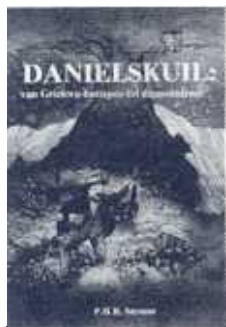


sion. The conclusion in the book consists of approximately 250 words or three short paragraphs which is hardly sufficient. In fact, it really says nothing. It does not give a critical evaluation of the origin and growth of the various communities of the valley. Nor does it mention the influence the valley had on the history of southern Africa.

This book, which is available in both official languages, is however a remarkable and valuable source of information about the development of the valley over the past three hundred years. It will therefore be useful not only to the historian, but also to the people of the Drakenstein Valley.

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P.H.R. SNYMAN. *Danielskuil: van Griekwa-buitepos tot diensentrum*. Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing: Pretoria, 1988. 186 pp. Illus. R18,00 (exclusive). ISBN 0 7969 0641 6.

For the uninitiated, the Northern Cape town of Danielskuil lies about 150 kilometres north-west of Kimberley in the Postmasburg magisterial district. The town derives its name from a nearby natural cavern which, because of its supposed (and mythical) use as a prison during the time that the area came under the aegis of the Griqua, reminded people of Daniel and the lion's den.

The author, a full-time research historian at the Human Sciences Research Council's Institute for Historical Research, is no stranger to the history of the Northern Cape. He has written two books on the region in this Institute's local history series, the first on Postmasburg, (*Postmasburg: 'n geskiedkundige oorsig tot 1982*. Human Sciences Research Council: Pretoria, 1983) and the second on Olifantshoek (*Olifantshoek — oase van die Langeberg*. Human Sciences Research Council: Pretoria, 1986). There is no one better qualified than Piet Snyman to write the history of Danielskuil.

But one must still ask the question: 'Why Danielskuil?' There is no doubting that, as the author says, by focusing attention on a small area, matters that escape the attention of the historian who works on a larger canvas may well be illuminated. And indeed, Snyman does touch briefly upon a number of issues that are seen more clearly from the perspective of Danielskuil than they would be from the amphitheatre of the Union Buildings in Pretoria. But this still does not explain why Danielskuil was chosen. There is no explanation in the book itself, nor does a careful reading of the text make it clear why Danielskuil has been favoured with a history. It is a pity that the reader was given no inkling of what the author was trying to achieve or the terms of reference of the mandate that was given him when embarking on his history.

The area had some interesting Stone Age inhabitants before it fell within the orbit of the Griqua, where it was for a time the headquarters of their leader Barend Barends. White settlement of the region followed, and in 1892 Danielskuil became a 'white' town in the sense that it was controlled by the white townsmen. The number of whites increased painfully slowly and they only numbered 560 in 1970, increasing to 942 in 1985. Electricity only came to the town in 1938, and even that was brought about through the good offices of the Dutch Reformed Church. It was not before 1975 that the local authorities had enough money to begin tarring the streets. Although it had a rail link from 1930, this was 23 kilometres away.

In other words there is very little that seems to distinguish the town. From the turn of the century it was primarily a service centre for the surrounding farms, and this only changed in the last few decades as a result of the increased exploitation of asbestos in the area, and, when the asbestos market declined, the establishment of a limeworks.

Snyman touches on a number of issues that one would have liked to see explored further. The author himself could hardly be expected to do so in a book that follows the fortunes of the region from the earliest Stone Age inhabitants to the most recent developments. The book contains much detail that might easily have been omitted so that space could be found for examining some of the deeper issues. Resistance by blacks to the exactions of the dominant white townsmen is mentioned, petitions are referred to, but nowhere are the roots of what seems on the surface to be a sophisticated response by the blacks analysed. He does not examine in any depth the implications for the society (and labour relations) of the coming of industry. But if the author has not himself had the time to analyse these matters, or to examine the role played by people like Ahmed Sulliman in the life of the town, at least he has given indications of what lies in store for future researchers into this field. Here too, the intriguing details of mixed living patterns within the town boundaries deserve further analysis.

