

Müller, Retief, 2022. *The Scots Afrikaners: Identity Politics and Intertwined Religious Cultures in Southern and Central Africa.* *Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press ISBN: 9781474462952.*

There seems to be a persistent interest in history of the Scottish influence and legacy in southern Africa's ecclesiastic scene by both academics and the public. It became particularly evident in 2022 when, in the spirit of the bicentennial commemoration of the arrival of the most notable Scottish import, Andrew Murray, the Stellenbosch Theological Journal devoted a special edition to the legacy of the pivotal Murray-clan. It reflected both the richness of existing literature on Scottish influences and legacies in southern Africa, as well as ongoing debates and perceptive thereon. Retief Müller's *The Scots Afrikaners* (2021) proves to be a central text in this historiography. The book covers the Scottish influence, and effects thereof, on the Afrikaner people and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). It covers the period from Lord Charles Somerset's attempt to anglicise the church in the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century when the Scottish influence waned under the more dominant volkskerk tradition of emergent Afrikaner nationalism. The development of the Scots Afrikaners – a term Müller uses to describe the hybrid identity of Scottish clergy still tethered to the empire, but who identified with the Afrikaner community – and their dominance of ecclesiastical matters in this period is covered extensively.

Central to Müller's analysis is the Scots Afrikaners' missionary identity. They, with the well-known Murray clan as a pivot, assimilated into the community to which they felt called to serve: the Afrikaners of the DRC. Here, Müller develops a convincing argument around the hybridity of these Scots who still remain rooted in their Britishness while they assimilated into the Afrikaner community. This hybridity is constantly navigated and renegotiated and places the Scots Afrikaners in the ironic position of influential role players in proto-Afrikaner nationalism, segregation,

and apartheid, while their ethnic heritage was later used by Afrikaner nationalists such as D. F. Malan to reject Scottish influences within the DRC. A sophisticated narrative emerges, characterised by tensions between various identities, ideologies, and theological credence.

This book does not only offer an insightful account of the Scots Afrikaner, but also places the DRC under historical interrogation. The DRC's embeddedness in the colonial and apartheid projects makes it an unmissable historical factor in southern Africa's past. This is true not only because of its proximity to power, but for its far-reaching influence in communities across the region. The DRC's intellectual and leadership spheres thus had great social influence. Yet, with some exceptions, rigours and responsible engagement with the DRC seems generally scant in the historiography.

With its archival fervour, rich analysis, and clear narrative, Müller's *The Scots Afrikaners* forms part of the exceptions. The book combines extensive literature with the rich archival sources housed at the DRC Archive to give a fresh, yet sophisticated interpretation of the history of the church. It is an exhibition of how a history writing can be woven into a compelling narrative, grounded in the necessary academic diligence and historical awareness. While the book academically rigorous, the narrative makes for an accessible read. It is then a pity that the book, due to the Scottish publishers' high price tag, is not easily attainable to the South African public and remains therefore confined to the academic sphere.

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