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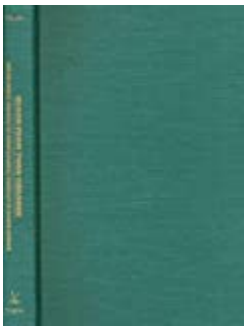

Benedict Carton. *Blood from Your Children: The Colonial Origins of Generational Conflict in South Africa.* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000. ix + 215 pp. $21.50 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8139-1932-4; $59.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8139-1931-7.

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Enacting one of the historical profession's venerable rituals, young historian Benedict Carton challenges the authority of the elders in this study of the Natal disturbances of 1906-1907. Thirty years ago Shula Marks argued in *Reluctant Rebellion* that colonial taxation and other exactions triggered a truncated peasants' revolt which went nowhere because it lacked credible leadership. Without disputing the role played by the Natal government's policies on land and taxation, Carton believes that Marks overlooked the contribution of conflict between 'generations'. Building on Jeff Guy's insight that the transition to colonial rule in KwaZulu Natal was marked by an 'accommodation of patriarchs', Carton sees young men and women challenging policies which maintained white and black patriarchal power - including, of course, older women whose authority depended on the patriarchs.

This is not a difficult case to argue because of the wealth of evidence showing that conflict between sons and fathers was structurally embedded in all levels of Nguni pre-colonial social organization. Young men could not hope to acquire the cattle required for marriage without help from their fathers. In a household with many wives, no son knew who would succeed as head until his father chose a chief wife. Lineage heads, chiefs and kings often delayed nominating a principal wife - and therefore the heir - for years, lest a disappointed sibling foment a patricidal plot. Carton reviews these conflicts in elegant prose in the first third of his text.

Next he sketches the way young men and women found opportunities to circumvent patriarchal power through wage labor and affiliation with Christian missions. The young men acquired means for earlier marriage, and many young women found ways to avoid marrying the men whom parents had chosen for them. The patriarchs found an improbable ally in Natal's white magistrates because the system of 'Native law' and administration developed by Theophilus Shepstone depended on cooperative chiefs. When disputes between fathers and sons reached courts of law, the magistrates were likely to side with the fathers. According to Carton, the contradiction between the disruptive effects of the colonial economy on traditional family life and the administration's dependence on chiefs reached crisis point when Natal imposed a poll tax on unmarried men over eighteen years of age. Because this threatened young men's newly won gains, they threw their support behind Bhambatha and a few other chiefs who were willing to risk the consequences of an open rebellion. Carton argues that the rebels failed because the two-headed monster of white and black patriarchal power combined to defeat them.

Although the argument is plausible, Carton lacks the necessary evidence to prove his case. This is not because he has failed in his research. He read the right books, ransacked the archives, learned Zulu and interviewed old people. The main problem is his inability to translate the subjective evidence he has accumulated into numbers. In a single family it is easy to see generational conflict. In society at large, the existence of thousands of families in different stages of development makes it more difficult to draw lines between generations. The young shade gradually into the mature, the mature shade gradually into the old. In this case the problem is exacerbated by the inevitable tendency of wars to enlist mainly young fighters. Were the rebels of 1906 fighting because they were young men aggrieved by the poll tax, or did they do the fighting because they were young and therefore fighting fit? In the absence of firm figures it is very hard to say. Even when Carton can use Natal government statistics, he finds it difficult to draw the line, as on page 120 when he writes that "nearly 1,800 young men and several hundred older men were found guilty of sedition between 1906-1908."

The book is as attractive as sympathetic editors, good proof-reading and the guidance of a fine university press can make it. As time goes by, historians must begin to wonder why notes must still be consigned to the end pages, rather than set out in footnotes on each page. It cannot be because of the expense, because digital page setting eliminates the cost which once made type-setters rend their garments and tear their hair. Nor is it reasonable to use the old excuse that footnotes distract the attention of casual readers. The use of the so-called 'Harvard system' of parenthetical referencing -i.e. (Lenin, 1985) - is far more intrusive. A book like this one would be much easier to read with footnotes.

Carton did a fine job of providing helpful maps and diagrams. He also found a number of interesting photographs, which have not been very well reproduced by the publisher. The mat finish dims the images and reduces contrast to unacceptable levels. If the author's intention was to carry his argument forward with the photos, it has been subverted by the printers.

Like everyone who writes in English on African subjects, Carton faced the inevitable problem of orthography. Like everyone else who has written serious history of Southern Africa in the last forty years, he includes a note explaining that he has used 'recent orthography' for 'isiZulu' words. The trouble is, the orthography keeps changing. Thus Carton feels compelled to write Bhambatha instead of Bambata, Dingana instead of Dinagane, etc. This is not because the Zulu language itself has been changing but because the linguistic gatekeepers continually change their minds. It is high time scholars got together to adopt a code of practice on spelling and grammar. Even the spelling of words in Wright and Webb's magnificent *James Stuart Archive* has changed as each succeeding volume has reached the press. Spoken American and British English have undergone great changes during the last two hundred year without producing concomitant changes in spelling. Writers have held the advocates of phonetic spelling at bay. Why do we treat printed African languages differently? Orthographical shiftiness is a form of orientalizing knowledge which operates to keep Zulu speakers in their place as 'the other'. This reviewer has had enough.

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