



THE ECONOMIC CAUSES & EFFECTS OF THE BHAMBATHA REBELLION

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PRESENTATION STRUCTURE

- Background
- Grand narrative
- My take
- Economic causes
- Economic effects
- Conclusions



BACKGROUND

- In 1905 the Natal Colonial government passed the Poll Tax Act to be implemented in 1906
- It targeted young men who could not pay the hut tax on account of their age
- Bhambatha kaMancinza Zondi (born in 1866) led a rebellion against this tax
- The rebellion was suppressed but the effects were disastrous for all parties involved.



WHAT CAUSED THE REBELLION?

- **The grand narrative**

- The passing of the Act & Black reaction to it
- Bhambatha's ambition to become a hero
- The colonial government's resolve to consolidate British hegemony in Natal.

- **My take**

- The Act was only the immediate trigger & a response to a confluence of other factors
- Economic factors led to the rebellion
- It is too simplistic to present the Act as the main cause of the rebellion.



ECONOMIC CAUSES

- The colony's financial position was in bad shape due to natural and human factors
 - +Natural= 1895 & 1904: locusts destroyed crops; 1904: East coast fever; rinderpest, etc
 - +Human= Forcing blacks out of arable land; Recommendation of the Lagden Commission (1903-1905) that 9 million hectares of land be reserved for whites
- Natal could not feed its population.



ECONOMIC CAUSES CONT...

- The 1904 census left blacks suspicious of whites
 - They blamed the colonial gov. for the natural disasters & interpreted the Act in this context (Ismail, 1971; Zondi 1998; Mngomezulu, 2008)
 - Economic effects of the ABW / SAW (1899-1902)
 - Bhambatha donated 3 pounds to the War cause despite his financial problems & was not rewarded
- “to treat a volatile personality like Bhambatha in such an off-hand manner was ill-advised and in all likelihood served as a contributory factor in pushing him towards rebellion” (Wassermann, 2007:105)



ECONOMIC EFFECTS

- To the colonial government
 - +Stretched the limited financial resources
 - +9368 white forces took part in the rebellion
 - +About R1, 055, 566 was used to suppress the rebellion (Smail, 1971).
- To blacks
 - +Bread winners died, were incarcerated, etc
 - +Others went to work in the mines & farms
 - +Traditional leaders such as Chakijana lost land & subjects (Madlala, 1996; Pampallis, 1991).



CONCLUSION

- The 1905 Tax Act has been over-emphasized
- Natural & human factors caused the rebellion
- To understand the context of the rebellion one has to go back to 1824 when the whites settled in Natal – not even 1879 when they invaded Zululand and destroyed the Kingdom
- Thus, there is a need for detailed studies on different aspects of the Bhambatha rebellion
- This study is just one attempt.



THANK YOU!

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