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Afrikaners in Angola 1928 – 1975

**(Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2009, 666 pp., map, photos,
bibl., index. ISBN: 978-1-86919-340-9)**

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Considering the limited availability of information on the life and circumstances of Afrikaners in Angola as well as other African countries, *Afrikaners in Angola 1928 – 1975* offers a welcome addition to the historian's research collection. There is no doubt about the need for this publication, for which Afrikaans seems an appropriate language. This, however, limits the readership to Afrikaans-speaking researchers, and may also exclude researchers interested in comparative studies with other white minority communities who stayed on in formerly-colonised African countries. *Afrikaners in Angola 1928 – 1975* offers excellent descriptions and analyses of interviews and other data collected, making it valuable for contemporary comparisons.

It consists of 5 parts covering 17 chapters, preceded by a background sketch in which Stassen explains the rationale, aim and structure. Although the focus of the different parts is explained on pp. 25-26, Stassen addresses Parts 1-3 with no mention of parts 4 and 5. While the latter is briefer than earlier parts, I would expect the background to present the full scenario of what the reader can expect, as well as an explanation on how each part contributes to the overall aim of depicting the life of the Afrikaner community in Angola during the period 1928 to 1975. Preferably, the focus of each part should also be mentioned in the headings of the table of contents.

The chapters in parts 1 and 2 report the role of the physical environment, namely geomorphology, climate, plant life, and animal life. Historical developments in Angola are important, and these are divided into seven periods with overlapping dates as well as some gaps in the periods covered, namely Portuguese occupation (1576-1839), slavery and forced labour (1486-1961), colonisation of inland Angola (1839-1910), Angola and the Portuguese Republic (1910-1926), Angola and *Estado Novo* (1933-1961), the fight for freedom (1961-1975), and Angola immediately after the revolution (1974-1975). Although the focus falls on the period 1928 to 1975, it would have been useful to explain, as part of the historical review, that some Afrikaners returned after 1975 (p. 397).

Angola's population is described variously in Chapter 3 as the native population, the white population, Germans, other whites, as well as protestant missionaries and teaching (instead of teachers). Although offering an interesting overview, the choice of these categories and how they relate to each other is not self-evident to the reader. The background to Part 3 is offered in Chapter 4, and explores the economy of Angola in terms of agriculture, animal husbandry, mining, and other industries. Against this background, the Afrikaners' involvement and life in Angola are portrayed in nine chapters. The Dorslandtreks of 1874 to 1928 set the introduction in Chapter 5. In 1928, many trekkers left Angola, although some stayed on. The reasons for doing so, the number of those staying, those returning to Angola after 1928, those leaving Angola after 1928, their geographic distribution in Angola, and where they stayed are discussed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 7 examines the economic situation of those Afrikaners who stayed on in Angola. For the period 1928 to 1958, their interest in independent farming, the agricultural situation, mixed farming, animal farming, hunting, plantations, mining, transportation, etc. are sketched. This chapter also

addresses the scale of poverty, the reasons for poverty, efforts to address poverty, and the Afrikaner in wealthier circumstances.

Chapters 8 to 13 each present a specific aspect of the life and circumstances of Afrikaners in Angola between 1928 and 1958. These include: material culture (i.e. housing, clothes, means of transport and food), spiritual culture (i.e. Afrikaans reading matter, radio broadcasts, the Afrikaans language, festivities and social gatherings and superstition), education, religious life, relationships with other communities, and social conditions. These chapters cover slightly more than one hundred pages. Since this is the essence of Afrikaner existence in Angola for this period, and because Stassen explains that there is not much information available elsewhere, greater depth in discussion and a wider range of aspects would have been useful. Other aspects (specifically depicted as sub-headings) that I think may add value include family life, attitude to law, legislation and government, political awareness, and health and medicine.

The repatriation of Afrikaners in Angola is associated with the year 1958, and several causes are noted in Chapter 14. Most were repatriated to South West Africa, some moved to South Africa, and a few stayed behind in Angola. Although offering good descriptive value, this topic can be supplemented by a comparison with repatriation in other contexts – perhaps in a future study.

The life of Afrikaners in Angola for the period 1958 to 1975 is portrayed briefly in Chapter 15 with references to the reasons for staying after 1958, new arrivals, numbers and distribution, economic circumstances, education, the Afrikaner's spiritual world, work done by the church, and the fight for freedom from 1961 to 1975. The flight of the last Afrikaners from Angola in 1975, described in Chapter 16, covers only 8 pages. These chapters offer information not available elsewhere, and studies linking these findings with those in other contexts will enrich historical research on this topic.

In chapter 17, Stassen sums up the value of the preceding chapters. Considering the limited amount of research on Afrikaners in Angola, and the limitations in access to resources on this topic, a fuller discussion would have added value. The three-page discussion, with very little reference to present day South African society could have been expanded with suggestions for further studies. References to Afrikaners staying in other African countries or comparison with other nationalities in previously colonised African countries would also have been interesting. As Stassen notes in the preface, no historian can expect to have the last say (p. 13), hence the need to point to further

research, especially its value for South Africa today.

Useful supporting information is captured in the five appendices. These include geographic names, Afrikaners staying after 1928, Afrikaner women *married* to Portuguese men by 1928 and staying behind in Angola, Afrikaner women *living* with Portuguese men by 1928 and staying behind in Angola, and Afrikaners living in Angola round about 1958. Notes on how the data was collected and reference to sources of information would have been useful. The detailed index succeeds in making the contents accessible, as does the extensive list of footnotes. In spite of the limitations pointed out in this review, *Afrikaners in Angola 1928 – 1975* is a very important source of historical information on a little-known topic, written in an easily accessible and gripping style.