The limitations of this work, one suspects, derive from the nature of

the mandate given to the author. Within these limits Piet Snyman has done a workmanlike job on the history of Danielskuil. He has consulted a wide range of sources, given due attention to the precolonial inhabitants of the region and also to the Griqua. The division of his material into three sections is largely successful, and represents an attempt to compromise between a wholly chronological account, and a study of some key themes. Thus in his first section he details the chronological course of events from the Stone Age to 1915, by which time Danielskuil had assumed a character and form that was not to change very much until recently. In the second section he looks thematically at the economic underpinnings of Danielskuil, the role of local government, and relations between the various segments of the population of the town. The short third section will be of interest mainly to the people of Danielskuil itself, containing a miscellany of odd bits of information about the town which could not easily find a place in the first two sections.

It is a competent piece of work in which the author strives to do justice to all. He is at pains to bring the blacks into his narrative at every opportunity, and he does not shy away from describing 1948 and the accession to power of the Nationalist government as a watershed in the deterioration of relations between the whites and blacks. He has demonstrated an awareness of recent trends in historical writing and the sort of questions being asked of the past today. This local history series has produced some solid works. The current book on Danielskuil must rank as one of the best in the series.

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H.J. VAN ASWEGEN. *Geschiedenis van Suid-Afrika tot 1854*. Academica: Pretoria en Kaapstad, 1989. 318 pp. Geill. R35,00 (eksklusief). ISBN 0 86874 337 2.

Hierdie is een van die min handboeke in Afrikaans vir die student van Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis, en een van nog minder wat aandag gee aan die fase voor die koms van die blanke en ook nie 'n blanke-sentriese uitgangspunt het nie. Van Aswegen, wat hoof is van die Departement Geskiedenis aan die Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit, het hom dit ten doel gestel om kennis te neem van nuwe navorsing oor en vertolkings van die Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis sonder om die rol van die blanke in 'n oormatig negatiewe lig te stel. Dit is vir die eerstejaarsstudent bedoel en is, volgens die skrywer, nie op oorspronklike navorsing gebaseer nie maar eerder 'n poging om 'in die lig van die ou en nuwe kennis oor ons vroeë geskiedenis die gebeure en prosesse op 'n onbevangse wyse aan die leser in student oor te dra' (p. 8).

Die boek bestaan uit elf hoofstukke waarvan die eerste vier (67 pp.) prehistoriese Suid-Afrika en die Bantoesprekende gemeenskappe tot 1800 behandel. 'n Volgende hoofstuk dek die vestiging van 'n blanke gemeenskap tydens die Nederlandse VOC-tydperk (1652-1795), terwyl een blank-swart-tussen-groepverhouding in dieselfde tyd beskryf. Drie hoofstukke ondersoek die Kaapkolonie onder Britse en Bataafse beheer tot 1854 en sluit die interaksie tussen blankes, gekleurdes en swartes in. In die laaste twee hoofstukke bespreek Van Aswegen die geskiedenis van die binneland voor die Groot Trek en daarna. Net voor die register is daar (in die vorm van 'n bylae) 'n kort bespreking van geskiedskrywing oor Suid-Afrika. Daar is ook nege lyn-kaarte opgeneem om die teks toe te lig, maar hulle verskyn ongelukkig nie in die inhoudsopgawe nie.

'n Belangrike kenmerk van die boek is die eenvormigheid (eenheid) wat gedagtegang en ontwikkeling betref — iets wat meestal by spanpogings ontbreek. Die taal en styl is keurig en die tegniese versorging, dubbelkolom-bladuitleg en drukwerk getuig van die hoë standaard waarvoor dié uitgewery bekend is. Die Plantin-lettertipe, hoewel aan die klein kant, lees maklik, die omslagontwerp is esteties verantwoord en die bindwerk in slapband is stewig dog funksioneel. By elke hoofstuk is 'n afsonderlike bronnelys gevoeg wat naleeswerk behoort te stimuleer.

'n Besondere hulpmiddel vir die student of algemene leser is die insetsels of panele wat 'n groot aantal onderwerpe toelig. So is daar statistiek oor skeepsverkeer, die herkoms van immigrante en slawe; penskette van politici, prokureurs, Boereleiers en sendelinge; besprekings van die aard en herkoms van mites oor Slagtersnek en die *difaqane*; 'n vergelyking van die uiteenlopende vertolkings van die Slag by Bloedrivier en Geloftepad, en 'n volblad-uitensetting van die begrip 'grens' of 'grensgebied' aan die hand van hedendaagse liberale en radikale vertolkers.

Van Aswegen het bepaald gepoog om 'n 'moderne' Afrikaanse standpunt weer te gee. *Geschiedenis van Suid-Afrika tot 1854* verskil dan ook van die meer 'tradisionele' vertolkings van Afrikaanse historici waaraan die Afrikaan-