



A. J. Christopher. *The Atlas of Changing South Africa*. Second edition. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. x + 260 pp. \$100.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-415-21178-9; \$220.00 (library), ISBN 978-0-415-21177-2.

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## Understanding the Spatial Legacy of Apartheid

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The premise of *The Atlas of Changing South Africa* is that apartheid was, at least in part, about the strategic control of space, about drawing lines on maps, on the ground, on the body, between bodies, between races. Christopher explores the gamut from petty to grand apartheid. The book is more than an atlas, defined as a book of maps. Christopher combines maps and demographic illustrations with an exposition on the spatial patterns of apartheid policy, focusing on the racialised use of space. The first edition was published in 1994; in this later edition the text has been extended up to 1999. It looks at the spatial impact of apartheid from 1948 to 1994 and the legacy we are dealing with today. This is particularly useful as contemporary land claims and restitution are still largely based on ethnicity and communities entrenched by apartheid.

This work is not, nor does it make any pretense to be, a chronological history. Instead it approaches apartheid specifically and thematically. Obviously, while the legacy of apartheid is still agonizingly apparent—in residential settlement and personal relationships, and so on—we have not yet arrived at a full understanding of its effects. Archives are still closed or, more worryingly, missing or destroyed, and there are places the historian cannot reach. The author's interdisciplinary approach helps in reaching a wider understanding of spatial apartheid, the reconfiguration of the living space in South Africa, which is sufficient in itself. Broader claims

would be misplaced.

Christopher demonstrates that apartheid existed not exclusively in the legislation nor in the houses of parliament, but was written onto the land itself, encoded into the landscape by inscribing and shaping space in particular ways. Issues of land ownership are still persistent, but this book is not a contemporary roadmap; it will not explicitly help shape policy on land restitution. Nonetheless, it provides important background material and a clear foundation, particularly on the impact of residential settlement and, more significantly, resettlement.

Chapter 1 discusses the political history of South Africa before apartheid, boldly condensing centuries into forty pages. Chapter 2 plots the administrative machinery of influence, demonstrating the heightened complexity of post-1948. Chapter 3, in turn, examines the apartheid state, analyzing briefly its philosophical content and its practical manifestations in a land tenure system, such as socially engineered resettlement and poverty-stricken homeland projects, ending with a postscript on Orania as an almost ironic post-1994 counterpoint to the black homelands of apartheid.

Chapter 4 explores apartheid's functioning on an urban level, with the drive towards residential and personal segregation (particularly restricting black access to urban areas) as opposed to state partitioning. The rise of new townscapes, the "apartheid city," is discussed. Chapter 5 dissects "personal apartheid," illustrating processes to prevent personal contact between blacks and whites

bodily (marriage and sexual relationships), mentally (religions, schooling, tertiary education), and in facilities (transportation and personal security). Chapter 6 focuses on resistance to apartheid, from the Programme of Action to the Defiance Campaign to confrontations over the banning of the Communist Party, and the break away of the Pan Africanist Congress. Chapter 7 explores the international response to apartheid, examining South Africa's role as a localized superpower—its attempts to retain South West Africa, South Africa's invasions of neighboring states, and destabilization by South Africa as retaliation for sanctions. Christopher shows that strategic trade relations and the configuration of transportation systems helped South Africa survive in isolation. Chapter 8 looks at the dismantling of apartheid, accepting that it is an incomplete, ongoing process in the 1990s. He shows how administrative and personal forms of apartheid were disassembled, how a new government was elected and then briefly discusses the notion of reconstruction, before looking at the manifestation of the post-apartheid city and showing how South Africa re-entered the global arena after ending international isolation.

Chapter 9 is an abbreviated—indeed, almost truncated—exploration of the attempts to undo the apartheid impression on the land. Christopher shows that the apartheid legacy remains entrenched in South African lives, in terms of income disparities (although, surprisingly, there is very little on this) and education. Finally, he contends that two separate and unequal nations still exist in South Africa and contends that only when all racial classification is abandoned will the end of apartheid be pronounced.

Christopher has succeeded in reviewing the spatial impact of apartheid over a period of four decades, providing a comprehensive introduction to and detailed analysis of apartheid and its legacy. Christopher offers us wonderfully interesting contrasts, such as the differences in university enrollment in 1958 and 1974 or the number of deaths due to political violence in 1985–1986 vs. 1987–1990. To be sure, these comparisons occasionally appear

a trifle random. Why those years, after all? It is a very useful and intriguing book, however, which provides a foundation for theoretical arguments.

There are some mild problems. Its modest title should perhaps have been extended and offer explication to reflect its strong focus on apartheid. It is not, for example, an atlas of the natural environment or biodiversity, nor simply a book of maps. This reader was also concerned about the analytical categories employed. Race is well dissected, but where is class or gender? Where is a discussion of the upwardly mobile black bourgeoisie? Where is the poor white sector? Christopher makes occasional generalizations that flatten his analysis. For example, ignoring the existing context of colonial segregation explored in the book and belying a complexity he elsewhere underlines, he observes, “White Afrikaner racial preservation and the rejection of miscegenation lay at the core of the policy [of apartheid]” (p. 2). There is the sporadic questionable source, such as a popular Sunday newspaper for statistics.

One or two of the maps had this reader puzzled at their inclusion. (Who really needs another map of the first Dutch settlement of the Cape of Good Hope? ) It is arguable that Christopher may have been too ambitious in attempting a complete synthesis of the political, as well as illustrating the spatial, story of apartheid. He hastens through seminal events, arriving, understandably, breathless at his conclusions. My prime concern is that this “atlas,” like the Atlas of old who was punished by Zeus for the revolt of the Titans and forced to hold up an entire world, attempts to do too much.

Nevertheless, *The Atlas of Changing South Africa* makes an important contribution. By illustrating it in visual forms most relevant to its conception, it demonstrates the numerous levels of operation of apartheid and its wider consequences. Lucid, unpretentious, and to the point, the book is very useful for tertiary level students, from first-year students up to senior researchers of apartheid history. It is, in short, far more than just a book of maps.

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