

A.J. CHRISTOPHER. *Southern Africa*. Studies in historical geography series. Dawson: Folkstone/Archon: Hamden, 1976. £8,00.

A 1972 survey of historical geography in Africa by Kwamina B. Dickson (see A.R.H. Baker, *Progress in historical geography* (New York, 1972), pp.187–206 and 273–274) suggests that very little attention is given to this subject on the African Continent and it makes no reference to a single work produced in Africa south of the Zambezi. It is therefore safe to assume that the study of historical geography is comparatively new in South Africa. Because of this people interested in how the cultural landscape of southern Africa had evolved were largely dependent on A.F. Hattersley's *Illustrated social history of South Africa* (Cape Town, 1969).

Dr Christopher has changed this situation by publishing the results of his research on the historical geography of southern Africa; this he has done in local and overseas journals and in this his first comprehensive work on the subject. Apart from the fact that it introduces into South Africa new concepts in the field of historical geography his book is important for its interdisciplinary and human approach to geography, an approach which makes his book valuable also for historians, particularly those specialising in urban and regional history.

It is quite clear that the author does not pretend to describe *in detail* the way the southern African landscape has been transformed through White settlement. The book is, instead, a broad introductory study of the process, the details of which can be worked out later. The first three chapters deal with the factors which determined the settlement of Whites in the interior of South Africa during the Dutch and early English periods up to 1860. They are followed by a rather short chapter on urban expansion from 1806 to 1860, when major developments took place. These first four chapters virtually cover the history of White settlement in that part of southern Africa which today forms the RSA.

By 1860 the main outlines of White rural development had been drawn. Chapter Five goes on to discuss the years 1860 to 1914, when the processes of filling in and closing the farming frontier took place. The important industrial development which took place at this time through the discovery of diamonds (Kimberley) and gold (Witwatersrand) is described in Chapters Six and Seven.

One of the most interesting though problematical aspects of colonization in southern Africa, that of contact between White and Black, is considered in Chapter Eight. To a large extent the future of White settlement in southern Africa was shaped by the economic and political effects of this contact, and the present situation in the RSA and Rhodesia can hardly be understood without taking these factors into account.

In a final chapter the author offers some perspectives on the historical geography of southern Africa, using Turner's frontier thesis on the settlement of the United States of America as a model and drawing parallels with what has been experienced in southern Africa. Although the process of settlement here was very similar to that in North America, Christopher indicates that in general the characteristics of settlement in southern Africa have been peculiar to this continent.

To conclude: this well-researched and well-written book is a welcome addition to the scientific literature of southern Africa and might well in future be looked back upon as an important pioneering work, valuable to both the study and understanding of the geographical processes and of history.

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