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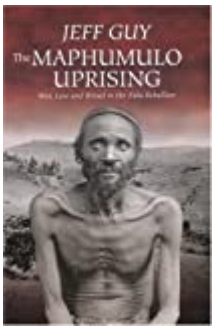

Jeff Guy. *The Maphumulo Uprising: War, Law and Ritual in the Zulu Rebellion.* Scottsville: University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2005. xii + 276 pp. $34.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-86914-048-9.

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War, Law, and Ritual in the Zulu Rebellion

In *The Maphumulo Uprising*, Jeff Guy has crafted a gripping story of the political machinations, chiefly intrigues, and paranoid colonial imaginations that surrounded the remarkable African effort to resist Natal intrusions and exactions during the Zulu, or "Bambatha," Rebellion of 1906. Guy brings to the project all his considerable expertise in the history of Natal and Zululand, and he greatly illuminates the story. Yet, as Guy notes, this monograph is the product of his effort "to go into the minutiae of events and to dig deeper into the local records" (p. 268). It reflects a "process of increasingly specialized research" (p. 268). This specialized detail is perhaps both the book's strength and its shortcoming. While Guy has brought to life, with his usual fiery passion, the excruciating details of killings and reprisals in the final days of the rebellion, at times, he has left the reader wondering about the broader picture.

Guy opens the book with a tantalizing prologue in which he sets out the players in the tragic story of the struggle of a Zulu community to combat colonial incursions. It is a graphic tale of the intense violence meted out by the Natal colony, which, Guy reminds us elsewhere, Winston Churchill once called the " 'hooligan of empire' " for its brutal handling of the rebellion.[1] It is also a gripping tale of Zulu rituals and spiritual preparations for defense in war. Guy discusses the cleansing and strengthening ceremonies performed by *izinyanga* (doctors, herbalists) and presided over by chiefs of the people of the Lower Thukela and Maphumulo districts; he covers their violent, sometimes gruesome, retributions against Natal soldiers and colonists; and he points to how they, then, came to be caught in the net of colonial military and legal power. Guy rightly spends little time on the overall course of the rebellion. As he notes, the story of the rebellion and its aftermath is familiar territory. There are, after all, a number of detailed contemporary accounts (including James Stuart's *A History of the Zulu Rebellion 1906 and of Dinuzulu's Arrest, Trial and Expatriation* [1913]) and much excellent scholarship, beginning with Shula Marks's seminal work *Reluctant Rebellion* (1970) and Ben Carton's *Blood from Your Children* (2000). Most recently, Guy has published the critically acclaimed *Remembering the Rebellion: The Zulu Uprising of 1906* (2007) based on a series of lectures he conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Killie Campbell Africana Library.[2]

In the brief first chapter, "Conquering Natal," Guy provides the broad brushstrokes of the provocations leading to the rebellion and the conduct of the rebellion. While this chapter sets the stage for his focused analysis of the Maphumulo Uprising, it does not provide the reader with the broader framework in which to situate the fascinating events that unfolded in African society toward the end of the rebellion. It is curious, for example, given what appears to be a clear element of irredentist millenarianism in the intent of the purification and fortification rituals and ceremonies, that Guy does not make some comparison with Jeff Peires's important work on the Xhosa cattle killing, *The Dead Will Arise* (1989). Similarly, discussions about the colonial Natal legal framework, which is at the center of the story, could have benefited from reference to Thom McClendon's work on the foundations of customary law in Natal in *Genders and Generations Apart* (2002). There is, however, much engaging material in the remaining chapters of the book.

In chapter 2, Guy offers, in great detail, the local context for the Maphumulo Uprising. Here, his intimate knowledge of the region provides the reader with such a vivid sense of the surrounds–the wagon tracks where military convoys stirred dust clouds as they passed, the exact locations of people's homes, and the contours and vegetation of the land–that one easily imagines being there. This sense is enhanced by excellent maps, rendered in three-dimensional color. Just as Norman Etherington provided (in his masterful *The Great Treks* [2001]) a fresh perspective–a more African perspective–on the importance of the local terrain in shaping history, Guy brings alive the land and people. We can, therefore, better appreciate the stories of the chiefs and people who, in June 1906, faced the crisis of rebellion as it exploded from the pressures of the colonial context. In this chapter, Guy fleshes out pressures on the African homesteads in the area. He also offers new insights into chiefly politics and the contestations over power among chiefs, *izinduna* (headmen), and household heads. In this chapter, he, moreover, begins to trace carefully the strands of myth-making by Stuart and others who portrayed Africans in such a negative light in the colonial imagination, and the likes of which have been laid bare so clearly in Carolyn Hamilton's seminal work, *Terrific Majesty* (1998).

There are some missing elements here, which could have enhanced the foregrounding of the rest of the book and provided signposts to its broader significance. Given that we are presented with such an intimate portrait of these local patriarchal political and domestic dynamics, for example, it would have been helpful to know something more about how women fit into the story and about their voices in these circumstances. It would also have helped to illuminate the broader context in which segregation was worked out in Natal, as well as in Zululand, if there was more discussion on land tenure for Africans on white-owned lands and on the relations of chiefs to white landowners in the Maphumulo district. As Guy states, the colony of Natal was "acquired by negotiation" with African patriarchs, not by conquest as in Zululand (p. 45). The picture that emerges from *Maphumulo Uprising* is one of intense colonial machinations calculated if not to precipitate a rebellion led by chiefs on whom the colonial administration fixed the legal principle of collective responsibility, then to justify at least their brutal crushing if a rebellion should happen to come along. This would, at least in the case of Natal proper, seem to be at odds with the arguments about the negotiated foundations of the colony. The answer to this may lie in the different and sometimes contending perspectives of the various blocs in Natal colonial society: white farmers, large landowners, sugar barons, colonial administrators, colonial troops, imperial advocates, etc. Although Guy mentions some of these interests, he could, perhaps, have provided a clearer picture of the importance of the local uprising if he disaggregated and more fully analyzed the component parts of Natal colonial society. Admittedly, space constraints may not have permitted for this.

In the following chapters, Guy delves deeper into the events of June 1906 in Maphumulo, and these are perhaps the most interesting parts of the study. Here, he provides riveting details of the duplicitous colonial agents who had already penetrated the rural areas: the stock inspectors who doubled as colonial spies and Africans accused of being co-opted by Natal. In chapters 3 and 4, we also do get a sense of the broader regional picture. Guy discusses the rural-urban links of African workers in Durban and Johannesburg, and the roles of Christian mission-educated Africans in the rural political economy. Guy also lays out the developments of the African resistance in Maphumulo, which boiled over into outright assaults and murder of local white civilians, such as storekeepers and colonial troopers and police. There is, moreover, fascinating material on the culture and perspectives of the average colonist during the rebellion. Guy notes a chilling link between the brutal suppression of the uprising and the colonial ethos that disposed whites to view the whole affair as good sport. He indicates, for example, that the Castle Beer Company sponsored a machine gun and the gunnery crew for use in suppressing the rebellion–a remarkable testimony to the dubious