

## Book Reviews

--

## Boekresensies

### Victorian influence on parade in Natal

#### **Graham Dominy, *Last Outpost on the Zulu Frontiers – Fort Napier and the British Imperial Garrison***

University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 2016

320 pp

ISBN 9780252040047

R749.00

In the Foreword to Andrew Duminy and Bill Guest's *Natal and Zululand: From Earliest Times to 1910*, published in 1989, the late Professor Colin Webb remarked, with approbation, that exploration of Natal's past continued vigorously. Graham Dominy's thorough account of the role of the garrison at Fort Napier exemplifies and embellishes that practice. At the outset he makes a significant observation about the strength of the garrison which has great relevance to the frugal way the British maintained their empire: "The power of the garrison was less than it sought to portray, but it was a token of the greater power of the empire, which could be brought into play if locally challenged" (p xvi). As such, the garrison symbolised British hegemony and promoted a sense of security amongst the small settler population. But as Dominy also notes, "the garrison masked the weaknesses of the state through military pageantry and marched out on minor expeditions in response to panic and rumours of invasion" (p 58). Although he does not make this point, the extent to which settlers were consistently aware of their vulnerability was their involvement in the rifle associations. No other civic organisation was as prolific. Initiated by Ordinance 11 of 1855, by 1904 there were 62 Volunteer Corps or rifle associations, as they were then called.<sup>1</sup>

In focusing on what he terms "the underplayed peacetime role" of the garrison, Dominy succeeds admirably in revealing "how the broad sweep and rhetoric of imperialism was manifested in local power, class and economic structures" and argues that they were "entrenched and underpinned by the garrison at Fort Napier" (pp xi; xiii). Although the presence of the garrison spanned the entire Natal colonial period – it withdrew in 1914 – he points out that little systematic research was ever made on the garrison (p xvii), apart from short references to it in the context of colonial conflicts. In particular, its role and activities during peacetime has remained a blank until the publication of Dominy's book, hence his statement that the main focus "is what happened to the garrison during the sixty-seven years when it was not at war?" (p 2).

---

1. Natal Legislative Assembly, *Votes and Proceedings*, LXII, 1904, pp. xiv-xvi; xix.

In adhering to that focus, Dominy enriches the historical landscape of colonial Natal, particularly that of Pietermaritzburg and posits a strong case for a symbiotic relationship between the economic and social growth of Pietermaritzburg and the presence and role of the garrison. “The engine for changing Pietermaritzburg from a Trekker settlement to a Victorian colonial capital was the garrison” (p 44). The men of the 45th Regiment dug the town’s water furrows, constructed roads and erected the earliest public buildings in Pietermaritzburg including the Government School Room which doubled as the first Legislative Council chamber.

In that context Dominy devotes an entire chapter, “Spending the Queen’s Shilling”, to the economic influence of the Fort Napier garrison which, he notes, has hitherto been largely neglected. As a stable market for produce, particularly during the depression years of the mid-1860s, the garrison proved critical in seeing merchants and farmers through lean times. Farmers like Joseph Baynes of Baynesfield, some fifteen miles away from Fort Napier, enjoyed a steady business supplying the garrison with livestock, milk and grain on a regular basis. The economic significance of the garrison also proved significant in coercing Pietermaritzburg’s municipality to improve its water supply. In 1898 when the garrison threatened to withdraw from Fort Napier unless the water supply was upgraded, the municipality was forced to respond. With a population of 100 officers, 4 550 other ranks, and 500 women and children, socially and financially Pietermaritzburg could not afford the relocation of the garrison.

Given the more than six decades of peacetime presence, focus on the garrison’s social rapport with settler society fills five of the 13 chapters. Sir Garnet Wolseley’s appointment as administrator of Natal in 1875, Dominy notes, “brought the Natal garrison even closer to the centre of colonial life [...] and heightened the importance of its ceremonial role” (p 66). The regimental band and guard of honour played prominent roles during Wolseley’s short tenure and were a key factor in his “social offensive” to seduce the colonial elite and its legislative members so as to render the colony amenable to his political reforms. Amateur dramatics, popular musicals and the turf club owed their inception to the 45th Regiment. The sports field broke barriers between ranks as well as providing opportunities for broader social interaction with colonial society. Sports such as polo, cricket, croquet, gymkhanas and steeple-chasing “gave Pietermaritzburg a sparkle many other South African towns lacked” (p 114).

As a garrison town, the pursuit of romance was a critical aspect of the garrison’s interaction with colonial society: “settler parents set their hearts, or ambitions, on their daughters being noticed by the military officers” (p 131). Dominy provides several insights on the garrison’s influence on class and gender relations and the hierarchical structure of settler society. One of the strictures on married life was that only six wives per hundred men could accompany the regiment or live in the barracks with their husbands. Another was that soldiers required their commanding officer’s permission to marry without which no relationship could be permanent.

The down side of relations between the genders was promiscuity, prostitution and the spread of venereal disease. Yet the British military authorities blamed “the

depravity of women” rather than the dalliances of their men. Drunkenness also contributed to debauched behaviour. It was “almost all-pervasive at Fort Napier throughout its existence as a garrison centre” (p 79). Boredom and the monotony of camp life encouraged intoxication. Men of the 64th Regiment faced charges of drunk and disorderly conduct in 1887. Desertion was another factor which became rife particularly after the discovery of the Witwatersrand goldfields. But for 90 percent of the ordinary soldiers – the other ranks – recruitment into the Victorian army was akin to a welfare system in that it provided a means of sustenance and opportunity otherwise beyond their attainment. Poverty in Ireland saw the first regiments at Fort Napier comprising large numbers of Irish troops. By the 1870s and 1880s the majority of soldiers were drawn from the England’s industrial centres.

The parades and pageantry of the garrison also resonated with the local African population, particularly the *kholwa*, in promoting orderliness, respectability and regimen. But the other side to relations with the local indigenous population was the *isibhalo* system of compulsory service which prevailed during both the Anglo-Zulu and Anglo-Boer Wars. “Without the labour of the African men .... the British military-transport system ... would not have functioned at all” (p 156). From the rigid divisions of rank and class, issues of masculinity, comparisons with garrisons elsewhere in the empire, military discipline, which included branding until it was abolished in 1871 and flogging, which was discontinued after 1881, to the education of the children of soldiers, Dominy presents a finely detailed and contextualised history of the Fort Napier garrison and its role in the replication of Victorian society on African soil. As such, it is the product of exhaustive research of sources, published, unpublished, official and unofficial in repositories in the United Kingdom and South Africa as one might expect from a professional archivist.

*Duncan Du Bois*  
*Durban*

### **Echoes from battlefields on the home front and from far afield**

#### ***Effie Karageorgos, Australian Soldiers in South Africa and Vietnam: Words from the Battlefield***

Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2016

257 pp

ISBN 978-1-4725-8580-6 (HB); 978-1-4725-8582-0 (ePDF); 978-1-4725-8581-3 (ePub)

R1500.00

In the last couple of years, the Bloomsbury Studies in Military History (with the renowned military historian, Jeremy Black as series editor), has produced some twenty thought-provoking publications that offer scholarly accounts of various aspects of military history. Thus far, war in Africa has not been the subject of any of the studies, but Effie Karageorgos (who teaches at the University of Melbourne in Australia) has changed that, albeit that her study deals only partially with conflict on the African

continent and the focus of her study is on Australian soldiers' experiences (in South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902, and in Vietnam, where Australia was involved from 1962 until 1973).

