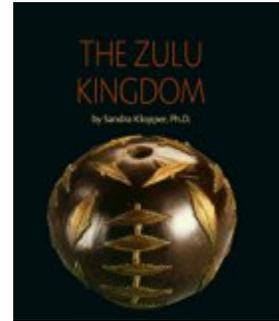


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Sandra Klopper. *The Zulu Kingdom*. Danbury, Connecticut: Franklin Watts, 1998. 64 pp. \$22.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-531-20286-9.

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Published on H-AfrTeach (October, 2000)



The Zulu Kingdom Reviewed

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The history of the amaZulu is much explored by fiction writers like H. Rider Haggard. Many history books have also been written on the exploits of the amaZulu, especially on the nation-building efforts of the founder of the Zulu nation, Shaka. Klopper's *The Zulu Kingdom* is a book which summarises the history of the amaZulu from the time of Shaka to the modern day in a concise and clear form that is easily accessible to children from ages nine through twelve, for whom it is written.

Divided into six parts with an introduction and a useful glossary, *The Zulu Kingdom* is a valuable source book that I will recommend to everybody interested in a concise history of the amaZulu. The largely accurate and unbiased information in it is presented in a scholarly yet very accessible manner.

The Introduction traces the beginning of the Zulu nation as we know it, from the early nineteenth century, to the present age; from the age of feudalistic and imperialistic conquests to the age of political compromises and democracy. The main part of the book is divided into six chapters, each dealing with the traditions and daily life of the amaZulu, the rise of the Zulu kingdom, the reign of Dingane, the second king of the amaZulu, the arrival of missionaries and white settlers, the end of that phase of the Zulu kingdom, and the Zulu kingdom within the present day South Africa.

Myths are beliefs that cover a range of meanings in the historical evolution of a people, and, which, by their

nature to inform man's cultural essence, serve as the embodiment of the people's totality of experience. To understand a people therefore, it is sometimes necessary to understand the popular myths of the people. Klopper follows this tested mode to introduce the amaZulu to her reader through one of their popular creation myths that explains the meaning and origin of the word "Zulu" and the importance of cattle to the amaZulu. The first chapter also introduces the marriage traditions of the amaZulu and the concept of homesteads.

Chapter Two traces the rise of the Zulu kingdom from a small chiefdom. According to Klopper, Shaka was a military ruler who organised and mobilised his army professionally (and ruthlessly) in order to expand his kingdom and increase his area of influence, especially in the area of trade with the Portuguese around Delagoa bay in present day Mozambique. This state of affairs subsisted until he was assassinated through the machinations of Dingane, his stepbrother, and a few of Shaka's chiefs. Dingane later succeeded Shaka as the king of the amaZulu.

Subsequent chapters in this book explore the reigns of other Zulu kings and their primary focus on trade with the white settlers. They also explain the various methods each king employed to deal with first the British and later the Boers (of mostly Dutch background) in their incursions into the Zulu kingdom. For instance, while Dingane resorted to fighting the settlers in a series of wars, Cetshwayo tried to diplomatically negotiate with the British until the latter declared war on him and exiled

him first to the Cape and then to Britain. With the exile of Cetshwayo, the British effectively defeated the Zulu kingdom and established the first model of the “divide and rule” form of government which became very popular throughout the British Empire before the colonies gained their independence. King Solomon who reigned in the 1920s attempted to unify the amaZulu with the formation of the Inkatha movement, a movement that metamorphosed into the Inkatha Freedom Party in the run-up to the 1994 multi-racial elections in South Africa.

The book concludes with a timeline, detailing the chronology of events, from 1818 to 1994, the important era of the Zulu kingdom. It also has a glossary of unusual terms – mainly Zulu words and other difficult words – that children will find very useful in understanding the

book. Apart from an index for easy accessibility of the information in the book, there is a list of books and relevant Internet Websites for further reading and information sourcing.

The Zulu Kingdom is a handy book that should grace the library of every school because of its importance in providing the history and political and cultural relevance of the Zulu in the present day South Africa in a simple and concise, readily accessible language. The age group to which it is directed, 9 - 12 year-olds, will definitely find the book very informative.

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Citation: Sola Adeyemi. Review of Klopper, Sandra, *The Zulu Kingdom*. H-AfrTeach, H-Net Reviews. October, 2000.

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