

**P.L. Merrett and R. Butcher (Eds): *The Hunting Journal of Robert Briggs Struthers in the Zulu Kingdom and the Tsonga Regions 1852-56*. Killie Campbell Africana Library publications No. 6. University of Natal Press. Pietermaritzburg. 1991.**

The intrinsic value of this text and its superb scholarly compilation allows readers of Natal history an appreciative smile as we anticipate the next winner from the Killie Campbell and U.N.P. stable.

One of the reasons why this volume is so valuable is the erudite work produced by Patricia Merrett in the various aids to the text - especially the fascinating introduction which places Struthers in historical perspective in Colonial Natal. The map, however, leaves much to be desired, and one would expect at least an attempt at tracing his six expeditions on the ground.

Struthers' hunter's journal, written in the form of field notes, is a rich mine of information for the region bounded by the Mlalazi and Phongolo rivers to Delagoa Bay during this period. Beginning with the hunting of hippopotami for their ivory, fat and skins, Struthers later graduates to the elephant which abounded north of the Mkhuze in Tsongaland. His graphic, articulate and observant record is astonishing when one takes into consideration the debilitating demands of long journeys in fever country - pages 49-50; pp. 95-97, with sometimes difficult companions: p.20.

This volume is useful because I don't believe our modern, increasingly conservation-minded public has much understanding of the decimation caused by these rare but mercenary hunters, and particularly their native client hunters. In their quest to enrich themselves through the sale of ivory, the Natal hunters endured much: eg. Dr. Robert Morris died when he was 28 - see note 78 p.114. There is a stoical quality as Struthers, with increasing efficiency, learns to hunt, and kills the hapless hippo's using boats to gain access to their favourite haunts where they abounded in herds of up to 50 - p.19. But there is also an anaesthetised insensitivity to basic cruelty evident as he clinically informs us on p.19: "Put twelve bullets into calf and did not kill it - fine shooting." "Today shot

eleven out of a herd of thirteen" - p.35, makes today's conservation-minded reader shudder with shock at the devastation. Fortunately the colonial government did not encourage hunters and traders entering Zululand (*vide* p.29).

Another remarkable source of information concerns the inter-relationship between the Zulus and the Tsongas eg. p.26: the Tsongas "living in constant fear of the Zulus who abuse them most horribly". Also p.51. There are interesting details on Zulu, and other, trade and relations with Delagoa Bay eg. pp. 56-57; p.59. Powder and lead were freely available from that source: p.48; p.56. A highlight is the vivid description of Lourenco Marques: pages 76 and 77.

A regrettable aspect that is evident is the detrimental effect of the Natal client hunters on the local inhabitants whom they apparently abused. They "are a set of scoundrels, they do a great deal of harm amongst the natives" p.52 and p.75 and p.101. Struthers took it upon himself to punish this bad behaviour with up to three dozen strokes. "He seemed glad at getting off so easy" pp.61-63.

Struthers also comments on the astonishing numbers of Zulus who fled to Natal - he counted fifty on one wagon - p.63. His identification of the Mhlatuze flatlands as being eminently suitable for sugar on 16 March 1853 is prescient. Struthers makes another interesting observation when he points out that the Mkhuzi river flows into the St. Lucia complex and not the sea as indicated in earlier maps - p.50. Although the journal is written in a reasonably business-like way there are some good descriptions - for example that of the "elephant country" on page 80.

Through this volume Robert Briggs Struthers has arrived in the forefront of mid 19th century hunter publicists, and we welcome this addition to our knowledge of our rich Zululand heritage.

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