The aim of *Australian Soldiers in South Africa and Vietnam: Words from the Battlefield* is:

... to analyse the attitudes of a sample of Australian soldiers, and their resultant conduct, through close inspection of their publicly archived letters and diaries and application of these to twentieth-century research into soldiering and other contemporary reports of their conduct throughout the wars (p 12).

The words (letters, diaries) that are analysed, come from the battlefields in wars that were fought more than six decades apart, with two destructive world wars in-between. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Britain and her many colonies experienced an imperial summer, whereas by the 1960s, the British Empire was no more; the Pax Britannica had been replaced by the Pax Atomica and the concomitant Cold War; the war in Vietnam being one of a number of occasions where the super powers confronted one another either directly or indirectly in combat.

Karageorgos asks, inter alia “whether men react similarly irrespective of the period and location in which they are fighting, or whether these factors play a significant role in determining the effect of the combat experience on a soldier” (p 3) – including their emotional responses. Furthermore, she examines the “home front” in each case “to point to the influence of external factors such as Australian public and political opinion on the stance of soldiers towards the war they were fighting” (p 3). To do this, she has investigated the archival records of 126 individual Australian soldiers who fought in South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War, and of 164 Australian soldiers who served in the war in Vietnam.

Her research took Karageorgos to twelve archival depots and libraries across Australia, while she also consulted nine Australian newspapers, as well as a vast number of published primary and secondary sources (see the Bibliography, pp 225–249). Her elaborate endnotes (pp 187–223) also attest to the excellent research that was done. With the exception of a photo (of a soldier in Vietnam) on the cover of the book, there are no illustrations, but there is an Index (pp 251–257) that is of great assistance to the serious researcher.

In Chapter One, Australia's role in South Africa and in Vietnam is reviewed, as well as opposition to Australian participation in these wars. (Some 16 000 Australians served in the Anglo-Boer War of whom about 600 died, while approximately 60 000 Australians participated in the war in Vietnam, of whom more than 500 died.) In Chapter Two, “Initial Impressions of the War and the War Front”, patriotism, adventure and “the cause” as reasons for joining up for military service are discussed, together with military training, the shock of war realities, soldiers and enemy civilians, and the inevitable change in attitude towards war upon discovering the stark realities of armed conflict. In Chapter Three, the impact of the military structure is discussed, including leadership, discipline, and the role of comradeship in combat.

The next two chapters highlight the psychological pressures on soldiers during war and their morale, as well as their potential consequences. In Chapter Four, “Morale: The Psychology of Combat”, topics such as boredom on the battlefield, soldiers and killing, fear in battle, survival on the war front, and the importance of morale are analysed. In the next chapter, namely “Morale: The Role of Diversions”, the issue of morale is further analysed by looking at soldiers and alcohol, drug use in Vietnam, sex and the soldier, disobedience and mutiny, desertion, and the overall psychological effects of combat. In the light of the importance of the link between combatants and their home and family, it is appropriate that a chapter, Chapter Six, should be devoted to “Soldiers and the Home Front”, with sub-themes such as the impact of society on soldiers; mail, censorship and the press; and self-censorship from the war front. Throughout the publication the similarities, as well as the differences between Australian soldiers fighting in two different wars in two very distinct time periods, are highlighted.

In this excellent “war and society” study, Karageorgos contributes to our understanding of the role that wars have played in the making of the Australian identity. After all, Australia as a federated county, was established only on 1 January, 1901, while the Anglo-Boer War was still in progress. The book clearly demonstrates the transformation of soldiers – in two conflicts separated in time – as a response to developments in military procedure, as well as changing civilian opinion. In the author’s words:

The findings of this study thus suggest that the connection between the home and war fronts is significant when focusing on the impact of Australia itself on the men who fought in South Africa and Vietnam. It is apparent that any assessment of soldier attitudes and behaviour during any conflict must also take into account individual influences deriving from the civilian front (p. 185).

Well-written and based on original scholarship, *Australian Soldiers in South Africa and Vietnam: Words from the Battlefield*, has indeed made a noteworthy contribution to conceptual and historiographical developments in the field of military history, and to the study of war in general. The book is highly recommended.

*André Wessels*  
*University of the Free State*

### **Another milestone for the Van Riebeeck Society**

**Alan Cobley (ed.), *From Cattle-herding to Editor’s Chair: The Unfinished Autobiography and Writings of Richard Victor Selope Thema***

Van Riebeeck Society, Cape Town, 2016

239 pp

ISBN 978-0-9814264-8-8

R300.00

The Van Riebeeck Society (VRS) plays a critical role by making primary sources of history available to the public. Established in August 1918, the society was founded “to print or reprint for distribution among the members, and for sale to the public, rare and valuable books, pamphlets and documents relating to the history of Southern Africa”. The publication of Richard Victor Selope Thema’s (1886–1955) autobiography and writings is another milestone for the society. According to Professor Howard Phillips, the chair of the VRS, the publication of Thema’s writings is “a companion piece to the volume published by the VRS in 2012, *A.B. Xuma: Autobiography and Selected Works*” (p iv) edited by Peter Limb. Dr Xuma (1893–1962) was not only a contemporary of Thema, but like Thema, he was also an author of note.

Thema’s autobiography occupies almost half of the volume, while the rest of the publication consists of newspaper articles written by him. He traces his biographical details back to his childhood in the village of Mafarana in the Tzaneen district where his community lived a “simple life worshipping the gods of their fathers” (p 2). The disruption of African communities as a result of the development of mining and the role of the missionaries naturally form an important part of the narrative. Thema soon developed an interest in the Christian religion and he “secretly ... belonged to it, although openly I pretended to be one of the upholders of the religion of our ancestors (pp 17–18). He attended the local community school, despite his mother’s fears that the influence of Western religion and education might have a negative influence on the community.

According to Thema, the South African War (1899–1902) was “the greatest disappointment of my early life” (p 21), because the conflict brought an end to his schooling. Despite his education being disrupted, he continued his studies at Lovedale and completed his matric in 1909. Thema left Lovedale in 1910, after being trained in shorthand, typewriting and office routine, to work as a teacher. He then worked in the offices of labour agents in what was then called Pietersburg (Polokwane). It was here that Thema’s involvement in politics began, and he became a member of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), the organisation which was renamed the African National Congress (ANC) in 1923.

Thema started his political career as secretary of the SANNC’s Pietersburg branch. By 1915 he was a prominent member of the organisation and was elected to serve as acting secretary general of the SANNC in the absence of Sol Plaatje who was in England during the First World War (1914–1918). Thema played an influential role in the SANNC in the decades that followed, contributing to the rise of the SANNC, but by the 1940s, with the establishment of the ANC Youth League, the organisation started to undergo radical change. According to Cobley the “tactics of rational discourse and engagement exemplified by Thema and his generation had patently failed to prevent the hardening of racist views among whites in the thirty-five years since the Congress had been founded” (p xxii). Towards the end of his career, in the early 1950s, Thema took to mentoring Youth League leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo at secret meetings. However, despite Thema’s efforts to curb the rise of the armed

struggle and the influence of communism on the ANC, the ANC was evolving in new ways beyond his control.

