



J. LABAND. *The Battle of Ulundi*. Shuter & Shooter: Pietermaritzburg, and Kwazulu Monuments Council: Ulundi, 1988. 56 pp. Illus. R11,70 (exclusive). ISBN 0 7960 01189.

The Battle of Ulundi is a fascinating account told by a trained historian and author of history books and several articles on Zulu history.

The reader is made aware of the determination of the British troops to avenge the Isandlwana disaster, and the killing of the disabled Zulus is blamed on the Natal Native Contingent (p. 40). What is not told is that this contingent was led by white officers. The question is:

who ordered the contingent to kill the disabled? During the British invasion it was common knowledge that the British troops did kill the wounded. This fact was accepted by Governor H. McCallum during the 1906 Bhambatha uprising. He stressed that 'at the battle of Inyezane it was reported both by Europeans and Natives that the greater proportion of the wounded had been killed and that very few if any prisoners were taken.'

In Laband's book the reader is given the incorrect impression that the Zulu king's word was final (p. 5). The Zulu kingdom was semi-federal in nature, with all the *amakhosi* (chiefs) having full jurisdiction in their areas, subject to allegiance to the *isilo* (king). They were members of the *isigungu* or federal parliament and could refuse to co-operate without punishment forthcoming from the king. A good example is the refusal of Prince Hhamu and his followers to defend the Zulu kingdom against the invaders.

Laband correctly states that 'By June all the major coastal chiefs were negotiating with Crealock, and many were to submit even before the battle of Ulundi was fought' (p. 4). This shows the degree of independence the *amakhosi* had from the king. It was thus not all the *amabutho* who defended the oNdini homestead, since it was the *amakhosi's* duty to supply them. It is incorrect to state that the *amabutho* ignored the king's orders and 'stayed at home' (p. 47).

What should be stressed is the breakdown in communication between the king and the *amakhosi*. The Zulu kings, except Shaka, solicited and encouraged dissenting or alternative viewpoints since by custom they must rule by consensus. They were the arbiters of disputes and as such they were supposed to be impartial.

The use of the words *ikhanda* and *amakhanda* is wrong. The *amakhanda* (military homesteads) were, strictly speaking, referred to as the *amadlangala* (temporary shelters). Those homesteads where the king had stationed his wives, grandmothers or the *isigodlo* were not the *amakhanda* in the sense

of the word. These were, *inter alia*, oNdini, eMlambongwenya and Kwa-Gqikazi to name but a few.

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