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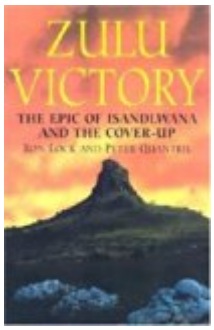

Ron Lock, Peter Quantrill. *Zulu Victory: The Epic of Isandlwana and the Cover-Up.* London: Greenhill Books/Lionel Leventhal, 2002. 336 pp. $39.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-85367-505-8.

Reviewed by Vusi Ndima

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This book attempts to provide an exhaustive historical narrative of the Battle of iSandlwana. It carves a niche by devoting the entire historical narrative to the military tactics and strategies of both belligerents, amaZulu and the British, which has not been done before in such graphic detail in the historiography of the battle of iSandlwana. The authors have been exceptional in their utilization of primary sources to unearth and produce new insights into Lord Chelmsford's conduct during the war. This is a major contribution and indeed commendable.

The book is divided into nine chapters, supposedly in chronological and logical sequences. These chapters are preceded by a list of maps and illustrations, authors' notes, acknowledgements, glossary, foreword, prologue, epilogue, notes, and appendices. Such features help to stimulate the imagination of the reader, which in turn enhances better understanding and comprehension of the content. The acknowledgements help the reader to know individuals or organizations that contributed to the success of the project and the glossary explains some isiZulu terms, which are *sine qua non* to the understanding of the content in its cultural context. The foreword helps the reader understand the manner in which current political actors perceive and remember the battle of iSandlwana.

In the authors' note, Arthur Konigkramer, who is referred to as "a person wise in the ways of the Zulu people [whatever this means] and their history" is quoted as having advised the authors against the use of the word "enemy" because amaZulu were never enemies of the British--who brought about the war--and should not be described as such. This intervention is useful insofar as it relates to the era before the beginning of hostilities. But it is unthinkable that amaZulu would have used any term other than "enemy" when referring to the British during and after this destructive war. It is quite disappointing that in the twenty-first century, in post-colonial and post-1994 South Africa, Lock and Quantrill have the audacity to publicly imagine that appreciation of Zulu culture resides in Konigkramer who, despite his rudimentary understanding of this culture, does not have the necessary tools to under-

stand its dynamic linguistic and cultural nuances. The authors could have done better by approaching African intellectuals--and not necessarily belonging to amaZulu as an ethnic group, since there has been much hybridization of cultures or cultural interpenetration among Africans in South Africa. African intellectuals are better positioned to understand the subtleties of the culture of amaZulu, who are spread throughout South Africa, the African continent and the western world.

South Africa, emerging from a colonial past, consists of emergent peoples who, according to Homi Bhabha, are those populations who have developed the capacity to define and project themselves in new ways that are either representative of longstanding but subjugated, downtrodden identities, or who are representative of new forms of an unfolding or refreshing difference that has not before been in currency.[1] The rationale behind my invocation of Bhabha's definition is to advise foreign authors to listen to the voices and perspectives of the indigenous populations. I do not believe that Konigkramer is qualified to make pronouncements about how amaZulu perceived the British. For me, he speaks for the Other since he is not a primary victim of the war.

In the acknowledgements there is no mention of a single African or Zulu commentator and expert who is wise on the ways of the Zulu people. Such visible absence and deafening silence of the important African voice(s) merits attention and discussion. It is therefore not surprising that throughout the book the authors have committed grave spelling and orthographical errors unacceptable even at primary-school level. These could have been circumvented had the authors worked in consultation with qualified experts who speak and live the language each and every day. The authors should have familiarized themselves with the cultural and linguistic sensitivities of South Africa since South African readers are the primary audience of the book.

For the benefit of the authors, it is important to appreciate that language issues are very sensitive in South Africa and as a result should be treated with great circumspection. The South African Language Policy and Plan, conceptualized in the early 1990s and finally adopted in 2002, advocates the promotion of multilingualism as well as the correct use of (African) languages. So any incorrect usage of African languages in a public document and published manuscript could easily be misconstrued and associated with a condescending attitude towards that language community. Examples of some of the misspelt words include Nkobamakhosi (instead of Ngobamakhosi), Maqatini (instead of Maqadini), nDondakusuka (instead of Ndondakusuka).

Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, whose self-interest in the subject is usually characterized by his propensity to use it to foreground his ancestral lineage, wrote the foreword. He (ab)uses history in order to invoke the memory of his Buthelezi ancestry by mentioning the names of his great grandfathers, Mnyamana and Mkhandumba, who fought during the war. In this regard, it is quite interesting to note that the book does not in any way signify the role of Mnyamana during the war. The authors instead extol the military prowess and strategic acumen of Ntshingwayo kaMahole Khoza. Also, Chief Buthelezi is always meticulous concerning issues involving isiZulu as both a written and spoken language and therefore one suspects that he wrote the foreword before reading the final manuscript.

Chapter 1 of the book provides a detailed and comprehensive exposition of the ultimatum, which is fore-grounded by the authors as the genesis of hostilities between the British and amaZulu. Hence this ultimatum is regarded as the most important causal factor of the war. This is a superficial exposition lacking substance. It misses the bigger picture that connects the war to the political economy of imperialism, including colonialism as a dominant ideology during the wars of

land dispossession in Africa. One would have thought that the major causal factors of the war were the advent of mineral revolution as a result of the discovery of diamonds in Griqualand West and the subsequent demand for cheap African labor (proletarianization); Lord Carnarvon's Federation Scheme and its ramifications on the socio-political and economic landscape of the Zulu Kingdom; and missionary influence and Christian proselytization. Therefore, the ultimatum should have been presented by the authors as a ***casus belli***, or the main spark of the actual war.

The authors also tend to include unnecessary details that tamper with the smooth flow of the historical narrative. When they discuss the ultimatum, they find themselves bogged down in details of amaZulu war rituals, which Ian Knight described comprehensively in his book ***The Anatomy of the Zulu Army: From Shaka to Cetshwayo, 1818-1879*** (1995).[2]

Chapter 2 provides us with new and exciting insights into the composition of Lord Chelmsford's army. Most fascinating is the fact that only 40 percent of this army was composed of British soldiers and a small number of colonials; the rest were African men, the conscripts who formed the Natal Native Contingent (NNC). The presence of Prince Mbuyazi's iziQgoza faction, that had escaped into the Natal colony in 1856 after the battle of Ndondakusuka (a battle or war of succession between Prince Cetshwayo and Prince Mbuyazi of the Zulu royal family) is also instructive. However, the authors' tendency to turn the narrative into a description of the social life of the British soldiers is irrelevant, more especially so if such descriptions have no bearing on the main thrust of the discussion, that is, Zulu victory and the epic of iSandlwana.

Chapter 3 provides a description of the Zulu Army, which is referred to as King Cetshwayo's Army. The authors have fallen into the trap of equating King Cetshwayo and Lord Chelmsford. This approach was challenged by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi in his opening address on the "Anglo-Zulu War: A Centennial Reappraisal, 1879-1979."[3] In this speech, Chief Buthelezi referred to white historians who wrote as if King Cetshwayo and Lord Chelmsford, as commanders of their respective armies, were equals. Chief Buthelezi reprimanded historians who did not take cognizance of the fact that the Zulu army had its commanders, such as Chief Mnyamana Buthelezi, to whom he refers as Commander-in-Chief of the entire Zulu Army, and Zulu generals such as Ntshingwayo kaMahole Khoza, Zibhebhu kaMaphitha kaSojiyisa, and Prince Dabulamanzi Zulu. Chief Buthelezi wrote:

"And yet the White perspective differs so much from our black perspectives, that in every history book, our history of this time is presented in every white-written history book as if King Cetshwayo, our monarch, directed his army personally against Lord Chelmsford and other British Generals. And yet nowhere it is ever suggested that Queen Victoria led her forces, merely because the British regiments which invaded King Cetshwayo's Kingdom were part of the Queen's Army. As we Zulu see it, we see in this an attempt to lower King Cetshwayo's status to that of such generals as Lord Chelmsford."[4]

Notwithstanding Chief Buthelezi's supposedly ulterior motives for presenting this argument, which was to "glorify" the role of his great grandfather Chief Mnyamana Buthelezi, one should acknowledge the rationality of his perceptive argument.