Apart from his role in politics, Thema was a prolific writer and his newspaper contributions on politics, which form the bulk of this publication, left a lasting legacy. According to Cobley, “in recent years there has been a growing awareness of his [Thema’s] equally important intellectual contribution to the development of African nationalism in South Africa (p xxiii). Research conducted by Professor Ntongela Masilela from Pitzer College in the United States of America, argues for Thema to be appreciated as “the leading African journalist and intellectual of his generation” (p xxiii). He is regarded as a critical commentator on the African experience of the time, and his contributions were published regularly in the leading African newspapers.

*From Cattle-herding to Editor’s Chair* is a significant publication because it makes the writings of a prominent early and long-serving member of the ANC accessible to the public. A welcome addition to this VRS volume is the inclusion of bound bookmarks, which make it easier for an individual reader to refer back to an item of particular interest. However, in the opinion of this reviewer, it is unfortunate that the name of Dutch colonist Jan Van Riebeeck (1619–1677), with its connotations to white supremacy, continues to be associated with the VRS. The name Van Riebeeck, which was considered a neutral name in 1918 when the VRS was founded, and was used as a compromise between VRS members with divided loyalties between the names of Kruger and Rhodes, has since become something of a burden, and to a certain degree undermines the work of the VRS. Given the fact that the VRS is in the process of changing the society’s name, it is unfortunate that this particular publication is published under the Van Riebeeck name. The VRS has repositioned itself in the democratic South Africa, and once the name change goes through, it will be in an even better position to promote the important work it is doing.

*Barend van der Merwe*

*Khotso Flatela Northern Cape Provincial Archives*

### **Uitsonderlike toevoeging tot die Afrikaanse en Suid-Afrikaanse historiografie**

**J.S. Bergh, *Paul Kruger: Toesprake en Korrespondensie van 1881-1900***

Protea Boekhuis, Pretoria, 2017

598 pp

ISBN 978-1-4853-0574-3 (gedrukte boek); ISBN 978-1-4853-0575-0 (e-boek)

R350.00

Die talle boeke, verhandelinge en tydskrifartikels wat sedert die tweede helfte van die 19de eeu en veral gedurende die tweede helfte van die 20ste eeu verskyn het, getuig van die groot belangstelling wat daar in die lewe en werk van Stephanus Johannes Paulus Kruger (1825–1904) bestaan. Die vele biografieë oor Kruger is van wisselende omvang en gehalte, met D.W. Krüger se tweedelige *Paul Kruger, I, 1825–83, en II, 1883–1904* (1961 en 1963) waarskynlik die belangrikste. Die outobiografiese *Gedenkskrifte*

van *Paul Kruger* (1947) wat deur H.C. Bredell en Piet Grobler opgeteken is, is in verskeie Europese tale vertaal. In J.S. du Plessis se *President Kruger aan die Woord* (1952) is die verkiesingsmanifeste, intreeredes en toesprake van president Kruger gepubliseer.

Omdat Staatspresident S.J.P. Kruger nasionaal en internasionaal een van die bekendste Suid-Afrikaanse persoonlikhede van sy tyd was, het prof. Johan S. Bergh tereg besluit dat 'n herwaardering van hom as mens, leier, krygs- en staatsman noodsaaklik is. Bergh het besluit om nie nog 'n Kruger-biografie te skryf nie, maar alles wat deur Kruger self geskryf is of wat hy aan ander gedikteer het of wat namens hom opgestel is byeen te bring, in Engels te laat vertaal, van inleidings te voorsien en waar nodig verklarende aantekeninge tot die teks toe te voeg.

Dit was 'n omvangryke taak om die tekste van al die oorspronklike dokumente in argiewe en ander bewaarplekke hier te lande en oorsee byeen te bring. Die deeglikheid waarmee prof. Bergh en sy helpers hierdie taak verrig het, is prysenswaardig en die eindresultaat daarvan gaan toekomstige navorsers nog tot groot dankbaarheid stem. Al die tekste wat in Engels vertaal is, sal in 'n veeldelige reeks verskyn. Gelukkig het prof. Bergh en die uitgewer besluit om ook 'n Afrikaanse weergawe van Staatspresident Kruger se toesprake, telegramme en korrespondensie te publiseer, maar vanweë die groot omvang van die dokumente moes noodgedwonge 'n seleksie gemaak word wat in een band sal pas. So is sommige dokumente wat reeds elders gepubliseer is byvoorbeeld nie opgeneem nie. Maar die seleksie van die stukke wat wel opgeneem is, is keurig gedoen en gee 'n duidelike beeld van Kruger se lewens- en wêreldbeskouing en sy staatsmanskap.

In 'n inleidende afdeling word die verskillende uitsprake oor die Kruger-figuur weergegee, waarna die redaksionele werkwyse aan die orde kom en veral die seleksieproses deeglik verduidelik word. Hierdie afdeling sluit af met 'n seleksie van Kruger se korrespondensie en toesprake van die vroeg 1850's tot 1881. Wat veral in die dokumente uit hierdie tydperk opvallend is, is die feit dat Kruger op 'n waardige wyse met die inheemse kapteins gekommunikeer het en dat hy 'n groot bydrae met die opstel van die eerste Transvaalse grondwet gelewer het. Die stroewe verhouding tussen Kruger en President T.F. Burgers blyk duidelik en Kruger se rol tydens die Eerste Vryheidsoorlog (1880–1881) en as lid van die Driemanskap saam met P.J. Joubert (1831–1900) en M.W. Pretorius (1819–1901) kom ook aan die orde.

Die tweede afdeling handel oor Kruger se loopbaan van 1881 tot 1889 en sluit onder meer in die onderhandelinge vir die verkryging van formele onafhanklikheid van Transvaal in Augustus 1881; die verkiesing van Volksraadslede en sy agtereenvolgende verkiesing as staatspresident in 1883 en 1888. Na die ontdekking van goud in 1886 aan die Witwatersrand en die instroming van uitlanders, was Kruger kennelik bewus van die probleme wat daaruit sou voortspruit en het hom in toesprake daarvoor uitgelaat. Kruger het so dikwels aan Volksraadsdebatte deelgeneem dat die besware van Volksraadslede daarteen selfs in *De Volksstem* neerslag gevind het. Kruger se korrespondensie met prof. Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), Nederlandse



Boerevriend en teoloog verbonde aan die Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, oor die moontlike vestiging van 'n universiteit in Transvaal is boeiende leesstof en getuig van progressiewe denke.

Die derde afdeling dek Kruger se loopbaan van 1890 tot 1895. In hierdie tydperk het die staatspresident die inisiatief geneem om die uitlanderkwessie te besleg deur voor te stel dat 'n tweede volksraad in die lewe geroep moes word waarin daar ook vir verteenwoordigers van die nuwe immigrante voorsiening gemaak kon word. Kruger het ook sy korrespondensie met prof. Kuyper oor die stigting van 'n universiteit in Pretoria voortgesit, maar weining steun in hierdie verband van die Boerevriend ontvang. In 1893 is Kruger as staatspresident herkies, maar met 'n verminderde meerderheid teen sy opponent P.J. Joubert. Die belangrikste gebeurtenis in hierdie tydperk was waarskynlik die ingebruikneming van die Delagoabaai-spoorlyn tussen Lourenço Marques en Pretoria in 1895, wat Transvaal tot 'n nie-Britsbeheerde hawe toegang gegee het. Uit die dokumente blyk dit dat Kruger 'n regverdigde, maar besliste benadering tot die afbakening van lokasies vir swart gemeenskappe gehandhaaf het.

