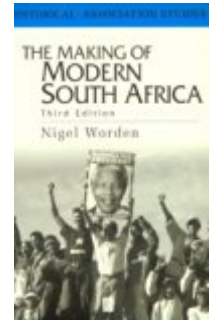


Nigel Worden. *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Segregation and Apartheid.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000. xiv + 194 pp. US\$32.10, paper, ISBN 978-0-631-21661-2.



Reviewed by F. A. Mouton

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One of the most disturbing trends in post-apartheid South Africa is the ahistorical attitude of its youth. That they have turned their backs to history is evident from declining enrolment of history students at South African universities. This is also reflected in the small amount of historical works published in the country. It is thus heartening to see that a third edition of Nigel Worden's *The making of modern South Africa* has been released. In this edition Worden analyses events in South Africa up to the election of 1999. He also includes new material published since 1990.

The reason for the success of the book is easy to explain as it is highly readable, balanced and concise. Although Worden makes it clear that the book is not a complete general history it succeeds admirably in explaining the major historical themes in South Africa's complex and turbulent past in a mere 169 pages. The central focus of the book is on the years between the 1910s and the 1960s with the development of segregation and apartheid. For any person with an interest in South Africa it will explain why it became such a

discriminatory society, dominated by a small white minority, as well as why apartheid eventually collapsed. In the process it also offers a handy overview of the latest historical scholarship on South Africa.

The strength of *The making of modern South Africa*, and one of the reasons for its success, is that it avoids the pitfalls of so many South African historical surveys of the past, the mind-numbing blow by blow descriptions of the Great Trek, the Boer War, or of white party politics and parliamentary elections. However, that the dynamics of white politics are so little considered can also be seen as a weakness of the book. White politics is an essential theme in understanding modern South Africa, and particularly for understanding the collapse of apartheid. To comprehend why white South Africans, after generations of racist domination went along with FW de Klerk's dramatic turnabout after 1990, one has to take note of the various political strands in the National Party. The emotional and intense struggle between the *verligtes* (enlightened ones) and the *verkramptes* (the stultified ones) over reform and

the morality of apartheid played a crucial role in changing Afrikaner attitudes to modernity and possible reforms. Another shortcoming of the book is that Worden ignores the works of Afrikaner historians who played such a crucial role mobilising Afrikaner nationalism and bolstering and justifying apartheid. This is a surprising omission as Afrikaner historiography had a powerful influence, determining the content of school textbooks way into the 1990s.

These shortcomings, however, do not detract from the overall value of *The making of modern South Africa*. It is to be hoped that it will find its way on to the library shelves of all South African schools, colleges and universities. In the hands of dedicated educators this book can hopefully play a crucial role in stemming the rising tide of ignorance about South African history amongst its youth.

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