
I thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated reading Delegorgue’s Travels. Painted with Gallic élan, Delegorgue presents his flamboyant and graphic record with bold and evocative strokes. With all credit to the gifted translator Fleur Webb, the narrative engrosses one with its engaging style. Delegorgue’s vibrant personality permeates every page. He had a zest and curiosity for life that filled his experience with real interest, but he is far from being overwhelmed by the dynamic events in which he was an active and courageous participant.

The eventual availability of the full text of this source in this handsome volume makes it a must for historians interested in the period 1838-1844. Delegorgue is an incisive and independent observer of the interrelationship between Zulu, Boer and Briton, seen against the pristine loveliness of Natal’s nature in most of its forms. His contribution is unique because he maintains his proud French outlook as he minutely, enthusiastically and ingeniously comments on the human foibles around him. He does not hesitate to express his opinions on many aspects of Natal — for example the Boers are real people who have faults unknown to most South African history text books. (Read as aspects of Natal — for example he was ecstatic about the ‘brilliant plumage’ of the Natal birds. But he was also one of those 19th century European ‘sportsmen’ who often lapses into paternalistic judgements. For example, after witnessing a sjambokking he is of the opinion that ‘while we grit on teeth with pain, they (Zulus) in similar circumstances simply laugh’ (p. 124) and ‘I say that the Cafre has feelings’ (p. 173).

Delegorgue’s passion as an observer is seen in the memorable description and comments on the trial of Dambuza and Khambezana (p. 111-114), the events surrounding the extension of the Republic of Natalia from the Thukela to the Black Mfolozi (pp. 120-121) on 14 February 1840 and life at Mpande’s royal umuzi.

Delegorgue came to Natal to collect specimens (p. 54). This he did with verve; for example he was ecstatic about the ‘brilliant plumage’ of the Natal birds. But he was also one of those 19th century European ‘sportsmen’ who participated in the often wanton decimation of vast numbers of Natal’s big game. He even gives us insight into traditional Zulu hunting methods. What makes his observation so valuable is that it enables one to see Natal in its pristine ecological glories, as well as a useful index, round off a publication that has not only been scholarly researched, but written in a very readable style which will hopefully give the wide audience it deserves.

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Western Cape. However, there appears to be a lack of editorial direction by James and Simons. This impression is reinforced by the brief and superficial introduction. It seems strange that the editors saw fit to include a chapter on the tiny Unity Movement and neglect the ANC, surely the dominant group in the Western Cape. Definitively this volume contains useful material, but it is by no means an authoritative social and economic history of the Western Cape.

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ISBN 0 86980 766 8 (hard cover ed.).

This work brings together sixteen of John Laband’s independently produced conference papers and articles, fifteen of which have been previously published in a variety of specialist journals at various times between 1979 and 1988. The sixteenth, Laband’s paper, “‘OI! Let’s go and have a fight at Jim’s!’: The Zulu at the battle of Rorke’s Drift”, appears here for the first time. While several popular works have recently appeared to feed the Anglo-Zulu ‘war buff’ market, this is a work of the highest historical and technical standard which adds both new detail and new perspectives to our understanding of the topic. It is likely to appeal to many general readers, but it is principally of interest to serious historians and deserves careful study by those specializing in regional and local studies.

This work is a blend of military and social history in which there are papers on diplomacy, neglected aspects of the campaign and a variety of specialized case studies on the impact of war on various local communities. Several of these latter papers present deep slices of Anglo-Zulu War history as it affected various localities ranging from cities such as Durban, to districts such as Weenen, fieldworks such as Isandlwana, and even some surprises, like a defence of the then Lieutenant-Colonel Henry George Wakelyn Smith by Sir Andries Stockenstrom, though one must bear in mind the correspondent! ‘All the Caffres whom I had on 14 September 1836, ‘expressed the most unqualified satisfaction on 14 September 1836, ‘expressed the most unqualified satisfaction of the British army’s main supply routes. Thompson has carefully used the information generated by a bureaucracy coping with a wartime crisis to reveal the composition, economy and social linkage in an important part of Natal Rural.

Kingdom and colony is a fascinating compilation of papers on an evergreen theme. Technically it is well produced with interesting and unusual illustrations, many of which, such as the cover illustration, have never been reproduced before. The maps are of a high technical standard, although some of the information from the map on p. 118 has been erroneously duplicated in the Rorke’s Drift map on p. 121. This is a book well worth having for general readers, libraries and for regional historians. What it does is use the crises of national war to show social microcosms in stress and place these case studies in a broader focus. This is surely the essence of good regional history.

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ISBN 0 7970 1603 1.

The third volume of Records of Natal is a welcome addition to this well-established series. This particular volume seems to be a much richer quarry for both the ‘national’ and the local regional historian, than the previous one. Much of the material herein contains bearing on important themes in South African history currently under critical discussion. Such themes include the relationship between the Great Trek and the ‘Mfecane’, the role of the missionary and the origins and early history of the Caffres (Mfengu). It is a volume especially (and surprisingly) rich (because some of the material is outside the stated chronological range of the volume) on the armed confrontation between the Cape forces and the Nguni at the battle of Mblompopo on 27 August 1828. This material is contained in a whole series of enigmatic dispatches, particularly one dispatched to a despatch by Governor D’Urban to Lord Glenelg, dated 22 November 1837 (pp. 218-240), as well as in conflicting evidence before the 1835 parliamentary select committee on aborigines, printed on 5 August 1836 (pp. 64-69, 152-156 and 158-163). Equally fascinating is the contrasting accounts of the causes of the Great Trek (pp. 246-251 and 291-294).

For Cape historians this volume contains certain ‘classics’ like D’Urban’s response to the Glenelg despatch of 1835 (pp. 41-43) and Harry Smith’s account of the causes of the war of 1834-1835 and his defence of the killing of Hints (pp. 99-109). And there are perhaps even some surprises, like a defence of the then Lieutenant-Colonel Henry George Wakelyn Smith by Sir Andries Stockenstrom, though one must bear in mind the correspondent! ‘All the Caffres whom I had on 14 September 1836, ‘expressed the most unqualified satisfaction on 14 September 1836, ‘expressed the most unqualified satisfaction of the British army’s main supply routes. Thompson has carefully used the information generated by a bureaucracy coping with a wartime crisis to reveal the composition, economy and social linkage in an important part of Natal Rural.

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