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Walter Brian Cisco. *Wade Hampton: Confederate Warrior, Conservative Statesman.* Dulles: Potomac Books, 2004. xiii + 399 pp. $35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-57488-626-9.

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Neo-Confederate Retelling of Hampton's History

Years after the Civil War had ended, an enamored U. R. Brooks, a clerk with the South Carolina Supreme Court and part-time historian, asked the aging Confederate Lieutenant General Wade Hampton how many Federals he had killed. The old soldier replied, "Eleven. Two with my sword and nine with my pistol." Brooks believed that number too low and reminded the general of at least two Union soldiers killed at Trevilian. "Oh," replied Hampton, "I did not count them, they were running."[1]

Wade Hampton was one of the most successful Confederate leaders of the war and one of the wealthiest men in the antebellum South. The powerful South Carolinian owned thousands of slaves and numerous plantations, and was a prominent member of the Southern planter aristocracy. During the war, he raised a popular troop of soldiers–the Hampton Legion–and served heroically and bravely for the duration of the conflict, being severely wounded at Gettysburg. After the war, Hampton was elected as the Democratic governor of his state and later as a Senator.

Despite such credentials, Civil War historians and scholars of the South have largely ignored Hampton. His war record is often overshadowed by that of other more flamboyant cavalry officers–J. E. B. Stuart, his former commander, and Nathan Bedford Forrest, the "Wizard of the Saddle." And, unlike other Southern commanders who were killed in action or died shortly after the war, Hampton never experienced a grand apotheosis. This less-than-god-like status is likely due to Hampton's postwar adventures as a failed businessman and mediocre politician. Most attention paid to the former general's postwar political career has focused on his "red shirt campaign" of 1876, and, though he is credited with "redeeming" South Carolina, historians have paid scant attention to Hampton's long political service.

This neglect is unfortunate, not least because in many respects Hampton was unlike his planter contemporaries. He was reluctant to break with the Union before the war, and during the Reconstruction period he supported a certain measure of civil rights for the freedmen. Though his paternalistic views on civil rights would be considered unacceptable today, his opinions were more liberal than those of his electorate. In other respects, however, Hampton was a typical member of his social class. He was a loyal, unapologetic supporter of the Confederate cause throughout his life and defended state's rights as both a soldier and statesman. Indeed, it was men of Hampton's stature who led the South into dependence upon slavery and ultimately into war. Large slaveholders like Hampton wielded power far beyond their actual numbers, and their economic, political, and cultural influence resonated throughout all aspects of Southern society. The planters established the patterns of conservative thought, social behavior, and racial hierarchies for generations of white Southerners.

History written over the past forty years has often neglected or maligned the planter class. Many historians during this time have focused on the common soldier, while others have worked (thankfully) to create a more comprehensive account of the lives of all participants of the war to include African Americans and women. The planter class, when mentioned, has usually been condemned (not always unfairly) for its sins. There has been, it seems, little interest in the lives of rich, dead white slaveholding aristocrats, especially those as rich and as white as Wade Hampton. Today, however, there is a renewed interest in the members of the planter class. Works by George C. Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (1994), William C. Davis, *Look Away: A History of the Confederate States of America* (2002), and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese's new tome, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (2005) indicate a wider trend by historians to examine the larger impact of the intellectual and philosophical foundations

of these self-styled "republicans."

Walter Brian Cisco's book, however, does little to advance our collective understanding of Hampton or our knowledge of the planter class. Though descriptive and comprehensive, Cisco's book is largely a nostalgic and anecdotal reporting of the life and career of this famed Confederate. Much like the star-struck Mr. Brooks, Cisco finds little to criticize in Hampton, and the book is hardly an improvement upon the two previous accounts–Manly Wade Wellman's inclusive *Giant in Gray: A Biography of Wade Hampton of South Carolina* (1949), and Ed Longacre's war-heavy *Gentleman and Soldier: A Biography of Wade Hampton III* (2003).

Cisco begins with a lengthy description of Hampton's English pedigree and family history, and does an admirable job in reporting the planter's antebellum and postwar careers. However, if one is looking for Civil War battle history, there is little here that scholars or laymen alike could not find in more war-specific works. Rather, Cisco's book succeeds in offering genealogists a trove of information regarding the Hampton family and its roots, and those of other "first families" of lower Carolina. In addition, the book is well organized and offers a descriptive account of Hampton's much neglected post-Reconstruction years, though it mirrors closely Wellman's account of the man. And like Wellman, Cisco tells Hampton's story from a decidedly pro-Confederate viewpoint.

Cisco makes indefatigable use of primary source material: manuscripts, official records, memoirs, and private papers. He draws very little information from secondary sources, however, and this oversight is evident. The bibliography is missing important texts from such influential Southern historians as Drew Gilpin Faust, Eugene Genovese, George Rable, and William Freehling, for example. As a result, the book lacks historical context to give the narrative larger meaning and intellectual force, especially in regard to the issues of slavery, secession, and Reconstruction.

Cisco is writing to an unreconstructed Southern audience, and neo-Confederates will find much to appreciate. Like Wellman's account from 1949, Cisco provides strong moral clarity: Confederates good, Yankees bad. His treatment of the postwar period is likewise clear-cut between the virtuous Democrats and corrupt Republicans. Indeed, Cisco's account reads like a Dunning-school history text and the author, like most neo-Confederates, is often apologetic toward slavery: "Southerners knew the institution had existed since the dawn of time, that the 'glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome' had been built by slave labor. Slavery was regulated in Old Testament days, tolerated by the New Testament church, defended by philosophers, and practiced by America's Founding Fathers. Both North and South had been slave owning during the colonial period. Slaves, purchased from Africa by their African owners, were transported to the New World by New England slave traders" (pp. 41-42). Furthermore, African Americans are presented as contented servants, easily duped by scheming Radicals, while long-suffering white Southerners labor under the tyranny of military reconstruction led by a "coalition of blacks, opportunists, and turncoats" (p. 189). Only Hampton's election to the executive, according to Cisco, "saved" South Carolina.

The author's pro-Confederate views lead him to make controversial, contradictory, and disturbing statements, such as: "During the war many Southern blacks stood by their country–the Confederate States" (p. 170). Likewise, Hampton's role as slave master is presented in uncritical terms. He is described as "paternalistic," but as a man who "treated slaves as individuals and fellow human beings," and who would "later back a nondenominational plan to support a missionary to blacks in the [Columbia, South Carolina] district, build a church, and provide religious instruction for his own slaves" (pp. 32, 41). Yet, the reader never learns why Hampton might support such a mission. Though he devoted much of his antebellum life to the management of his extensive plantation holdings and slave investment, we learn very little of Hampton's plantations or his slaves. Cisco's failure to offer an analytical assessment or a healthy dose of skepticism concerning Hampton's impact upon Southern history seriously limits the scholarly value of his narrative.

A story is told of Governor Hampton meeting former North Carolina governor and Senator Zebulon B. Vance many years after the war. It is said that Vance exclaimed, "It's been a long time between drinks," reflecting the traditional rivalry between the Carolinas that had prevented the two states from engaging in any meaningful dialogue. [2] Similarly, it's been a long time, if ever, since a biography of Wade Hampton was written that engaged the academic community in meaningful discourse.

Notes

[1]. Manly Wade Wellman, *Giant in Gray: A Biography of Wade Hampton of South Carolina* (New York: Scribner, 1949), 239.

[2]. Richard Walser, "Damn Long Time between Drinks," *North Carolina Historical Review* 59, no. 2 (April 1982): p. 77.

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