Die vierde afdeling handel oor Kruger se reaksie op die Jameson-inval van 1895 tot 1896 en die nagevolge daarvan. Uit die staatspresident se toesprake voordat die inval plaasgevind het, wil dit voorkom asof hy daarvan bewus was dat daar in sekere kringe 'n komplot gesmee word wat vir die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek nadelige gevolge kon inhou en dat Cecil John Rhodes (1853–1902), die Kaapse premier, waarskynlik die aanhitser daarvan was. Die Jameson-inval het misluk en dr. L.S. Jameson (1853–1917) en ander leierfigure is gevange geneem.

Die vyfde afdeling dek Kruger se loopbaan van 1896 tot 1899. Hierdie tydperk kan eintlik as die voorspel tot die Anglo-Boereoorlog (1899–1902) beskou word. Kruger was gelukkig om juis in hierdie fase oor die dienste van die uiters bekwame dr. W.J. Leyds (1859–1940) en na hom oudpresident F.W. Reitz (1844–1934) as staatssekretaris en die jong Jan C. Smuts (1870–1950) as staatsprokureur te beskik. Vir Staatspresident M.T. Steyn (1857–1916) van die Oranje-Vrystaat het Kruger die hoogste lof gehad en die samewerking tussen hulle was hartlik. Wat persone van ander geloofsgroepe, byvoorbeeld die Jode en Rooms-Katolieke, betref, was Kruger van mening dat hulle nie van burgerlike voorregte uitgesluit mag word nie en het selfs voorgestel dat hulle tot die Eerste Volksraad verkies kon word. Verder was Kruger vas oortuig dat, wat die geestelike betref, God geen onderskeid tussen blank en swart tref nie; 'n standpunt wat virseker nie deur al sy tydgenote gedeel is nie. Die oorlogswolke het begin dreig en om 'n gewapende stryd te voorkom, is 'n konferensie in Bloemfontein gereël waartydens Kruger en Alfred Milner (1854–1925), Britse goewerneur en hoë kommissaris, mekaar ontmoet het. Hulle kon nie tot 'n vergelyk kom nie en op 11 Oktober 1899 het die Anglo-Boereoorlog (1899–1902) uitbreek.

Die laaste afdeling handel oor Kruger en die Anglo-Boereoorlog. Na die aanvang van die oorlog het Staatspresident Kruger steeds 'n belangrike rol gespeel, hoewel hy nie soos Staatspresident Steyn te velde was nie. Daagliks is daar vanaf die verskillende oorlogsfrente aan hom telegramme gestuur, wat hy dan geëvalueer en beantwoord het.

Benewens sy taktiese evaluering en advies, het hy ook moreel-godsdienstige ondersteuning in sy telegramme aan die kommando's aan die verskillende fronte gegee. Toe dit gelyk het asof baie Boerekrygers moed verloor het, het Kruger die Natalse en Vrystaatse fronte besoek om die burgers moed in te praat. Teen Mei 1900 het Kruger en die Transvaalse Boeregeneraals se oortuiging dat die oorlog voortgesit moet word, 'n laagtepunt bereik. Die opmars van die Britse troepe het Kruger uiteindelik verplig om na Oos-Transvaal en eventueel na Lourenço Marques uit te wyk, waarvandaan hy na Europa vertrek het om daar die saak van die twee Boererepublieke te probeer bevorder.

Soos uit bostaande oorsig blyk, dek die dokumente wat in hierdie boek byeengebring is nie alleen die hoogtepunte in die lewe van Staatspresident S.J.P. Kruger nie, maar weerspieël dit ook die wel en wee van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek tydens die tweede helfte van die 19de eeu. Elke historikus wat in die toekoms oor Kruger of die ZAR navorsing wil doen, sal verplig wees om hierdie inhoudryke bronnepublikasie te raadpleeg omdat 'n herwaardering van Kruger daarna haas onvermydelik is.

Die publikasie getuig van die deeglikheid waarmee die projek aangepak en afgehandel is. Die seleksie van dokumente wat in hierdie bundel opgeneem moes word, was ongetwyfeld 'n moeilike taak, maar die leser is spoedig daarvan bewus dat die keuses weloorwoë was. Die Afrikaanse vertalings van dokumente wat in Nederlands, Engels en Patriots-Afrikaans geskryf was, is uitstekend gedoen en lees vlot. Die inleidings tot die dokumente wat in die verskillende tydperke in die lewe van Staatspresident Kruger ontstaan het, is bondig, maar verskaf die nodige agtergrond waarteen die dokumente gelees moet word. Waar nodig, is verklarende of verwysende voetnote ingevoeg. *Paul Kruger: Toesprake en Korrespondensie van 1881–1900* is 'n uitsonderlike en waardevolle toevoeging tot die Afrikaanse en Suid-Afrikaanse historiografie.

*O.J.O. Ferreira*  
*Universiteit van Pretoria*

### **Reappraisal of an enigmatic character**

**Kobus du Pisani, Dan Kriek and Chris de Jager (eds), *Jan Smuts: Van Boerseun tot Wêreldverhoog***

Protea Boekhuis, Pretoria, 2017

599 pp

ISBN 978-1-4853-0614-6

R395.00

Jan Christiaan Smuts (1870–1950) is regarded as one of the two most influential South African leaders of the twentieth century, along with Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (1918–2013). While some South Africans regard Smuts as an international statesman, an astute politician, a capable military leader and a brilliant scholar; others maintain that

he was a traitor, a jingo, a racist and even an overzealous servant of the British Empire and imperialism. Regardless of these labels, Smuts remains a noteworthy character to this day. He played a leading role in the South African political landscape from 1902 to 1948. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910. As Minister of Defence, he was crucial in the establishment of the Union Defence Force in 1912 and is regarded as the father of the modern day South African National Defence Force (SANDF). He was actively involved as a combatant and military commander in the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), as well as the First World War (1914–1918) and the Second World War (1939–1945).

Between 1917 and 1919 Smuts was not only a member of the British War Cabinet but also served on the Imperial War Cabinet. He is also the only South African to have held the military rank of field marshal. More importantly, Smuts was a key figure in the peace negotiations after each of these conflicts and helped to create the League of Nations shortly after the end of the First World War. He also helped to establish the British Commonwealth, which, along with the Balfour Declaration of 1926, forever changed the relationship between the United Kingdom and its colonies. Moreover, he played a key role in the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 and wrote the first draft of the preamble to the United Nations Charter. Despite these notable achievements, Smuts also had definite shortcomings, none more so than his warped racial and segregationist policies that had, and continues to have, a lasting impact on the history of South Africa.

In general, the available historiographical works on Smuts are varied and mostly dated. The most recent publications to appear are two books popular books by Richard Steyn, *Jan Smuts: Unafraid of Greatness* (2015),<sup>2</sup> and *Churchill and Smuts: The Friendship* (2017).<sup>3</sup> In 2013, however, Dan Kriek and Chris de Jager approached Kobus du Pisani with the idea of a new work on Smuts. The aim of the book, they argued, would be an academic reappraisal of Smuts from a distinctly Afrikaans point of view. The result of their labours was the publication of *Jan Smuts: Van Boerseun tot Wêreldverhoog* in 2017. This is an edited collection, comprising 21 chapters, with contributions from seventeen different authors. The book is divided into four broad categories.

