

## BOOK REVIEWS

**André Wessels**, *A century of postgraduate Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) studies: Masters' and doctoral studies completed at universities in South Africa, in English-speaking countries and on the European Continent, 1908-2008*. Bloemfontein: SUN PReSS, 2010. ISBN: 978-1-920383-09-1, Softcover, 205 pages. Price: R225 + postage.

The author and compiler of this work is Prof. André Wessels, chairperson of the Department of History at the University of the Free State, and one of the foremost authorities on the history of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), as well as being a prolific writer of many books about this war, including *Lord Roberts and the war in South Africa 1899-1902* (2000) and *Lord Kitchener and the war in South Africa 1899-1902* (2006). The publication of a new book by Wessels always creates interest, because historians have come to know him as a painstakingly accurate researcher and an excellent writer – in short a seasoned historian. With *A century of postgraduate Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) studies*, he continues this admirable tradition. Deservedly, he has dedicated this exceptional publication to Prof. M.C.E. van Schoor (1920-2009), his mentor, and likewise an authority on the Anglo-Boer War.

In his “Preface” Wessels points out that about 2 700 books have been written about the Anglo-Boer War, and that the first doctoral thesis had already seen the light in 1908. Wessels also draws our attention to the fact that theses have been presented to History Departments, as well as in related subjects such as Political Science, Literature, Theology and many others. In addition Wessels explains that the titles of those studies that dealt exclusively or virtually so with the war are indicated by the use of bold type. He stresses that while he strives for completeness, there could be theses which he had not tracked down. Nevertheless, this remains a magisterial opus.

In Chapter 1, “Introduction”, Wessels sums up the Anglo-Boer War in a nutshell, but in a clever manner he threads into it the titles of the first significant publications and theses dealing with the war as a whole, or aspects of it.

In Chapter 2, “Analysis”, statistical data touching on postgraduate studies are analysed and interpreted. Wessels shows that from 1908 to 2008 at least 264 Masters' and 296 doctoral studies were completed on one or the other aspect of the war. Of these, 139 Masters' and 84 doctoral studies had direct connection with the war. As to be expected, most of these studies were undertaken in South Africa, followed by English-speaking countries such as Britain and the United States of America (USA). It is noticeable that more studies about the war were undertaken in Germany and Austria than in the Netherlands. As to be expected, most theses in South Africa were written in Afrikaans. Of the number of degrees conferred for works on the war, the University of Pretoria is in the first place, and the University

of the Orange Free State (now University of the Free State) second. Prof. Fransjohan Pretorius and Prof. M.C.E. van Schoor are the front-runners when it comes to tutoring to postgraduate students about subjects having a connection with the war. Especially important is Wessels's identification of research themes that have not yet received the necessary attention. This would be fallow land for future students with an interest in the war.

Chapter 3, "The postgraduate studies – according to countries of origin", is of particular interest. The expected countries, such as South Africa, Britain, the Irish Republic, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the USA, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany and Austria, are there. But, surprisingly, countries like the USSR/Russia, Poland, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, and Portugal are also there. The list of postgraduate studies in each of these countries is preceded by a succinct description of the various countries' involvement in the war.

Chapter 4, "The postgraduate studies – according to topics", will probably be the most valuable and useable part of the book for future researchers. At a glance, 23 different aspects of the Anglo-Boer War covered by theses can be referred to. This thematic presentation must have been a most arduous task, but the labour was worth the trouble and makes the comprehensive work extremely user-friendly.

There are seven appendices, of which the first six should be read together with Chapter 2. The interesting source list shows among other things what a useful aid the internet can be for research of this kind. In spite of the logical manner in which the book is compiled, a register of authors would not be out of place. The impressive cover and outstanding typographical layout attest to care and good taste.

Considering that the Anglo-Boer War was one of the most far-reaching and dramatic events in South Africa's history, it is not strange that aspects of it quickly became the subject of postgraduate studies at South African universities. What Wessels has brought to the fore in an excellent way is that postgraduate studies about the war have also been undertaken in the rest of the world. It confirms the proposition by the Portuguese historian, G da FA Statter, in his thesis *A África do Sul e o sistema-mundo: da Guerra dos Bóers à globalização* [South Africa and the world order: the Boer War and globalization] (2004), that the Anglo-Boer War was the key event that made South African history part of world history.

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