



A. DUMINY and B. GUEST (eds.). *Natal and Zululand from earliest times to 1910: a new history*. Shuter & Shooter: Pietermaritzburg, 1989. 489 pp. Illus. R49,95 (exclusive). ISBN 0 86980 695 5.

The sixteen essays in this book deal with virtually all the important aspects of the history of the region of Natal and Zululand before 1910. Most are drawn from larger works or ongoing research and receive more extended treatment elsewhere. It is clear, however, that this book has as its specific aim bringing the most recent developments in research and thinking about Natal and Zululand history to a wide audience.

The different historians offer a critical commentary on the wide-ranging research and debate into the economic, social and political history of Natal and Zululand. Many of the authors provide a lucid and stimulating overview of their subjects, making clear the various interpretations currently exercising Natal historians, while at the same time offering a distinctive and individual point of view. It is a pity that one cannot say much more in a short review about each of the essays. Some chapters are better than others, but each one is solid and some are exceptional. Wright and Hamilton, in particular, draw together the often highly speculative research into the history of African state formation. The result is lucid and balanced. Colenbrander in his chapter on the Zulu kingdom 1828-1879 is highly successful in putting the details in a wider framework of political economy, vested interests and attitudes, and offers a stimulating interpretation of the subject. Mention should also be made of the first two chapters in this volume. Mazel and Maggs offer both an excellent introduction to historical archaeology and a confirmation of the vitality of the field.

Taken together the different chapters constitute the best and most up-to-date volume on the history of the region of Natal and Zululand before 1910 — a testament to the conscientious efforts of the contributors and the astute judgements of the editors, who, in their strong introduction and conclusion bring common threads together and indicate how the different chapters complement each other in many satisfactory ways.

Like any work compiled by a number of historians it is bound to be criticised on points of detail, style and analysis, but students of regional history should find it a useful tool for developing informed judgements of the period before 1910 in this area of Southern Africa.

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