The first deals with Smuts' contribution to science and academia. Of particular interest are the detailed chapters on Smuts as an intellectual, his passion for botany, and the crucial role he played in the establishment of the University of Pretoria. The second category comprises three key chapters that examine the military Smuts. They discuss his role in the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), as well as his contribution in the First and Second World Wars. The third category consists of eight chapters in which

---

2. R. Steyn, *Jan Smuts: Unafraid of Greatness* (Jonathan Ball Publishers, Cape Town, 2015). The book is also available in Afrikaans as R. Steyn, *Jan Smuts: Afrikaner Sonder Grense* (Jonathan Ball Publishers, Cape Town, 2017).

3. R. Steyn, *Churchill and Smuts: The Friendship* (Jonathan Ball Publishers, Cape Town, 2017). The book is also available in Afrikaans as R. Steyn, *Churchill en Smuts: Die Vriendskap* (Jonathan Ball Publishers, Cape Town, 2017).

Smuts is analysed as a politician. These chapters cover the period from 1898 to the end of the 1940s, during which time Smuts was active in the South African political landscape. The fourth category investigates Smuts as an international statesman and comprises four chapters which provide an unprecedented evaluation of the key role he played in the international arena in the first half of the twentieth century.

The book concludes with a final, overarching chapter by du Pisani, Kriek and de Jager. Here the authors glean several conclusions from the preceding chapters in an attempt to draw together this progressive reappraisal of Smuts. They conclude, as does Hermann Giliomee (cited on pp 23–24) that Smuts has gained more international renown than any other South African with the exception, later, of Nelson Mandela (p 469). Although they agree that statistics do not always tell the whole story, quantitative data suggests that Smuts is in all likelihood the foremost South African head of state since the inception of the Union of South Africa in 1910 (p 482).

The category that deals with Smuts's military acumen was of particular interest, especially from a military history point of view, and warrants further discussion. Fransjohan Pretorius' chapter, which deals with Smuts's role in the Anglo-Boer War, deserves particular mention. The chapter provides a unique insight into Smuts's varying roles during the war. Pretorius succeeds admirably in discussing the transformation of Smuts from state attorney of the fledgling South African Republic in 1899, to his role in active combat and eventually becoming a general in the Boer forces. The part played by General J.H. (Koos) de la Rey (1847–1914) in acting as a military mentor to Smuts is discussed to some extent and provides for interesting reading and academic gist. Pretorius further offers key insights into the strategic vision of Smuts during the war and discusses his leadership in the field in some length – particularly during the invasion of the Cape Colony in 1901.

It is notable that Smuts started collecting loyal followers around him at this time, men such as Jaap van Deventer and Ben Bouwer who remained his faithful followers throughout the First World War campaigns in German South West Africa and German East Africa. Interestingly, Pretorius concludes that this period was the only true anomaly in Smuts's life – a period in which he entertained Afrikaner nationalism and denounced British imperialism.

André Wessels authored the two chapters that address Smuts's military role during the First and Second World Wars. To be frank, these two chapters should be regarded as somewhat of an opportunity missed. I am of the opinion that the editors gave Wessels an unrealistic task and his broad overview of Smuts's military career during the World Wars is to some degree understandable. Of particular concern is the absence of primary archival material in his references, despite the wealth of documentation at the South African National Archives Repository in Pretoria; the Department of Defence Documentation Centre (Military Archives) in Irene; and the National Archives of the United Kingdom in Kew Gardens, London. This begs the question whether these chapters are simply a reworked version of the available secondary sources. There are also some historical mistakes which unfortunately

slipped through the editorial process. Regrettably, the chapters on the World Wars add no new analysis or perspective on the military role which Smuts played and they leave the informed reader with an array of unanswered questions. The final word on the military Smuts has certainly not been written.

Generally speaking, the book is well researched. The majority of the authors consulted a range of private papers and primary archival material supplemented with a range of published material. This is evidenced in the detailed endnotes of the book. The publication also includes a comprehensive bibliography, an invaluable tool for any future historian wishing to research Smuts. The book is also indexed, ensuring ease of access to readers. All in all, *Jan Smuts: Van Boerseun tot Wêreldverhoog* is a welcome addition to the burgeoning literature on Smuts, and it provides a fresh academic perspective on this enigmatic figure. It comes highly recommended and is in a different league when compared to the recent works written for wider readership.

At a recent book launch in Potchefstroom, Kobus du Pisani indicated that Protea is considering an English translation of the book to appear in 2018 – this is welcome news and will add renewed vigour to the academic debate surrounding Smuts.<sup>4</sup> The book, especially when translated, can be considered for inclusion in university course material. Meanwhile, the verdict is still out – was Smuts the greatest Afrikaner, and perhaps even the greatest South African, of all time? Obtain a copy, and judge for yourself.

*Evert Kleynhans*  
*Stellenbosch University*

### **Into a great historian's workshop**

**Hermann Giliomee, *Historian: An Autobiography***

Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2016

344 pp

ISBN 978-0-624-06682

R388.00

The late John Clive, author of the outstanding biography *Macaulay: The Shaping of the Historian*, suggested that rather than studying dense theories on historiography, students should read the works and study the lives of great historians. These books, he suggested, would provide measure and inspiration for them. Clive was convinced that there is something uniquely instructive for the apprentice historian to be taken into a great historian's workshop, observing him or her labouring with the raw materials. They would then realise, wrote Clive, that even the greatest masters of the craft struggle, because the writing of history is hard work at any level.<sup>5</sup> *Historian: An Autobiography* would have gladdened Clive's heart because Hermann Giliomee makes it possible for students to enter his "workshop" and observe his guiding principles and

---

4. An English translation of the book is already under way (Editor).

5. J. Clive, *Not by Fact Alone: Essays on the Writing and Reading of History* (Alfred A. Knopf, London, 1989), pp 103, 262.

methodology as he writes about the past in a period of turmoil, violence and dramatic political change in South Africa.

With *Historian*, Giliomee weaves together the story of his life during the rise and fall of Afrikaner nationalism, and the apartheid state. What the book reflects is that through his historical works, columns in newspapers, but especially *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, an Afrikaans opinion magazine which he founded, Giliomee has played a leading role in convincing many Afrikaners that apartheid was a repressive and self-destructive regime, and to inspire them to fight for freedom for all in South Africa. In doing so he helped to prepare the way for reforms that brought the end of the apartheid state. In the process, he produced outstanding historical works such as *Die Kaap tydens die Eerste Britse Bewind* (1974); *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652–1820* (1979); *The Rise and Fall of Afrikaner Power* (1979); *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (2003), and *The Last Afrikaner Leaders: A Crucial Test of Power* (2012).

The cornerstone of Giliomee's success as a historian is that for him the writing of history is an "informed narrative", akin to a fine novel. The historian must be a good story-teller with the development of a narrative line, the fleshing out of characters, the highlighting of irony, confusion and unintended consequences. The big question he asked himself at the start of his career was from which perspective he would he tell his story. Here he mirrored the approach that the late Tony Judt had articulated, namely that people trust those who are upfront about the perspective from which they come, and from which they tell their story, rather than those who pretend that they are totally objective.

