adayi (Longman 1963) and, recently, T Falola (Carolina Press, 2001) – however, have produced surveys questioning these assumptions. They have explained how ancient African societies had established complex political systems for their governance, created sophisticated civilisations and the extent to which internal conflicts and outside forces/pressures brought about their decline.

The book, *West Africa before colonial era: A history to 1850*, authored by the internationally renowned scholar and journalist, Basil Davidson, surveys West African history before the arrival of Europeans. Using his widely acclaimed text, *A History of West Africa 1000-1800* as a point of departure, Davidson delves into the rich cultures, societies and politics of this region before the advent of colonial rule. Davidson's work traverses familiar African history scholarly terrain because it summarises and clarifies topics treated elsewhere