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François-Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar. *Histoire de l'Afrique du Sud.* Paris: Seuil, 2006. Maps. 431 pp. EUR 23.75 (paper), ISBN 978-2-02-048003-1.

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A History of South Africa in French

François-Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar's synthesis represents a salutary effort to sum up the increasing academic literature on the history of South Africa and to make it available for a French-speaking public not necessarily aware of the more recent progress in the historiography of the region. Former syntheses in French on the history of the country are either outdated or limited in scope, covering only the more recent period or supporting old racist apartheid clichés (a few marginal scholars in French academic circles continue to support these claims).[1] The book under review merges a small but growing academic literature produced in French with classical as well as more innovative pieces of work produced in English-speaking countries. A set of well-designed maps, a chronology, and an index (not so common for many French publishers) make the book a practical tool for teaching. Furthermore, it is published at the right time as history of Africa since 2010 is part of the secondary school syllabus in France.

Not only does this work fill the gap of a long-awaited synthesis in French, but it also deals with three imperatives that the author presents as innovative. First, it conveys the necessity to deal with a *longue durée* analysis that did not start with the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope by European travelers. Second, the author wishes to write a history of South Africans that includes a connected history of all groups instead of a separate history of black and white people. Although these two points may not be too original since they have reached a consensus among historians, it is a merit of this book to extensively cover developments prior to the fifteenth century and include convincing analysis in each of its parts of the uneven consequences of black and white "encounters." The third imperative, mostly successful as well, is to present a history of South Africa organized around a few topical issues without ignoring the importance of chronology.

The book is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 on the history of naming is useful for discovering the historically contingent political meanings behind official and ordinary names in the country: this includes proper location names (such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, town and city names); more common ones (white, Afrikaner, Boer, coloured, black); and the white naming of black people and their change over time (Hottentot, Bushmen, Kaffirs, Bantu, Natives).[2] Chapter 2 is a history of the population in the *longue durée* approach using up-to-date archaeological, linguistic, and ethnographic sources as well as European traveler accounts, often used extensively and usefully. Chapter 3 is a history of state formation in the region from Great Zimbabwe to the nineteenth-century effects of warfare on the building of Zulu Kingdom, including different interpretations of this controversial period. This chapter also includes excellent analysis on the decline of the Khoekhoe population in the Western Cape region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Troubles for the reader start with chapter 4, "The War," which begins with the 1830 Trek (migration of the Boers from the Western Cape Province into the interior of the country) and concludes with the Anglo Boer War (1899-1902). Fauvelle-Aymar convincingly suggests that this is a period of almost uninterrupted wars that provoked increasing brutalization of the population, but his periodization is inaccurate. War was common in western parts of the country before the 1830s (a topic that the author deals with in chapter 2 but omits here) leaving the 1830s "rupture"' hard to understand. He also includes the emergence of nineteenth-century Christianity, which obviously cannot be reduced to a war enterprise. Chapter 5 is a classical, not to say old-fashioned, piece of political history of South Africa based on factual history of segregation, repression, antiapartheid resistance, and

reconciliation.

It is too easy to indicate what is missing in a relatively short and dense book covering a long and divided history. As mentioned before, Fauvelle-Aymar has succeeded in giving a comprehensive and accessible history to a large readership; the book is well written, without any jargon, and easy to read. At the same time, some South African academic debates largely absent from the book have been too central in the last twenty years not be mentioned in this review. While the period prior to the twentieth century is based on good bibliographical knowledge, which includes new primary sources that are not easily accessible, coverage of twentieth-century history has a number of shortcomings, as does the general historiography of South Africa.