Inspired by Van Wyk Louw's dictum that you love your people not because of their greatness, but because of their "misery", Giliomee was determined that his Afrikaans background would be a resource, rather than a stumbling block. Readers would be left in no doubt about the "corner" from which he would tell his story. All his books are written as someone who stood on the margins of the Afrikaner community with the mission to understand his fellow Afrikaners, and to explain them to others. To do so he was determined to write with empathy and understanding, but without condoning or explaining away injustices perpetrated by Afrikaners. Here the statement made by H.D.F. Kitto, a scholar of slavery in ancient Greece, that "to understand is not necessarily to pardon, but there is no harm in trying to understand" (p 212), served as an example for Giliomee. However, he would discover that in a politically divided society, struggling to come to terms with its turbulent past, this is a challenging task because to apologise is so much easier than understanding and explaining.

For Giliomee the essence of historical understanding lies in being attuned to complexity, context, causality, and to change over time. The challenge for the historian is to capture the complexities, the moral dilemmas and the momentous choices of the past. And here he heeded the advice of the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, by putting himself at a point in the past where the known factors seem to permit different outcomes. Historians, according to Giliomee, must ask themselves why there was a

specific outcome, and that it is crucial to bear in mind that the unexpected tends to be the norm – and that few things are as important as the character of leaders.

An important factor for Giliomee's success as an historian is his willingness to collaborate with historians whose ideological perspective differs from his own. An example was the time he spent working with Rick Elphick while producing *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652–1820* on early Cape Society. Giliomee was surprised by the arrogance and venom the radicals showed in attacking liberal historians at the English-medium universities. Working with Elphick taught him more about historiography than all his classes as a student at Stellenbosch. And in the process, they produced a book that had a profound influence on young Afrikaner historians.

The most striking part of *Historian* is the section dealing with Giliomee's ostracism for refusing to trim his sails to prevailing political winds. For him history writing is only of value when the historian does his utmost to establish the truth, and refuses to put this truth at the service of a political ideal. This meant that his years at the University of Stellenbosch, where history had to be in the service of Afrikaner survival, were turbulent. He was hounded as a dangerous leftist radical, "a snake in our midst", who polluted the minds of students with dangerous ideas. Floors van Jaarsveld condemned him as being influenced by Marxism for daring to differ from Afrikaner nationalist interpretations. The vindictiveness and pettiness he had to endure at Stellenbosch makes for uncomfortable reading. On one occasion Giliomee had no choice but to resort to legal means to protect his reputation as an historian. In 1983, after years of being denied promotion to the rank of associate professor, despite his stature as an internationally respected historian, he felt that he had no choice but to resign, and to accept a post at the University of Cape Town. As the apartheid state crumbled, his critical stance on the policies of the African National Congress, and the intolerance of radical students who denied the right of free speech to those they disagreed with on the campus, led to him being condemned as an ultra-conservative Afrikaner nationalist. Undaunted, Giliomee proceeded to write history on his own terms, producing his masterpiece, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (2003).

*Historian* is an exceptional autobiography by a master craftsman, providing an inspiring example for young apprentice historians. Following the methodology of Giliomee they will be able to cope with the slow and difficult process of writing vigorous and independent history based on intellectual rigour. But more crucially, he sets an example of the moral courage needed to maintain the ideal that historical writing must never be in service of a political ideology.

*F.A. Mouton*  
*University of South Africa*

## **Welcome contribution to scholarship on Zimbabwean land seizures**

**Charles Laurie, *The Land Reform Deception: Political Opportunism in Zimbabwe's Land Seizure Era***

Oxford University Press, New York, 2016

398 pp

ISBN 978-0-199-39829-4

R700.00

Charles Laurie's book *The Land Reform Deception* is a welcome contribution to the debate on land reform in Zimbabwe. As the title of the book suggests, Laurie interrogates and examines the land reform process in the context of political opportunism. To construct this argument, he draws from an extensive set of primary evidence that includes wide ranging interviews with farmers and government officials, as well as surveys. He presents these in a well-argued 398-page monograph. The book is divided into ten chapters and begins with an overview of the land seizure era and concludes with an examination of the impact of the land reform on commercial agriculture production.

The central question that Laurie seeks to answer was whether the land seizures represented a genuine desire by the ZANU PF government to redistribute land to the landless majority of black Zimbabweans and in the process, correct the colonial land imbalances, or whether it was just part of a large-scale political strategy and grandstanding exercise by the ruling party. To answer these questions and more, Charles Laurie takes the reader through an intricate investigation of the genesis of the land invasions and tries to draw the connection, or lack thereof, of the farm seizures and the hand of the government in the whole process. He explains how the government almost lost control of its initial plan of farm takeovers, a reason which he gives as partly explaining the violence that rapidly took centre stage in the invasions.

To place his story in its proper historical context, Laurie's first chapter gives an overview of the historical trajectory that offset the commandeering of commercial farms and this explanation goes a long way towards establishing the significant political and socioeconomic dynamics that prefaced the takeovers. His second chapter deals with the key protagonists of the land invasions, the war veterans, and tries to provide pointers that explain their role, motivation and most importantly, their relationship with Robert Mugabe. For Laurie, Mugabe's relationship with the war veterans holds the explanation for the direction that the land invasions took.

Chapter Three explains government action on the decision for farm takeovers and discusses the crucial turning point at which, Laurie argues, the government almost lost control. For Laurie, in as much as war veterans were not "operating completely independent of the government's political objectives or those of the state security services" they put the government in a tight squeeze and it lost control of its initial plan to seize a few farms for political mileage. Instead the exercise escalated into a full scale, countrywide violent takeover of land (p 57). What is important is that Laurie does not



make these claims in a vacuum but provides compelling evidence explaining exactly how the government lost control of its original plan and how those orchestrating the takeovers were responsible for the subsequent, rapid escalation of violence and land-grabbing.

The pivotal argument that brings together the book's core hypothesis is contained in Chapter Four which examines the tactics set up by the farm invaders especially their modus operandi in selecting and taking over farms. Laurie puts together a detailed description and explanation of the kind of people who were involved in particular farm seizures and how the nature and character of the leading individuals in an invading group determined the actions taken. The chapter also chronicles the violence of the farm seizures, competition for resources among farm invader groups, and attempts by white farmers to enter into deals with invaders to protect themselves and their properties.

In Chapters Five and Six, Laurie discusses the two key objectives of the farm invaders, namely to suppress the opposition and to seize land and agricultural property. For him, the first objective was achieved through targeting farm workers and farmers; and the second aim was accomplished mainly through unmitigated violence. The last three chapters discuss the emergence of extortion and the protection schemes that were organised; the realisation by the farm invaders that there was an opportunity to abuse the whole exercise for profit; farmer eviction methods which chronicles the intimidation, fear and coercion the farmers were subjected to; and the overall impact the whole exercise had on agriculture in Zimbabwe.