In the beginning of chapter 3, the authors display some insensitivity in referring to King Shaka as the bastard son of King Senzangakhona, an issue which is not clear-cut according to existing oral traditions and customs of amaZulu. The notion and concept of a "bastard" in such societies was not necessarily the same as in European societies. Maybe such a discussion would have been appropriate if the book was about King Shaka's legitimacy, illegitimacy, or "bastard" status as seen

through the eyes of Europeans. The debates about the Zulu kings, monarchy, and African societies elsewhere are not yet complete. African perceptions of African kings and monarchies are long overdue and important.[5] Another vexing issue in the book concerns references to both African and European monarchies by white researchers and academics. For example, the authors always refer to Cetshwayo, the Zulu king, instead of King Cetshwayo, and when it is about European monarchies the rules change and social Darwinism comes to the fore. It is always Queen Victoria, not Victoria, the British queen. Consistency is needed in terms of protocol because African monarchies are as important as their European counterparts.

Chapters 4 and 5 vividly sketch the manner in which Lord Chelmsford's army arrogantly entered the Zulu Kingdom hoping to accomplish their mission swiftly and easily, and the subsequent skirmishes. What is obvious here is that Chelmsford and his followers were a product of their times. The British army was highly influenced by the existing discourse of race, racism, prejudice, and social Darwinism. This army's leadership was controlled by white supremacists who undermined the intellectual capabilities and military acumen of their African opponents.

The title of chapter 6, "The Game of Chess," is misleading because it implies that the grand masters of chess, that is, British and Zulu war generals, were at the same level. This title seems to contradict the authors' depiction of Zulu intelligence and British arrogance in the preceding chapters. My understanding of a chess game is that it is played by opponents well endowed with technical skill and analysis, who are usually highly intelligent, astute strategists. This was not the case at iSandlwana. It was the Zulu generals who, as able strategists, astutely planned for the war. The British war plan, on the contrary, was very poor, which explains their complete annihilation and humiliation. So any reference to chess is in a sense misrepresentation. Also, it is not really acceptable to use the analogy of a chess game to refer to an imperialist war that was a matter of life and death, and that involved suffering and land dispossessions. As military historians, the authors fall into the trap of portraying this war in sporting terms rather than as a serious issue. To take one example of writers who have examined these other sides of the war, Dirk Cloete graphically portrays the socio-economic consequences of the war in his Centenary paper, "From Warriors To Wage-Slaves: The Fate of the Zulu People since 1879."[6] Cloete views the war as having provided the breeding ground for "faction" fighting, that is, fights for scarce resources like land. Combined with natural disasters and diseases such as Rinderpest and drought, the Zulu Kingdom crumbled. Famine led to the disintegration and dislocation of many families, hence the genesis of migrant labor system and the subsequent proletarianization of the amaZulu.

Chapter 7 provides an apt and graphic analysis of the military aspects of the battle. However, it seems to me that the historical narrative of the authors bears a strong resemblance to the battlefield narratives collected by David Rattray and Bob Gerald, who run the battlefield tours of iSandlwana, Fugitive's Drift, and Rorke's Drift. I have visited these sites and listened to the on-site narration by Gerald; I was taken through the battlefield tour by Gerald in December 2002 and received recorded tapes from Rattray in March 2003. Having listened to the tapes of both Rattray and Gerald, it is difficult to establish the original authors of the chapter. If indeed the authors of this book have consulted Rattray or Gerald, it would be appropriate for them to acknowledge these sources, which include African public intellectuals who provided testimonies to all the researchers. Yet nowhere does one find this acknowledgement. This issue requires further analysis, particularly the role played by African public intellectuals (so called "informants") in shaping the historical narrative and historiography of

iSandlwana, including the work done by the authors of this book, and that of Rattray and Gerald.