Social scientists and twentieth-century historians, for example, might find some fundamental aspects poorly addressed or altogether missing in this book (Jeremy Seekings and Belinda Bozzoli on the 1980s urban struggle, and William Beinart and Colin Bundy on the hidden rural struggle, to mention but only a few). There are also fundamental problems with Fauvelle-Aymar's discussion of the South African state. First, qualifying the apartheid regime as "totalitarian" is problematic because the apartheid regime differed from Nazi and fascist regimes: apartheid officials tolerated a white parliamentary opposition; a critical white press (*Rand Daily Mail*); and even after the banning of antiapartheid political parties in 1960 (African National Congress, South African Communist Party, and Pan African Congress), the existence of "civil society" organizations and unions (for instance, the South African student organization from 1968 to 1977, the United Democratic Front from 1983 to 1991, the Congress of South African Trade unions from 1985 onward, the Black Sash, and the South African Institute of Race Relations throughout the period). The second problem is presenting the South African state as being more powerful and monolithic than it was. Several historians (Deborah Posel and Paul Maylam, among others) have in the last twenty years insisted on the fact that "there is a danger in viewing control during apartheid in teleological, monolithic, functionalist terms, creating a picture of powerful state agencies."[3] Twenty years ago, Posel has challenged former understandings of the early apartheid period in stressing that it was a contradictory and messy political process rather than a well-prepared plan, while Herman Giliomee has shown that official Afrikaner circles were constantly divided over what to do and in which directions to take the country.[4] The third problem lays in the fact that social history of ordinary people is missing and is consequently disconnected from this political history. This is especially surprising because the author makes a remarkable attempt to deal with the slow building of social identities prior to the twentieth century and because social history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was dominant in South African universities between the 1970s and the 1990s. Fauvelle-Aymar does not use this rich literature in this book. Scholars who study the history of women, poor rural and urban "communities," migrations, work, and leisure have made tremendous progress in the last thirty years and have helped to write a more complicated and less teleological history showing that everyday life could not be reduced to a confrontation with the repressive nature of the state and that identities assigned by the state were permanently reshaped by people.

Lastly, the author does not mention that South African historiography resembles its history: highly divided for decades with some attempts of reconciliation since the end of apartheid. The introduction is deceiving in this regard; Fauvelle-Aymar mixes up different authors of the "radical" and "liberal" schools of history and forgets to summarize major debates opposing them. He, for example, omits the famous so-called class/race debate and the historical explanations on the origins of the segregated nature of the state linked, for the radicals, to the late nineteenth- and twentieth-century industrialization of the country and for the liberals to the longer presence of the voortrekkers who have tried throughout nineteenth- and twentieth-century history to reestablish the patriarchal and racial relationships initially set in the Cape Colony. Of course, the intensity of this debate has cooled down in the postapartheid period mainly because radical historians have become liberals and liberal historians are becoming more radical, but this debate is not totally finished.[5] Fauvelle-Aymar's book looks as if controversies were a side issue in writing the history of South Africa, but that has never been the case. The interrogation on the domination–or the end of the domination–of social history in South Africa also indicates that academic controversies remain important in writing the history of the country today.[6]

Notes

[1]. For outdated studies, see, for example, Paul Coquerel, *Afrique du Sud, l'histoire séparée* (Paris: Gallimards, 1992); and Wilhelm Grütter, *L'histoire de l'Afrique du Sud* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1982). For a limited study, see, for example, Bernard Lugan, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Sud* (Paris: Perrin, 1990).

[2]. An explanation of why the administration decided to use the term "Bantu" instead of "Natives" in the

second part of the twentieth century would have been useful here.

[3]. Paul Maylam, "Explaining the Apartheid City: Twenty Years of South African Urban Historiography," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21 (1995): 34.

[4]. Deborah Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948-1961, Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners, Biography of a People* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003).

[5]. Leonard Thompson, A *History of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), xii; and Rodney Davenport and Christopher Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000), xxiii. For different perspectives, see Nigel Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007); Merle Lipton, *Liberals, Marxists, and Nationalists: Competing Interpretations of South African History* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007); and Giliomee, *Afrikaners*.

[6]. Alan Cobley, "Does Social History Have a Future? The Ending of Apartheid and Recent Trends in South African Historiography," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27, no. 3 (September 2001): 619; Eddy Maloka, "Writing for Them: 'Radical' Historiography in South Africa and the 'Radical' Other," in *The Social Sciences in South Africa since 1994: Disciplinary and Transdisciplinary Areas of Study* , ed. Fred Hendricks (Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa, 2004).

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