All in all, Laurie's book is a moving account of the controversies of Zimbabwe's land reform exercise. It is well-timed, informative and accounts for the political nexus of the land reform programme as opposed to the much extolled story propagated by the Mugabe led government that land reform was designed to "redress colonial land imbalances". The major strengths of *The Land Reform Deception* lie in its attention to detail as it weaves a thread through the complexities of the land reform exercise. Laurie puts forward a very convincing argument that it was never the intention of Mugabe and his government to carry out such massive land redistribution. The book also makes a strong case of how the ZANU (PF) government lost control over what was supposed to be a small scale movement instigated by the desire to gain political mileage. In his attempt to demonstrate and downplay the intentions and claims of ZANU PF with regard to the land reform, however, there are instances where Laurie tends to overstretch the point. However, that is perhaps to be expected when handling a topic that is as contentious as this one. The book is a refreshing read, well researched and with evidence that it was written by someone with detailed knowledge of the turbulent story of Zimbabwe's land question.

*Joyline Takudzwa Kufandirori*  
*University of the Free State*

**A must read for development professionals and scholars**

**Marc Epprecht, *Welcome to Greater Edendale: Histories of Environment, Health, and Gender in an African City***

McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal and Kingston, 2016

360 pp

ISBN 9780773547742

\$31.46

Marc Epprecht examines South Africa's unsettling continuities between pre-colonial, colonial, apartheid, and post-apartheid policies in an attempt to reconstruct the country's environmental history. The author hints that the themes referenced in the subtitle are key to the historical narrative. Thus, he studies contestation over land, housing, sanitation, public health, and the meaning of development in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. The book is divided into seven chapters. The first introduces key theoretical concepts and chapter outlines. The second and third make gestures towards the goal of decolonising knowledge about Msunduzi. These chapters show how the local environment has been seriously misrepresented and used for political purposes in the process of reconstructing the eco-health history of the city. The fourth critiques Maynard Swanson's theory of sanitation syndrome in the historiography of African cities using the "native village" debate of Pietermaritzburg as a case study. The fifth and sixth chapters are devoted to an investigation of colonial development interventions in Edendale through a close examination of some key decisions that ultimately led to the abandonment of the liberal promise in favour of so-called separate development and racial zoning. The concluding chapter documents industrialisation, environmental activism and health from the period of apartheid to democracy in South Africa. This book will certainly be regarded as a classic in the literature on Greater Edendale.

Alfred Crosby in *Ecological Imperialism* (1986); Timothy Brook in *Vermeer's Hat* (2007) and John Weaver in *The Great Land Rush* (2003) discuss globalisation and imperialism comparatively and argue that the success of European imperialists in the colonial field was neither ecological nor political, but rather an inseparable combination of the two. Like in the New World, Africa's environmental and health problems cannot be fully understood without reference to the global influence of the Europeans. Following this line of reasoning, Epprecht argues that globalisation, industrial capitalism, bad governance, poor regulation of institutions, infrastructural and technological advances (such as adoption of the plough) and non-conformity of Africans to the colonial notion of proper urban life led to segregation, health and environmental crisis in South African peri-urban centres. Since the 1960s, environmental, health and institutional problems facing African states have in many cases grown worse. In order to proffer solutions to these challenges, some post-colonial scholars engage in an oversimplification of the complex legacies of colonialism which Terence Ranger refers to as patriotic history.

This white/black dualism (assessing all colonial decisions through the lens of race to the neglect of diverse local perspectives) that was once used to mobilise opposition to colonial hegemony still lingers on. It largely obscures the failures of most post-colonial government in Africa. Epprecht refutes this popular crisis narrative of most post-colonial and post-apartheid scholars on African environmental crises by building his argument on a constructive critique of Maynard Swanson's concept of the "sanitation syndrome". Swanson attributed the Europeans' segregationist policy during colonial rule in Africa to the bacteriology of the late 19th century which linked environmental sanitation to health, i.e. infection of whites by diseased blacks. Epprecht repudiates this perpetuating generalisation in his local historical studies of Edendale (history from below) which treats Africans as active agents in constructing meaningful life for themselves rather than being passive victims of colonialism. This approach not only offers an opportunity for understanding contemporary problems in Africa, but also addresses national and sub-national environmental crises.

During colonial rule, European administrators in Africa were inextricably drawn into confronting Africans as social beings. Fredrick Cooper emphasises this view in his 1989 article entitled "From Free Labor to Family Allowances: Labor and African Society in Colonial Discourse" where he argues that the colonial state tried to induce Africans to become disciplined wage workers and then contain conflicts that unleashed in places of work and urban residence. As such, many coloured people became landowners in cities across Africa in the late nineteenth century.

However, Africans' non-conformity to colonial notion of proper urban life such as disturbing noise, fires, animal smells, and bare breasts, among others, led to conflict with the colonialists. Brushing aside Swanson's sanitation thesis, Epprecht demonstrates Africans' level of moral decadence which included illicit brewing, uninhibited drunkenness, thieving and the problem of loose African women which had become increasingly apparent in cities. Bringing gender and health issues to the fore, the author argues that the emergence of shebeens along with shanties where beer and sex were sold in towns as early as 1880s, undermined the integrity of colonial urban spaces, women's health and labour productivity. According to Toyin Falola in *Politics and Economy in Ibadan, 1893–1945* (1989), it was these similar social problems that informed the British Vagrancy Act in colonial Nigeria. Far from expelling their labour force from these towns, the colonialists initiated the native village debate in order to relocate "advanced" natives into an African community where they would serve as a model of a stable working class for other Africans. While this argument may be valid in explaining away sanitation thesis as the cause of segregation in most of colonial Africa because some educated Africans continue to live in cities under tightened residential codes, the term Native Village (in Pietermaritzburg) in its own context not only reveals colonial racism and prejudice against "undisciplined" Africans, but also explains Africans as people in need of European "civilisation" and tutelage.

Environmental and health crises such as slums and diseases in Edendale, which led to the formation of the Local Health Commission (LHC) in 1943, necessitated attempts to employ radical social medicine to provide clean water, healthy homes, and

curative medicine in the town. Epprecht uses women and gender discourse to complicate modernist development projects in pre-apartheid Edendale. The author shows that women's fear of state intrusion in their private affairs was exploited by men as a manipulative political tool to reject the development projects that LHC thought was best for them. Similar to the World Bank-CIDA led Thaba-Tseka "white-elephant" project in Lesotho which James Ferguson describes in his *Anti-Politics Machine* (1990) the LHC's ignorance of African cultural sensitivity to private issues fuelled disbelief in the initiative. Perhaps, if a woman was appointed in place of Thomas Wadley to lead the LHC team, the suspicion of Edendale women to questions about their private sexual and medical issues might not have been a setback for the commission's good intentions. Be that as it may, transition to less intrusive and curative medicine which provided hospital, piped water and mass immunisation to the Africans shows how most ill-conceived development interventions often failed in contemporary Africa.

A further critique of Glen Elder's *Malevolent Geographies* (2003) and Jennifer Beningfield's *Imaginative Entitlement* (2006) ideas as impediment to contemporary environmental and social justice in post-apartheid South Africa gives guidance to present-day struggles for social justice. Having demonstrated in the sixth chapter of the book how intense internal (LHC Advisory Board) and external (Edendale residents and the apartheid government) pressure from the 1940s to 1970s reversed the LHC's developmental progress in Greater Edendale, the author submits that economic growth has occurred at the expense of the health and environment of Africans. The book contributes immensely to the modern African challenges of social justice and as such, is a must read for development professionals and scholars.

