

in aanmerking geneem word, is hierdie 'n bydrae met heelwat verdienste. Daar is baie waardevolle inligting in die boek opgesluit en dit kan in hoë mate as "baanbrekerswerk" bestempel word.

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MARTIN HALL. *The changing past : farmers, kings and traders in southern Africa, 200-1860*. (First paperback edition. Volume 3 of "The People of South Africa" series). David Philip : Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1987. 147 pp. Illus. R29,95 (exclusive). ISBN 0 86486 063 X.

There has always been a tendency to portray preliterate South African society by referring to the indigenous peoples and providing them with a geographical location. Possibly some reference would be made to economies based on archaeological revelations of technology and crafts. Generally, however, the image that emerged was one of fairly static and stagnant communities that awaited the arrival of colonists to give these societies a dynamic element. An even easier route to follow was that of explaining the African presence here in terms of the Bantu-speaker from the north. Similarly the present-day absence of the Khoikhoi and San is explained away by the "open season" on the San and the innate destructive capacity of the Khoikhoi, coupled with the depredations of disease. Thus the way is cleared for what many, until recently, have seen as the central force in South African history: the conflict between Boer and Briton with the Africans as passive bystanders, who had little more than nuisance value.

Martin Hall does not adopt these comfortable assumptions. In a synthesis of a wide-ranging selection of archaeological literature he disabuses the reader of these standpoints and suggests that South African society in the period under discussion was a continuously evolving one. Equally important is that the division of South African preliterate history into, for example, the Stone and Iron ages has scant justification. The 'Age divisions' would imply an abrupt change based on technological change that had originated outside the geographical confines of the subcontinent, whereas the 'rubbish heaps' of past society, "always a profitable source for the archaeologist", would show a far more gradual transition from one age to another, as modes and relations of production — a means to power — changed.

In addition to the aspects referred to in the preceding paragraph, Hall shows that ancient kingdoms such as Mapungubwe, Zimbabwe and Mutapa, apart from being of local origin and their general significance to southern Africa itself, were also vital links in the Indian Ocean trade network that stretched across to India and China.

However, unlike so many others concerned with economic factors in the shaping of society, Hall comes back to the point that there is a reciprocity in economic relations, even when there is a coercive element present. He makes frequent use of the argument that these economic links did not only exist within a specific community, but that, in some instances, they stretched across the subcontinent and beyond. Equally important is that he shows that the economic relationships were not constant but in a state of flux as the locus of power shifted from one region to another, aided by environmental factors, changing technology and economic bases, as well as fluctuations in commodity prices.

Again, unlike many of those researchers who see the past in terms of racial conflict, Hall does not see slavery as a purely European invention. He points out that the Mozambican *prazeros*, " 'transfrontiersmen' — people who had crossed the frontier of their own cultural area, often taking up a new way of life", set the tone for a new type of slavery in the region, aimed at creating a large military power base to establish political control and thus dominate trade. In doing so they established a 'tradition' that was to be emulated by the likes of Shaka, Soshangane and Mzilikazi.

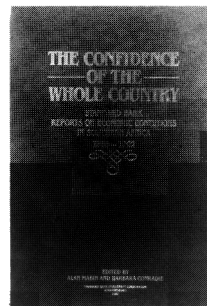
Although the author has entitled the third chapter "Origins : unwrapping the Iron Age package", one feels that in fact only the outline of the package has been revealed, and that a good deal more 'unwrapping' is required. Nevertheless the book does open exciting possibilities for the historian to explain the current changes as the successors to changes that had manifested themselves around 200 AD and earlier. One is also, unfortunately, left with the feeling that the communities of the archaeological past merely exist as types rather than as people. But this can probably be explained in terms of a lack of sources to properly document this aspect. Even this limitation is however mitigated by attempts to indicate social stratification within early society through archaeological excavations of towns, which show that different standards of housing and consumption existed, in turn possibly reflecting class distinctions within a specific community.

It is interesting to note that a good part of the early chapters is devoted to placing archaeological writing in its ideological context. Hall's critique of writing predisposed towards ideology will prompt the reaction amongst historians that they have heard it all before. This will lead them to contend,

correctly, from their perspective that this is superfluous, and that his arguments have been far more exhaustively and cogently made in the debate surrounding South African historiography.

Despite these flaws the book competently outlines southern Africa's preliterate past and should thus prove a valuable aid to historians seeking to place their work in the broader context of the changing past, and to those involved in teaching a history course which deals with this era.

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A. MABIN and B. CONRADIE (eds). *The confidence of the whole country : Standard Bank reports on economic conditions in southern Africa 1865-1902*. Standard Bank Investment Corporation : Johannesburg, 1987. 547 pp. Illus. R59,95 (exclusive). ISBN 0 620 11467 3.

This de luxe hardcover was produced to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the Standard Bank in South Africa and "make available to a wider audience" some of the material in the bank's archives. As the title suggests, the book is a collection of contemporary reports on the state of the South African economy between 1865 and 1902. The 'banker's-eye-view' of the economy results in a realistic, businesslike, yet conservative assessment of current events.

The editors, researcher Alan Mabin and Standard Bank archivist Barbara Conradie, have done an excellent job in selecting appropriate snippets from the reports of the bank's general manager in South Africa to the head office in London. In general, the extracts are left to stand alone and tell their own story. Only where absolutely necessary, have the editors linked extracts with appropriate background detail not evident from the reports themselves.

The four decades covered by the book have been divided into nine sections which each relate to specific periods of economic ebb and flow. The sections range from "the very throes of the crisis" in the 1860s to "a country convulsed in war" between 1899 and 1902. The editors set the scene for each section in a brief introduction. As the economy expanded, the reports become increasingly detailed as each of the regions in southern Africa fell within the bank's sphere of interest. The focal point of individual reports also reflect the changing importance of the various sectors of the economy. Initially wool and sugar are the centre of interest but they give way to diamonds which, in turn, give way to gold.

As the editors point out in their introduction, the book "will reward even the most casual reader, who wishes merely to dip into its pages" (p. vii). But the book will be most appreciated by students of history and economic history, both as a collection of primary source material and as a guide to the type of information available in the Standard Bank archives. It will also save many the strain of ploughing through and deciphering deceptively neat 19th century copperplate handwriting. The comprehensive index is yet another boon to any researcher. However, it should be noted that the index is not flawless: for example, the reference to the Jameson Raid, supposedly on page 379, is actually on page 397.

The confidence of the whole country is a useful tool for providing eminently quotable quotes to brighten up any piece on the South African economy between the depths of the wool crisis and the end of the Anglo-Boer War.

In the reports economic developments are always dealt with from a banker's, generally conservative, point of view. A case in point is the formation of Rhodes's De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd in 1888 to monopolize diamond mining in South Africa. In the opinion of the Standard Bank manager in Kimberley, Rhodes and his associates "will never be able to realise more than the market prices for their output, nor will it pay them to withhold sales for any length of time: the loss of interest would in our opinion be too costly a process to be indulged in for long" (p. 235). But then bankers are destined to be a brake on rampant entrepreneurs.

The material in the book has been well chosen and provides a useful insight into contemporary thinking on the state of the South African economy. Unfortunately the topic is broad and thus only the important events receive attention. But each report is usefully broken down into regions and topics relevant at the time. As a result a reader with an interest in, for example, the Cape Colony or railways, can easily find the relevant sections of each report.

This collection of primary source material provides a wealth of information. However, as is the case with all edited primary material, the usefulness of the information depends on what the researcher is looking for and the skill of the editors in choosing what to omit. No book of this kind can be all things to all people.

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