If there is any major contribution that this book gives to the literature and historiography of the Battle of iSandlwana, then chapters 8 and 9 represent such commendable original research. Recent discoveries by the two authors have produced primary evidence that positively links the conduct of Lord Chelmsford, rather than that of Dunford, to the crushing defeat of the British forces by the Zulu Army.

In the final analysis, it must be borne in mind that both Lock and Quantrill are military historians; hence their research and subsequent publication is influenced by this background and specialization. Whilst the authors have produced new historical insights and exalted Zulu militarism, they have fallen into the trap of not wanting to see the war in its imperialist and capitalistic terms. They do not want to shine a spotlight on the land dispossession, poverty, misery, suffering, and dependency syndrome imposed on the once self-sufficient and independent Zulu Kingdom by this war. If this is done by them at all, then it is done in a cursory fashion.

Historians such as Dirk Cloete, John Wright, and Jeff Guy, in their presentations on the centenary of the battle in 1979, challenged those historians still trapped in the mindset of colonial historians such as Cory and Theal, whose writings perpetuate the image of the amaZulu as bloodthirsty savages and warriors that fought over the slightest provocation.[7] Wright and Guy challenged this mentality because of its propensity to hide the real causes of the war. Not only does this approach label amaZulu as warriors but it also tends to patronize them as brave, a stereotype that has been internalized and essentialized not only by the majority of amaZulu but by other cultural and ethnic groups in South Africa. Some of the recent political conflicts in South Africa could partly be ascribed to this cultural, ethnic stereotyping. To some extent, Lock and Quantrill might be accused of falling into the same trap about cultural, ethnic stereotyping.

After reading the book I concluded that research on the war itself and the resulting military strategies is becoming saturated. Nevertheless the book is an authoritative account about the military history of the war and is a welcome addition to the ever-growing specialist literature. Notwithstanding this fact, I propose that new research on the battle should take a different focus that complements the publication by Lock and Quantrill. Such research could begin to analyze how this war is remembered and commemorated by descendants of both amaZulu and the British. New research might also analyze the manner in which the memory of this battle has been sustained beyond the production of military literature and history. This would lead to understanding the (ab)use of Public History as a tool, that is, to understanding the reason behind the erection of memorials in memory of both amaZulu and the British in colonial, apartheid, and post-1994 South Africa; the invocation of this memory for socio-political as well as economic reasons; the production of historical knowledge and images for the tourist and heritage industry; and commissioning and producing visual histories in the form of films, videos, and theater productions. Another important issue that can be researched involves the original artifacts and other forms of Zulu cultural material that were exported to the Borderers Museum in Brecon, South Wales, part of which houses the history of the Battle of iSandlwana. These issues define the heritage of amaZulu, and as such, South Africans.

Notes

[1]. K. Hollinshead, "Tourism and the Restless Peoples: A Dialectical Inspection of Bhabha's Halfway Populations," ***Tourism, Culture and Communications***, 1:1 (1998).

[2]. Ian Knight, ***The Anatomy of the Zulu Army: From Shaka to Cetshwayo, 1818-1879*** (London: Greenhill Books, 1995).

[3]. M. G. Buthelezi, speech presented at Shepstone Hall, Howard College, University of Natal, Durban, Wednesday, 7 February 1979.

[4]. Ibid.

[5]. See, for example, S. M. Ndlovu, "The Changing African Perceptions of King Dingane in Historical Literature: A Case Study in the Construction of Historical Knowledge in 19th and 20th Century South African History" (Ph.D. thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 2001).

[6]. D. Cloete, "From Warriors to Wage-Slaves," ***Reality*** 11:1 (1979), pp. 20-23.

[7]. J. Wright, "Beyond the Washing of the Spears," ***Reality*** 11:1 (1979), pp. 3-4; and J. Guy, "The British Invasion of Zululand: Some Thoughts for the Centenary Year," ***Reality*** 11:1 (1979), pp. 8-14.