

A few small mistakes have crept in; for example, the “Long Tom” guns were of 155-mm (not 135-mm) calibre (p 33); Maritzburg (map, p 37) must be Pietermaritzburg; Roberts's army suffered more than 1 000 deaths from enteric (typhoid) fever (p 45) – in actual fact, many more died from typhoid, for example, in Bloemfontein alone some 1 600 perished; Simon's Town, not Simonstown (p 71); Deneys, not Dennis, Reitz (p 247, Chapter 2, note 14); and on p 166 the town of Middelkerke must be spelled correctly and consistently (i.e. not as Middelkerk or Middlekerke).

*General Lord Rawlinson* forms part of the Bloomsbury Studies in Military History series (with Jeremy Black as senior editor), which includes diverse titles, such as on D-Day, the First World War, the British Army in India, the 1711 expedition to Quebec, the Battle of the Atlantic, war and state-building in modern Afghanistan, postwar Japan as a sea power, and Australian soldiers in the Anglo-Boer War and Vietnam War.

The history of what is today South Africa, especially in the years 1795 to 1910, is inextricably linked to that of the British Empire. But the influence that British imperialism had on South Africa and all its people, lingers on to this day. In the light of the present 120th anniversary of the Anglo-Boer War, the most devastating war to be fought in South Africa, and in the wake of the First World War centenary – a war that caused divisions in South Africa, but a war in which South Africans also played a relatively small but important role – it is worthwhile revisiting the career of a committed career soldier, such as Henry Rawlinson. Rodney Atwood's *General Lord Rawlinson: From Tragedy to Triumph* is an excellent biography and is highly recommended.

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### **Bold new interpretation of Cape burgher identity**

**Teun Baartman, *Cape Conflict: Protests and Political Alliances in a Dutch Settlement***

UCT Press, Cape Town, 2019

206 pp

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R300.00

Teun Baartman's *Cape Conflict: Protests and Political Alliances in a Dutch Settlement* offers a bold new interpretation of burgher identity, protests and political alliances in the eighteenth-century Cape Colony. Informed by exhaustive research, the work sets out a compelling revision of the history and motives of the Cape burgher protest movement of the late 1770s and 1780s. Baartman challenges a long-standing historiographical tradition, which has characterised the burgher protesters as Cape patriots and the protest movement as a harbinger of proto-Afrikaner nationalism. The

focus of the book is the brewing tensions between Cape burghers and the Dutch East India Company (VOC) that came to a head in 1779 and continued into the 1780s. Though triggered by a relatively insignificant event (the arrest and banishment of the prominent, but unpopular, Cape burgher Carel Hendrik Buijtendag), the period of protest that followed was shaped by ongoing disagreements between Cape burghers and the VOC over burgher status.

Rebuffing the “Cape patriots” narrative that was first espoused by Coenraad Beyers in publications in 1929 and 1967, the author argues that the protest movement was not that of a poor, suffering burgher population resisting an oppressive VOC. Rather, Baartman presents a persuasive case for understanding the burgher protest movement as a struggle between “leading members of the ruling elite for access to the centre of power” (p 188). By analysing the financial and property data of the VOC archives, and in particular the *opgraafrollen* (which offer rich detail on burgher households originally recorded for tax collection purposes), the work provides a detailed account of the economic standing of the movement’s participants. Chapter Seven focuses on the 404 burghers who signed a petition of protest and demands for reform in 1779, which marked the beginning of the movement. As Baartman explains, “the image that emerges of the Cape burgher protesters of 1779 is that they were mostly economically independent, and that many of them were prosperous settlers” (p 111). Rather than being a nationalist movement of disgruntled underdogs, the Cape burgher protests of this period are more accurately understood as an attempt by a group of wealthy farmers “to reshuffle the members of the [Cape’s] ruling elite” to enhance their own access to power and its concomitant resources and benefits (p 148). The author contends that the burgher protesters were not seeking to overthrow the VOC, but “to negotiate within the existing system” to effect change that suited their political and economic interests (p 186). As a struggle between factions of the Cape elite, the protest movement was hardly revolutionary.

Baartman’s argument is strengthened by his considered assessment of the Dutch character of the Cape at the time of the burgher protest movement. Recent strides in Cape historiography have highlighted the extent to which the Cape was engaged in a multitude of different networks (perhaps most notably in Nigel Worden’s edited volume, *Cape Town between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town*, published in 2012). One of these networks was of course the Dutch world. Yet, as the author rightly observes, the Cape’s Dutch connection and Dutch character during the VOC era are often “underexposed” in the related historiography (p viii). By examining the burgher protests of the late 1770s and 1780s through the lens of the Cape’s Dutch character, Baartman highlights often overlooked connections to the Netherlands, which “had far reaching consequences for the local political dynamics” at the Cape (p viii). In terms of its organisational, judicial and administrative systems, as well as the political and social customs of the elite, the VOC Cape may be described as Dutch Africa (more so than any other contemporary Dutch settlements on the continent).

Significantly, Cape burghers saw themselves as equal to Dutch burghers, in contrast to the VOC, which disagreed and regarded all those settled in its territories as subject to its power and prerogatives. However, the work reveals how dissatisfied Cape burghers “used the means provided by Dutch traditions of protest to influence policies in their favour and were often quite successful” (p ix). Among the Cape’s elite, this tradition of protest dated back to 1658, a mere six years after the VOC settlement was established, when the first petition by disgruntled burghers was presented to the Cape’s commander, Jan van Riebeeck (p 70). Baartman’s extensive archival research coupled with his foregrounding of Dutch traditions of protest have produced a convincing rebuttal of the “Cape patriots” interpretation of the burgher protests of the late-eighteenth century. Twentieth-century efforts to equate burgher protests that occurred in Dutch Africa with “the struggle of an Afrikaner nation in British Africa” were clearly influenced more by the context of their writing than by the evidence. Baartman has delivered an engaging, accessible study that sheds new light on an episode of Cape history that had been considered settled for many decades. It is a fine example of revisionist history.

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### **Liberation behind prison walls**

**Derek Hook, ed, *Lie on your Wounds: the Prison Correspondence of Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe***

Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2019

555 pp

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The possibility of any interaction between a prospective reader and a book publication is often determined by the cover page. *Lie on Your Wounds* by Derek Hook is an exemplar of this debatable point. Indeed, with the ruthless and brutal nature of the apartheid government’s implementation of unjust laws and dehumanising the conditions of “non-whites” in South Africa in mind, surely one might have expected from one of its most formidable opponents, a militant model declaring war against an imminent enemy. Instead, the cover picture of the iconic late leader of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, smiles fervently at an object absent from view. Interestingly, he does so with a smile that may possibly alert the prospective reader that the book is about a gentle giant and not an authoritative leader who often held a grim and stern facial expression that instilled fear, dominance and power. These visuals, and the title’s further wording (particularly wording such as “the prison correspondence ....” and “letters of opposition to South African apartheid”) and the book’s striking cover design alert the reader of its orientation.