*Adebisi David Alade*  
*McMaster University*

### **Painstaking and meticulous scholarship**

#### **PR Kumaraswamy, *Squaring the Circle: Mahatma Gandhi and the Jewish National Home***

KW Publishers, New Delhi, 2018

234 pp

ISBN 978-93-87324-06-0

R172.00

What was Mahatma Gandhi's understanding of, and attitude toward, the Jews, Jewish nationalism and the project to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine? Mainstream history books tell us that though sympathetic towards the Jews, Gandhi opposed the Zionist idea of establishing a Jewish national home in Palestine. This he found to be morally unacceptable. Indeed, one of the most widely quoted statements of Gandhi on Palestine emanating from 1938 was that, "... Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English and France to the French..." (p 207). In this well-researched and erudite book, however, PR Kumaraswamy, takes on this conventional wisdom. He points out that Gandhi's positions regarding the Jews, Jewish

nationalism and Israel have been more complex than commonly understood. There were shifts and changes, subtle differences, dualities, and above all, inconsistencies in Gandhi's position with regards to a Jewish homeland in Palestine. For instance, after his 1938 statement he also admitted that Jews have "a good case", "a prior claim" to Palestine, and was prepared to admit "the natural desire of the Jews to find a home in Palestine".

What explains these divergent positions of Gandhi on a Jewish homeland in Palestine? According to the author two reasons account for it. First, Gandhi lacked sufficient understanding of Judaism and Jewish history. Disregarding their nationalist consciousness since the eighteenth century, Gandhi looked at the Jews merely as a religious community and not as a national group. Second, the Jewish/Palestinian question was secondary to both Gandhi and the Indian Congress Party. Their primary objective was Hindu-Muslim unity in India as they agitated for an independent state. As such, the Gandhian/Congress position on a state for Jews in Palestine was seen through a domestic lens. The rejection of a Jewish homeland in Palestine played well amongst Muslim Indians and if this was the price to pay for Hindu-Muslim unity, it was a price that both Gandhi and Congress were willing to pay. In addition, as Indians struggled to overthrow the yoke of British colonialism, they viewed Jews as collaborating with British imperialism in Palestine. Concomitantly, the Jewish cause for a homeland was viewed with antipathy. This antipathy on the part of Gandhi and Congress was to cast a long shadow over Indian foreign policy. Post-independence India was to consistently adopt a pro-Palestinian position in international affairs and formal diplomatic relations between India and Israel was only established in 1992.

Interesting as this is, the real genius of the book is exposed when the author turns to historiography. Why is it that scholars of this period of history are aware of Gandhi's 1938 statement that Palestine belongs to the Arabs and not to his subsequent statements, alluded to above, which would suggest that he had changed his mind? Here is where the painstaking and meticulous scholarship underpinning this remarkable book becomes self-evident. Much of what historians know about Gandhi emanate from the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, a 100-volume study published by the Ministry of Culture of the Government of India in 1958. When writing this book, however, PR Kumaraswamy also made use of the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem. In the process he noted many omissions in the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* which was supposed to be comprehensive. These omissions included a meeting between Gandhi and Nahaum Sokolov, President of the World Zionist Organization, on 15 October 1931, as well as a meeting between Selig Brodetsky, a member of the Zionist Executive, and Gandhi in London. The Jewish Agency for Palestine sent Immanuel Olsvanger, a Sanskrit scholar, to India in September 1936 where he met with Gandhi and other Indian independence leaders. Moreover, there was correspondence in 1937 between Gandhi and Chaim Weizmann, the former President of the World Zionist Organization, who went on to become the first President of Israel. None of this appeared in the *Collected Works*.

These omissions were deliberate. One of Gandhi's disciples of 27 years was Pyarelal. He was given the task of compiling the *Collected Works* by the Indian Government. Towards the end of his life, he however admitted to suppressing certain materials including Gandhi's later views on Israel. Gandhi's apparent change of stance on a Jewish homeland did not fit well with the political project of Congress and those materials consequently had to be excluded from the *Collected Works*. In bringing this omitted history to light, Kumaraswamy has done a great service to future scholars researching this fascinating period of history. In the process, a more nuanced perspective of Gandhi's view on a Jewish homeland in Palestine is provided. The book is a veritable *tour de force* and a must read for historians attempting to understand India-Israel relations.

*Hussein Solomon*  
*University of the Free State*

### **Exploring state capture in South Africa**

**Pieter-Louis Myburgh, *The Republic of Gupta: A Story of State Capture***

Penguin Books, Johannesburg, 2017

306 pp

ISBN 9781776090891

R260.00

In recent years, state capture has entered the political discourse of South Africa. This after a powerful and connected business elite entered the South African political arena and succeeded in capturing key institutions of the state and repurposing them in ways that subvert the constitutional mandate established in 1994. It is imperative to note that systemic corruption/state capture holds serious repercussions for the country's political and economic fabric. Pieter-Louis Myburgh's book, *The Republic of Gupta: A Story of State Capture*, unpacks the degree and extent to which institutionalised corruption has influenced the functionality of the South African state.

State capture, at present in South Africa, occurs when the economy becomes trapped in a cycle in which policy and institutional reforms necessary to enable and improve governance are systematically undermined by collusion between companies and state officials who extract substantial private gains. Myburgh notes that state capture in South Africa represents the case of a political conviction that the formal rules of the game are biased and unfair towards specific constituencies and as such, it is legitimate to break them. Following on from this contention, institutionalised corruption has been normalised and is not seen as inherently negative, or potentially dangerous, for the proper functioning of the state. As a result, shadow networks exist and function with impunity alongside established bureaucratic processes.

The author briefly depicts a picture of the Gupta brothers, Ajay, Atul and Rajesh who relocated to South Africa just before the country's democratic transition in 1994. The family control swathes of business interests and have become known for capturing President Jacob Zuma, Government ministers and crucial segments of the state.

Additionally, the author reveals a disturbing allegation by linking Atul Gupta with the previous head of state, Thabo Mbeki; with Atul having served on Mbeki's so-called secret council. Myburgh writes about this secretive think-tank which Mbeki described as a focus group that enabled him to stay in touch with the views of the South African population. The author thus argues that the Guptas first entered the South African political arena during the Mbeki era, but went on to establish themselves as an integral part of government relations during the Zuma administration. Indirectly, the author appears to assert that Mbeki first brought the Guptas into state affairs and should therefore shoulder some of the blame for the institutional decay the family has exacted during the subsequent Zuma administration.

For those who have carefully followed the State Capture probe led by the former Public Protector, Adv. Thuli Madonsela, as it unfolded in the aftermath of the axing of former Finance Minister, Nhlanhla Nene in December 2015, the book may be a disappointment. Much of what the book discusses – allegations, hearsay, ministers' claims of being offered millions to bend state machinery to the will of the Guptas – is already in the public domain. A stronger historical analysis would have enhanced the delivery and impact of this work. The African National Congress (ANC) has a past characterised by patronage, loyalism and nepotism. The book would have been more valuable if it had made links between the past and the present and a chapter outlining continuities with the ANC in exile would have been welcome.

Nonetheless, the book succeeds in emphasising the fact that state capture in South Africa is not solely about the Guptas and how they have managed to capture key institutions of the state. It also highlights the leadership crisis that South Africa has been experiencing for the past decade and which has enabled state capture. The work is recommended for South Africans who wish to “connect the dots” and to understand the degree and extent of state capture under the Zuma administration.

*Michaela Elsbeth Martin*  
*University of the Free State*